

and Bolivia) ranged in weight from 13.0 to 17.0 g (\bar{x} = 15.3 g). Typical soft part colors of the above specimens were brown iris; black bill, with the basal one-third of the mandible being flesh-colored; and gray tarsi and feet. *Ramphotrigo megalcephala* was previously known from only one locality in Peru (O'Neill 1969), but it has recently been reported from the Alto Río Madre de Dios, Department of Madre de Dios (Terborgh et al. in press).

The only reference that I found to the nesting of any member of *Ramphotrigo* is that of Schönwetter (1968: 109), who gave measurements of two *megalcephala* eggs but did not describe the nest from which they were secured.

The cavity-nesting behavior of *Ramphotrigo* flycatchers may shed light on the taxonomic position of this tyrannid genus. Other "flatbills" (*Rhynchoicyclus* spp.) and flycatchers that are probably related to them (*Tolmomyias* spp.) build hanging, pendant-shaped nests with entrance-ways low on their sides. The habit of laying eggs in natural cavities lined with mammal hair (as in the case of *Ramphotrigo fuscicauda*) resembles that of *Myiarchus* flycatchers. Furthermore, the whistled calls (and dawn song of *R. megalcephala*) are *Myiarchus*-like in quality and pattern. Skeletal and syringeal similarities also support a *Ramphotrigo*-*Myiarchus* relationship (W. E. Lanyon MS).

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The Dwarf Tinamou (*Taoniscus nanus*) of Central Brazil

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In the last 5 yr, we have obtained some information on the Dwarf Tinamou (*Taoniscus nanus*) at the "Reserva Biológica do Roncador" of the Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística (IBGE) (approx. 15°55'S, 47°52'W), Federal District central Brazil. Except for Azara (1805), the Dwarf Tinamou has not been studied in the field; Silveira (1967, 1968) reported only on five collected or captive birds from Cristalina (Goiás) and near Brasília.

At the study area, *Taoniscus* is more common in "campos sujos" than in the "cerrado" or bushy savanna. These "campos sujos" are grasslands, with scattered bushes less than 2 m in height and a dense

grass, composed mainly by Graminae (*Axonopus*, *Echinolaena*, *Paspalum*, *Panicum*, *Schizachyrium*, etc.). In this habitat live four other tinamous: *Rhynchotus rufescens*, *Nothura maculosa*, *Nothura minor*, and *Crypturellus parvirostris*. Another species (*Crypturellus undulatus*) occurs nearby, in dry forest.

The Dwarf Tinamou is very small and very difficult to locate, even in open burned-over vegetation and along trails, which are the best places to observe it. We saw only isolated individuals and pairs, never flocks of "a dozen birds" (fide Silveira, 1967). This tinamou seems to be more active in the early morning or in the afternoon, especially after or during drizzles, when individuals come into the open to

sunbathe. Dust baths are also common, as for other tinamous (*Rhynchotus*, *Nothura*, *Crypturellus*).

Taoniscus resembles *Nothura* in many behavioral patterns. When alarmed, it stands upright, with the neck erect, looking around. It then crouches, remaining motionless for some time, and suddenly disappears by running through the vegetation or by entering holes. Sometimes a bird bursts into flight with a crackling call, very close to the observer. The flight is short, almost a long jump, and the bird drops immediately into the grass a few meters away.

The Dwarf Tinamou spends most of its time searching through the vegetation for small arthropods and seeds of Graminae. Like *Rhynchotus*, it pecks at termite nests (*Proconitermes araujo*) to catch the insects that emerge.

Unlike those of other tinamous, the vocalizations of *Taoniscus* are inconspicuous, being easily confused with cricket songs. As in *Nothura*, the bird stands upright with neck erect and bill wide open to vocalize. Its call is a trill, "peet, peet, peet . . . ee-ee-ee," in which the "peet" notes are monotonous, piping, and weak and the terminal "ee" notes are louder, rising and lowering rapidly in volume and then ending abruptly. A single "ee" was also noted, apparently a location call.

Taoniscus is very peculiar in shape, especially because of the prominent "tail" of rump feathers, which can touch the ground. The soft ventral plumage conceals the feet most of the time, making the bird seem to "slide" across the ground like a plump, minute toy. An adult male *Taoniscus* is approximately 160 mm in total length and weighs only 43 g, about the same as a 1-week-old domestic chick.

The Dwarf Tinamou has a thin, pointed bill with basal nostrils. The mandible and maxillary tomia of a collected male (Museu Nacional 32949) are pink, while the rest of the maxilla is black with a whitish tip. The iris is pale yellow, and the tarsus very short (15 mm) and pinkish. As in other tinamous, the outermost primary is very short, while the two anterior primaries are slightly curved inward.

Sexual dimorphism has been reported in *Taoniscus* (Miranda-Ribeiro 1939, Pinto 1964), but the specimens that we examined have more or less the same general pattern. As in *Nothura maculosa*, individual *Taoniscus* seem to vary in plumage. For example, two adult males from the same locality may have plain ashy-black or slightly marbled primaries.

The breeding biology of *Taoniscus* is little known. One nonmolting male, collected on 15 September 1982 near the study area, was very fat, with gonads starting to develop (5 × 3.5 mm). At this time, songs were very common. In October, we observed an adult with two tiny chicks, but it was impossible to capture them. When we saw the chicks, the adult flew about erratically, calling and trying to attract our attention to him to give the chicks time to escape. These downy young seemed to be like those of *Nothura*.

Like many "cerrado" species, the Dwarf Tinamou

is harmed by extensive grass fires. Birds escaping from burning areas were so dizzy from the smoke that we could capture them with our bare hands. These birds are probably easy prey for the Aplomado Falcon (*Falco femoralis*), which frequently hunts for birds near grass fires. Perhaps *Taoniscus* may be also prey of the Burrowing Owl (*Speotyto cunicularia*), which captures such small tinamous as young *Nothura minor*.

Taoniscus is rare in collections, being regarded as endangered by some authors (Carvalho 1968, Sick and Teixeira 1979). On the other hand, it has a large range in central Brazil, from the Federal District and Goiás south to São Paulo and Paraná. Recent observations from northeastern Argentina (Misiones) need confirmation (see also Olog 1978). It is very easy to confuse *Taoniscus* with young *Nothura* in the field, and even the local hunters and farmers frequently are unable to distinguish this bird as a separate species.

Within our study area, *Taoniscus* seems to be more difficult to locate than rare, for several birds were observed during 2 weeks in September. *Taoniscus* could be more common in its rather large range than was believed. Although it survives in burned-over areas and near cities, any evaluation of its status is premature, as central Brazil is undergoing rapid agricultural development.

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