

Coryphaspiza melanotis, which occur in similar habitat in adjacent Brazil and Argentina, were thus not unexpected.

Similarly, although the humid forest originally covered 55% of the Oriente (Bozzano & Weik 1992), there is a subset of Atlantic Forest endemics whose distribution in Paraguay appears restricted to the southeast, adjacent to Misiones province, Argentina (Lowen *et al.* 1996b). Such species include *Mackenziaena leachii*, *Clibanornis dendrocolaptoides*, *Anabacerthia amaurotis*, *Campylorhamphus falcularius* and *Stephanophorus diadematus*. Since recent ornithological fieldwork in the Paraguayan Atlantic Forest has concentrated on forests further north and west (e.g. Brooks *et al.* 1993, Madroño & Esquivel 1997, Hayes & Scharf 1995), it is unsurprising that there have been few or no recent records of these species until renewed fieldwork at sites within their Paraguayan range.

A number of the species are secretive and unlikely to be recorded if their vocalizations are not known. These include crakes, owls, *Caprimulgus maculicaudus*, *Mackenziaena leachii*, *Drymophila rubricollis* and *Hylopezus nattereri*. Inadequate identification literature (e.g. for *Anthus* spp., *Euphonia chalybea* and *Emberizoides ypiranganus*) has a similar effect. Further fieldwork in appropriate habitat will probably reveal these species as more widespread than current records suggest.

Several migratory species may have been under-recorded due to a lack of fieldwork at the appropriate season. *Buteo swainsoni*, a North American breeder that spends the austral summer in Argentina, is likely to pass through Paraguay in reasonable numbers each year. Likewise, migrant *Sporophila* species such as *S. palustris* and *S. cinnamomea* probably pass through the Paraguayan Chaco each year en route between Brazil/Bolivia and Argentina. A few records may refer to vagrant individuals. This is perhaps the case for *Gallinula melanops* at RNBM, the single record of *Poospiza lateralis*, and both the 1992 (Brooks *et al.* 1995) and 1995 records of *Amazona pretrei*.

New distributional information was gathered for seven globally threatened species, including the Critically Endangered *Claravis godefrida* and *Caprimulgus candicans* (Collar *et al.* 1994). All are primarily threatened by habitat loss (Collar *et al.* 1992, 1994). They are—by definition—likely to be genuinely rare in Paraguay, although at sites which preserve pristine areas of their habitat they could be locally common (e.g. *Anthus nattereri* at two southern grassland sites and *Coryphaspiza melanotis* at Aguará Ñu, RNBM).

Most of our records reflect the paucity of knowledge about the distribution of birds in Paraguay rather than genuine rarity of the species concerned. However, given the continuing destruction and degradation of Paraguay's natural resources, it is likely that many are declining. Recent fieldwork (e.g. Brooks *et al.* 1993, 1995, Lowen *et al.* 1995, 1996a, 1996b, Madroño & Esquivel 1997) has highlighted the urgent need for more biological fieldwork. The rate at which Paraguay's ecosystems are being destroyed will otherwise result in the loss of the country's avifauna before much of it has even been documented.

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Addresses: James C. Lowen, BirdLife International, Wellbrook Court, Girton Road, Cambridge CB3 0NA, U.K. Robert P. Clay and Joe A. Tobias, Dept. of Zoology, University of Cambridge, Downing Street, Cambridge CB2 3EJ, U.K. Juan Mazar Barnett, Avenue Forest 1531 1°B, CP 1430, Buenos Aires, Argentina. Alberto Madroño N. and Estela Z. Esquivel, Fundación Moisés Bertoni para la Conservación de la Naturaleza, Calle Prócer Carlos Argüello 208, CC714, Asunción, Paraguay. Mark Pearman, c/o 58 Prospect Place, London E1 9TJ, U.K. Bernabé López Lanús, CC 38, 7260 Saladillo, Pcia. Buenos Aires, Argentina. Durwyn C. Liley, School of Biological Sciences, University of East Anglia, Norwich NR4 7TJ, U.K. Thomas M. Brooks, Dept. of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, TN 37996-1610, U.S.A. Jane M. Reid, Newnham College, Cambridge, U.K.

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Appendix

A summary of the location of sites mentioned in the text

Region	Site	Department	Coordinates
Oriente	RVS Yabebyry	Misiones	27°10'S, 57°00'W
	MN Bosque de Arary	Itapúa	27°27'S, 56°48'W
	/Base Aerea		27°25'S, 57°11'W
	/Puerto Turi		27°24'S, 57°14'W
	RNP Ypetí	Caazapá	25°33'S, 55°30'W
	RNP Itabó	Canindeyú	24°20'S, 54°35'W
	PN Caaguazú	Caazapá	26°04'S, 55°45'W
	PN San Rafael	Itapúa	26°25'S, 55°40'W
	RNB Mbaracayú	Canindeyú	24°07'S, 55°23'W
	/Jejui-mí		24°08'S, 55°31'W
	/Lagunita		24°08'S, 55°25'W
	/Aguará Ñu		24°09'S, 55°16'W
	/Carapá waterfall		24°00'S, 55°20'W
	PN Ypacaraí	Central/Cordillera	25°15'S, 55°19'W
	RNP Sombrero	Cordillera	25°00'S, 56°38'W
	Estancia Kaa'gua Rory	Caaguazú	24°46'S, 55°26'W
	Bahía de Asunción	Central	25°18'S, 57°40'W
Chaco	Estancia Jiménez	Canindeyú	24°13'S, 55°38'W
	PN Cerro Corá	Amambay	22°39'S, 56°00'W
	RNP Golondrina	Presidente Hayes	24°59'S, 57°43'W
	Puerto Remanso	Presidente Hayes	25°12'S, 57°33'W

On the validity of the Half-collared Sparrow *Arremon semitorquatus* Swainson, 1837

by Marcos A. Raposo & Ricardo Parrini

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Many authors have stressed that it is necessary to review the many existing polytypic species because of the conceptual problems presented by the subspecific rank (Rosen 1978, 1979, Nelson & Platnick 1981, Wiley 1981, Cracraft 1983, 1992, McKittrick & Zink 1988).

The Pectoral Sparrow *Arremon taciturnus* (Hermann, 1783) is a classical example of a problematic taxon. It is a Neotropical undergrowth forest dweller generally treated as consisting of four subspecies: *A. t. nigrirostris* Sclater, 1886, from Peru, Bolivia, and probably northwestern Argentina (Meyer de Schauensee 1982); *A. t. axillaris* Sclater, 1854, from the eastern part of Colombia and adjacent Venezuela; *A. t. taciturnus* ranging from southern Venezuela, the Guyanas and the right bank of the rio Amazonas through the states of Mato Grosso, Goiás, Tocantins, Pará and southward to Minas Gerais and Espírito Santo; and *A. t. semitorquatus* Swainson, 1837 which is restricted to Brazil from Rio de Janeiro to Rio Grande do Sul (Hellmayr 1938, Pinto 1944).

In spite of the well marked differences between the last two taxa their conspecificity was defended by Hellmayr (*op. cit.*) and Pinto (*op. cit.*) on the basis of a supposed intergradation zone, particularly at Serra dos Órgãos, a mountain range in Rio de Janeiro. These authors distinguished *A. t. semitorquatus* from *A. t. taciturnus* by the colour of the lower mandible (yellow in the former and blackish-brown in the latter), the lesser upper wing coverts (nearly the same olive as the back in the former, bright yellow in the latter), and the black pectoral collar (interrupted at the centre of the neck in *A. t. semitorquatus*, complete in the nominate subspecies). The presence of an "intergradation zone" was based on the variation of the two last characters in some specimens from Serra dos Órgãos and in one skin from Ipanema (upland São Paulo).

The purpose of this work is to re-examine the evidence adduced by Hellmayr and Pinto, and to review the taxonomic status of Swainson's form.

Methods

We conducted an analysis of the specimens housed in the Museu Nacional of Rio de Janeiro and Museu de Zoologia da Universidade de São Paulo. A total of 243 skins were examined, 54 corresponding to the diagnosis of *A. t. semitorquatus* and 189 to that of the nominate form. The measurements taken were: bill length (calmen); wing length (chord); and tail length. Some field notes were made and specimens



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