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First record of the Ash-throated Crake, *Mustelirallus albicollis* Vieillot, 1819 (Aves, Rallidae) in the Cordillera Central of the Colombian Andes

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Abstract: We present the first record of Ash-throated Crake, *Mustelirallus albicollis*, for the Cordillera Central of the Colombian Andes. One individual was killed while crossing a road in a marshy area in Porce, Antioquia department, Colombia. Our photographs represent the first record for the department of Antioquia and also for the Cordillera Central.

Key words: new avian record; South America; Colombian Central Andes; *Porzana albicollis*; Antioquia department; Porce

The Ash-throated Crake, *Mustelirallus albicollis* (Vieillot, 1819), is a medium-sized rallid (21–24 cm) (Restall et al. 2006) dwelling in natural and artificial marshy habitats, lagoons, rice fields, and pastures in South America (Taylor & van Perlo 1998). Two subspecies, mainly diagnosed by size, have been recognized: the nominate subspecies restricted south of the Amazon River, and *olivacea* occurring in northern Brazil, French Guiana, Suriname, Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago, Venezuela, and Colombia (Hilty & Brown 1986; Taylor 1996; Taylor & van Perlo 1998; Johnson 2010; Hilty 2003). In Colombia, all known populations are from lowlands below 900 m in the Llanos savannah east of Bogotá, in the northern dry Guajira facing the Venezuelan Lago de Maracaibo, and in the northern coastal areas of Magdalena, Atlántico, Sucre, and Bolivar departments (Hilty & Brown 1986; McMullan & Donegan 2014). Recent novel and more isolated records come from the Río Cauca valley in Valle del Cauca department at 900 m (López Ordóñez 2010) and from the Eastern Andes in Santander department at 1,900 m (Boesman 2011).

On 11 September 2005, around 17:00 h, we accidentally killed with our car one rallid that was crossing the road in a marshy area known as Porce, Antioquia department (06°39.672′ N, 075°07.201′ W, 1,007 m above sea level) (Figure 1). We retrieved a dead but perfectly preserved adult *Mustelirallus albicollis* (Figure 2). We photographed

Figure 1. Small isolated marshes in cleared pastures near human settlements, habitat in the Porce area where *Mustelirallus albicollis* was found. Photo by Diego Calderón-Franco.

Figure 2. Fresh road-killed *Mustelirallus albicollis* in the Porce marshes area. Photo by Juan David Ramirez.

Figure 3. Close-up view of the *Mustelirallus albicollis* showing the diagnostic field marks. Photo by Juan David Ramirez.

the dead bird. The specimen was prepared as a museum skin and brought to the bird collection at the Universidad de Antioquia Museum in Medellin, Colombia, where unfortunately it went missing before being properly deposited (Wilmar Múnera pers. comm.).

We identified the species based mainly on its relatively short and stout greenish bill with a darker brown culmen, its prominent white throat contrasting with the grey sides of the neck and head (Figure 3), its black and white barred flanks, and its brown-purple legs (Restall et al. 2006; Taylor & van Perlo 1998; Hilty & Brown 1986).

Our record is the first one of this secretive species both for the Cordillera Central of the Colombian Andes and for the Antioquia department, and accounts for a range extension of ca. 250–300 km from any of the known areas where the species is found in the Cauca River valley, the Eastern Andes, or the Caribbean lowlands (Figure 4).

Although the Porce area is embedded in the Central Andes, the altitude is relatively low and there is a connection to the north with the Caribbean lowlands along the descending Porce River. Consequently, it is not surprising that the avifauna of this area shows stronger affinities with that of the Caribbean lowlands and the Magdalena Valley than with that from the Andes (Cuervo et al. 2008).

Taylor (1996) mentioned that *Mustelirallus albicollis* presents seasonal movements both in the eastern Llanos and in the Caribbean lowlands of Colombia, and McMullan & Donegan (2014) mentioned that this species' seasonal movements are not fully understood.

Several visits by birdwatching groups to these marshy areas in more than 10 years since our record have not produced any additional evidence of this species there, supporting the idea that the individual we recorded was probably only in transit in the Porce area. However, only a few marshes are accessible from the main road and the minority still remains relatively intact. Cattle ranching, along with massive pine and eucalyptus plantations, had severely affected marshy habitats in the Porce area (Figure 5). Disturbingly, the continuous developing of hydro-electrical projects along the Porce river and adjacent valleys has an undetermined effect on the local biotas (Lara et al. 2012).

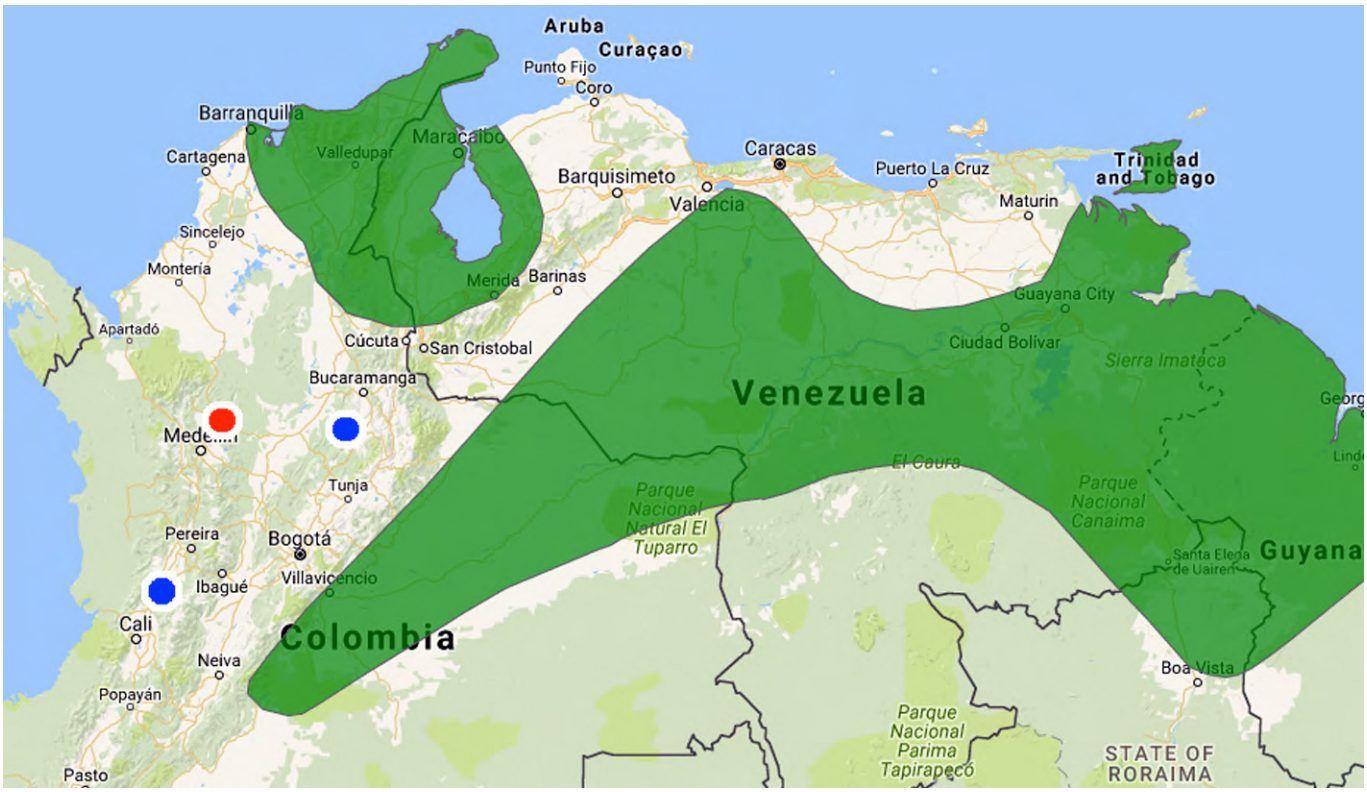

Figure 4. Distribution of *Mustelirallus albicollis* in Colombia showing the known range in the eastern Llanos and the Caribbean lowlands in green. The red circle represents our record in the northern Cordillera Central, and relative to ours, the blue circles represent the recent novel records from Valle del Cauca (southern) and Santander (eastern) departments. Map by Diego Calderón-Franco modified from Johnson (2010).

Figure 5. Porce area marshes in a matrix of forestry plantations and cattle ranching. Photo by Diego Calderón-Franco.

With rallids, new observations are always exciting because at the end, most of these secretive birds choose when to be seen, not you! as experienced by Myers & Hansen 1980 and Engbring & Engilis Jr. 1988.

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