

# Aves, Stercorariidae, Chilean Skua *Stercorarius chilensis* Bonaparte, 1857: First documented record for the state of Espírito Santo, southeastern Brazil

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**ABSTRACT:** This study presents the first documented record of the Chilean Skua *Stercorarius chilensis* for the state of Espírito Santo in southeast Brazil. A debilitated bird was found during regular beach monitoring in July 2011 on Ubu Beach, Anchieta municipality. It received veterinary treatment and was successfully rehabilitated and released at Guanabara Beach, in the same municipality.

The Chilean skua *Stercorarius chilensis* Bonaparte, 1857 is a large predatory seabird that inhabits the coasts of South America between central Peru and north Argentina, with occasional occurrence along the coasts of Ecuador, Brazil, Uruguay and Antarctica. The limits of nesting are southern Chile and the southernmost point of South America, the Cape Horn in Argentina (Furness 1996; Olsen and Larsson 1997; Shirihai 2008; BirdLife International 2009). Rough estimates suggest that current populations sum about 6,000 mature individuals, but the number of breeding pairs is unknown (Shirihai 2008; BirdLife International 2011). In addition, there is no information about the breeding success of *S. chilensis* (Shirihai 2008).

Silva *et al.* (2002) consider that information on *S. chilensis* distribution in Brazil is scarce. A possible explanation to this paucity of data may be related to the similarity between the various forms in the *Stercorarius* genus. There is a wide range of individual variation and polymorphism (Sick 1997; Vooren 1999), and *S. chilensis* is the form with more distinct plumage in relation to other skuas.

The species differs from other skuas by the cinnamon-brown color pattern of the body contrasting with a uniform blackish-brown cap. The sides of the neck and mantle have risks/stripes lighter than the general color of plumage, and the under wing primary flashes narrower than in other skuas. Adult individuals differ from immatures by the general color of plumage, grey bill with black tip and striped, not barred, wings (Olsen and Larsson 1997; Perlo 2009).

There are few confirmed records of the species for Brazil in the states of Rio Grande do Sul (Vooren and Brusque 1999; Bencke 2001), Santa Catarina (Soto 2001 *apud* Silva *et al.* 2002), Rio de Janeiro (Silva *et al.* 2002) and Bahia (Lima *et al.* 2004). This study aims to report on the first documented record of *S. chilensis* on the coast of Espírito Santo State, southeastern Brazil.

The taxonomic treatment considered here is the

same recognised by the Comitê Brasileiro de Registros Ornitológicos (CBRO 2011), in which skuas and jaegers (*Stercorariidae* Gray, 1870) are merged in the genus *Stercorarius* Brisson, 1760. The following publications can be used to better understand the group taxonomy and identification: Harrison (1983), Higgins and Davies (1996) Sibley (1996), Jiguet (1997), Olsen and Larsson (1997) and Perlo (2009).

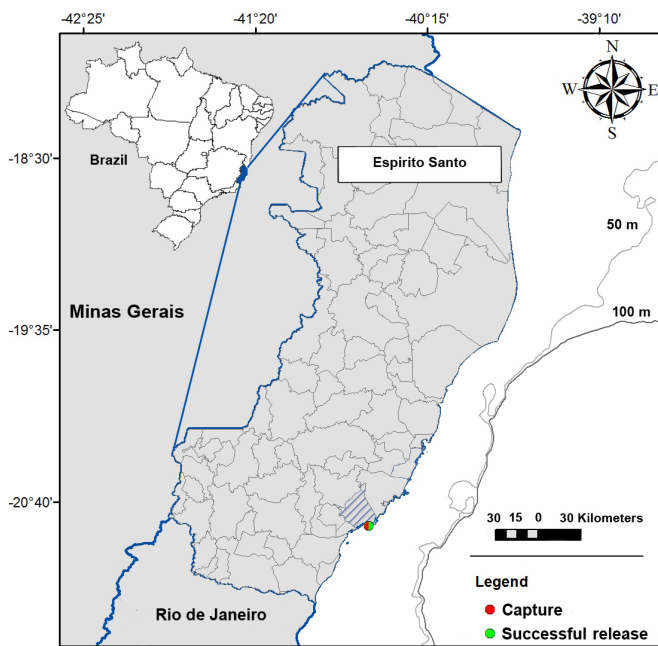
On 04 July 2011, a debilitated *S. chilensis* was rescued at Ubu beach (20°29'21.55" S, 40°21'01.11" W), Anchieta municipality, state of Espírito Santo, southeast Brazil (Figures 1 and 2a), during a regular beach patrol for wrecked seabirds and stranded cetaceans and sea turtles. The bird had a lesion in a finger of the left foot and was sent to the nearest Rehabilitation Center (Figures 2b and 2c). The treatment included amputation of the injured finger, and the use of antibiotics, vermicides and supplements of salt and vitamins. The following measurements of the bird were taken with calipers and rules: total body length (544 mm), bill (57 mm), wing (382 mm), tail (146 mm), tarsus (65 mm) and middle finger (75 mm).

After two weeks of intensive treatment, the skua was tentatively released with no success on 12 July 2011. It returned to the rehabilitation center, remaining there 15 additional days. When considered fully recovered, the bird was set free on 26 July 2011 nearby the site where it was originally found, on Guanabara beach, Anchieta municipality (Figures 1 and 2d). It was banded with a IBAMA-ES 9.04661 ring, licensed by IBAMA-ES.

Following the recommendations by Carlos *et al.* (2010), the voucher documents of this record, photos and video of the release of the bird were deposited in the scientific collection of GEMM-Lagos - Grupo de Estudos de Mamíferos Marinhos da Região dos Lagos/ENSP/FIOCRUZ.

According to Sick (1997) and Vooren (1999), there are regular records of individuals of skuas between May and June in Rio de Janeiro (Guanabara Bay) and southern Brazil. In accordance, the documented records of *S.*

*chilensis* to the Brazilian coast, considering photos and specimens deposited in museums, occurred between May and September (Silva et al. 2002; Olsen and Larsson 1997).



**FIGURE 1.** Localities of capture and release of Chilean Skua *Stercorarius chilensis* in the State of Espírito Santo, southeastern Brazil, in July 2011.

These combined observations suggest that individuals of *S. chilensis*, including adults, use temperate waters as a wintering site. However, Vooren (1999) points that the austral visitor status of *S. chilensis* is inferred only by the records of individuals in winter months. This fact, linked to the absence of migratory data (Shirihai 2008), reinforces the need of more studies involving banded individuals for more solid knowledge about the geographic distribution of *S. chilensis*.

Our record of an adult *S. chilensis* in the state of Espírito Santo reinforces the occasional use of tropical waters of the Brazilian coast as wintering sites. Furthermore, we recommend that the primary bird list of Espírito Santo (Simon 2009) include this species, not previously recorded in this Brazilian state.

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**FIGURE 2.** Details of Chilean skua *S. chilensis* found in the state of Espírito Santo, southeast Brazil: a) bird at Ubu beach, Anchieta municipality, on 4 July 2011; b) side view of the bird showing the main characteristics of the species: general color of plumage, contrasting cap, and stripes on the side of the neck and mantle; c) individual manipulation for veterinary procedures and biometry; d) bird flying after release on 26 July 2011 at Guanabara beach, Anchieta municipality.

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