New record and known-range extension of Undulated Antpitta (*Grallaria squamigera*) in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta of Colombia

NUEVO REGISTRO Y EXTENCIÓN DEL ÁMBITO DE DISTRIBUCIÓN DEL TORORO ONDULADO (*GRALLARIA SQUAMIGERA*) EN LA SIERRA NEVADA DE SANTA MARTA EN COLOMBIA

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Abstract
We report and provide photographic evidence for the first known, documented record of an Undulated Antpitta (*Grallaria squamigera*) in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta of northern Colombia. This observation significantly extends the known range of the Undulated Antpitta in Colombia and suggests that this secretive species may have been overlooked by the many visitors to this region.

***Keywords**:* Grallariidae, montane forest, secretive species, northern South America.

Resumen
Reportamos y proveemos evidencia fotográfica del primer registro documentado del Tororoi Ondulado (*Grallaria squamigera*) en la Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta en el norte de Colombia. Este registro extiende significativamente el ámbito de distribución de esta grallaria en Colombia y sugiere que esta especie, de hábitos inconspicuos, ha pasado desapercibida por muchos observadores de aves y ornitólogos que han visitado esta región.

Palabras clave: bosques montanos, especie inconspicua, Grallariidae, norte de Suramérica.

The Undulated Antpitta (*Grallaria squamigera*) is a secretive, ground-dwelling member of the Grallariidae family that inhabits the floor of humid and wet montane forest, *Polylepis* woodland, *Chusquea* bamboo and *Neurolepis* cane, and second growth in the Andes of northwestern South America (western Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia) (Krabbe & Schulenberg 2003, Restall *et al*. 2006, Hilty & Brown 1986). This relatively large and distinctive antpitta is characterized by a slaty crown and nape, dark back, white throat, black malar stripe, and blackish brown scaling on underparts that vary in color from light or orange buff to deep ochraceous (Krabbe & Schulenberg 2003). Superficially similar, but larger related species include the Great Antpitta (*Grallaria excelsa*) and the Giant Antpitta (*Grallaria gigantea*).

In Colombia, the Undulated Antpitta occurs locally, but is restricted to the Andes. Based on its current documented distribution, it ranges as far north in the western Andes as Páramo de Frontino in Antioquia (Hilty & Brown 1986). It also occurs in the Central Andes in the departments of Tolima, Valle del Cauca, and Cauca, and in the Eastern Andes as far south as Páramo de Choachí (latitude of Bogotá, Hilty & Brown 1986). The most northerly sightings of Undulated Antpitta recorded on eBird occur just north of Medellín (approximately 570 km straight-line distance southwest of the El Dorado Reserve in Colombia's Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta) and east of Bucaramanga, and in Venezuela, near San Crístobal and Mérida (both approximately 430 km southeast of the El Dorado Reserve). To our knowledge, the Undulated Antpitta has not been recorded in the northern part of the Central Andes. Nor has it been documented in the Serranía de Perijá (northern Eastern Andes) where at least four antpitta species occur (See López-O *et al*. 2014). Finally, the Undulated Antpitta has not been documented in the isolated but heavily visited Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, a region known for its avian endemism (Todd & Carriker 1922, Strewe & Navarro 2003, 2004).

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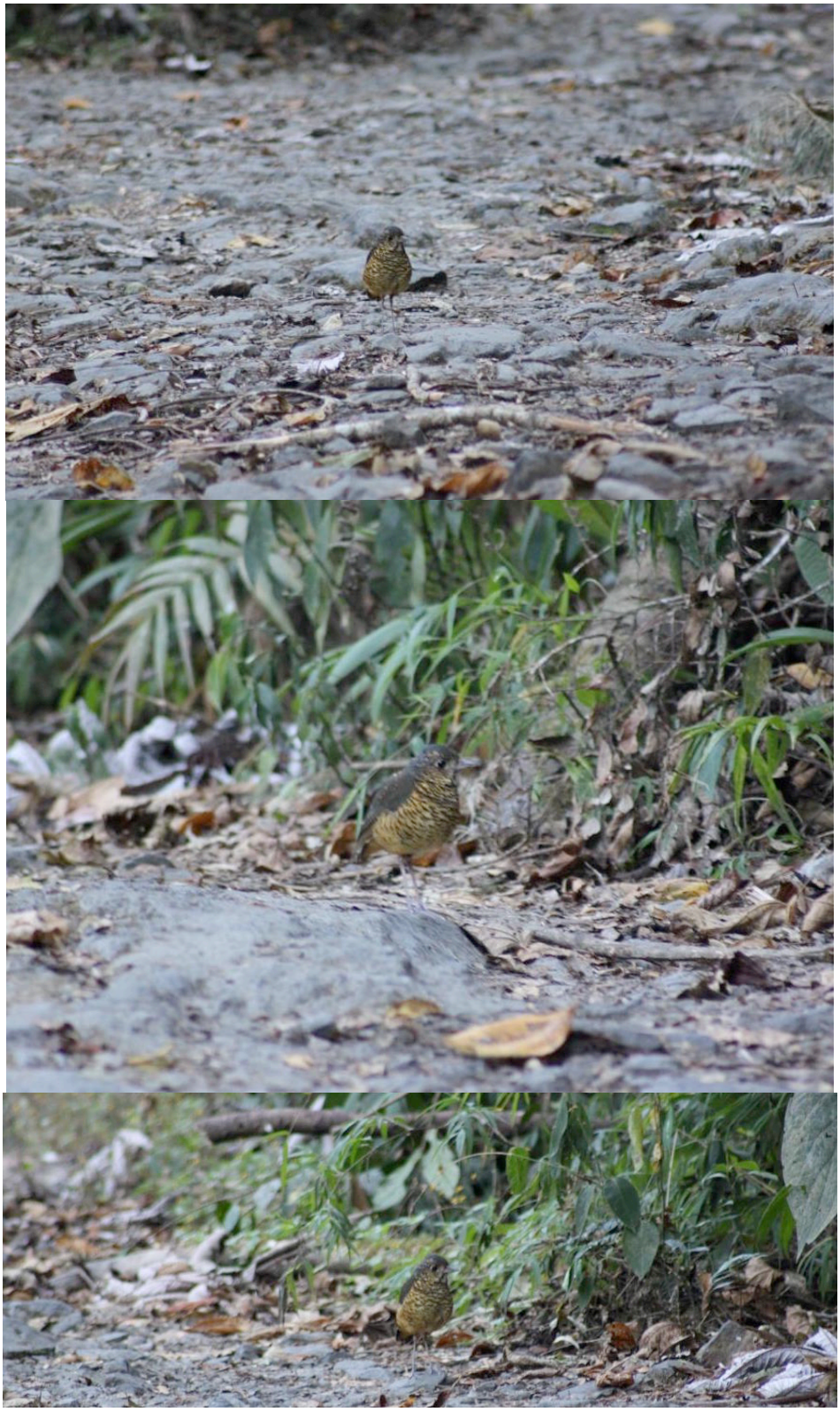

Figure 1. A single individual of the Undulated Antpitta (*Grallaria squamigera*) recorded at the San Lorenzo road ~2000 m.a.s.l (Photo: C. V. Olson).

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On March 7, 2015, we observed an Undulated Antpitta for approximately five minutes in the El Dorado Reserve in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta (Fig. 1). We had walked approximately 1 km up the road from the El Dorado Lodge when we spotted the classic long-legged, upright stance of an antpitta by the road edge approximately 30 m ahead of us at around 06:45 hours. It hopped down the dirt road toward us, crossing the road as it moved closer to us. We had excellent views in good light with 10 x 50 binoculars (Leica, Swarovski) and took several photographs. We had clear views of the dark scaling on its yellowish front, its white throat and dark malar stripes, its grayish cap and brown back. Over a period of several minutes, the antpitta came within approximately 6-7 m of us. It appeared to want to move past us and hopped off the road into the ditch, disappearing from view for a moment. CVO moved to the road edge where the bird had gone out of view and the antpitta briefly reappeared within 2-3 m of him before going out of sight into the undergrowth. We did not hear the Undulated Antpitta vocalize, nor did we have a recording or a means of initiating playback.

Although the range maps in our field guides did not indicate that Undulated Antpitta was present in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, the species is distinctive and readily identifiable. Possible species with which it might be confused include the Giant Antpitta and the Great Antpitta. Both species are noticeably larger than the Undulated Antpitta. The Giant Antpitta has cinnamon buff, rather than yellowish underparts, no white throat, and no malar stripe. The similarly sized Great Antpitta, which more closely resembles the Undulated Antpitta, lacks a malar stripe, though it does have a white throat. The Great Antpitta also has a mostly brown crown with a slaty hindcrown, in contrast to our bird's solid slate crown. These distinctive differences, coupled with our bird's smaller size, supported our identification of Undulated Antpitta. The Giant Antpitta is only known in Colombia from the southwestern portion of the country, whereas the Great Antpitta is known to occur in the Venezuelan Andes and the Perijá Mountains (more exactly to the east slope, see López-O. *et al*. 2014) of western Venezuela. Its range may extend into adjacent Colombia, particularly on the Colombian side of the Perijá range (Hilty & Brown 1986, Krabbe & Schulenberg 2003, Nicholas Bayly pers. comm.), so its occurrence in the nearby Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta is a possibility. Great Antpitta is thought to occur at lower elevations (1700-2300 m.a.s.l) than Undulated Antpitta, which mostly occurs between 2300-3800 m.a.s.l (Hilty & Brown 1986, Restall *et al*. 2006). Nevertheless, our Undulated Antpitta sighting occurred at approximately 2000 m.a.s.l.

Given the poor flying abilities of antpittas and known dispersal barriers to forest understory birds formed by arid valleys, large rivers, and unsuitable habitat (Krabbe and Schulenberg 2003, Krabbe 2008, Moore *et al*. 2008), it seems unlikely that our Undulated Antpitta was an accidental vagrant. It appears more likely that this is a resident species that has been overlooked in the El Dorado area. If this is indeed the case, the Undulated Antpitta has been overlooked in this region for more than a century (Todd & Carriker 1922, Hilty & Brown 1986, Strewe & Navarro 2003, 2004). Alternatively, our sighting may represent a possible range expansion of the Undulated Antpitta from the Perijá Mountains, where bird surveys have been scarce and the occurrence of this species may still be possible. Since the narrow elevational distribution of antpittas, coupled with their inferior flight capabilities, render this group of birds prone to speciation (Krabbe & Schulenberg 2003), and given the high level of endemism exhibited by birds in the isolated Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, further investigation of the Undulated Antpitta's occurrence and possible uniqueness in this range is warranted.

Acknowledgements

We thank Nicholas Bayly, Migratory Species Manager for SELVA, for verifying our sighting and for encouraging us to document our observation. Jorge E. Avendaño, Diego Calderón and Andrés M. Cuervo commented on the note.

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