

## First Bolivian record of Laughing Gull *Leucophaeus atricilla*, and two noteworthy records of *Fulica coots* from Laguna Guapilo, dpto. Santa Cruz

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Received 30 November 2018; final revision accepted 29 April 2019

Cotinga 41 (2019): 98–100

published online 21 June 2019

El 28 de enero de 2018, durante una visita a laguna Guapilo, al este de Santa Cruz de la Sierra, depto. Santa Cruz, Bolivia, observamos una Gaviota Reidora *Leucophaeus atricilla*, el primer registro en Bolivia. Adicionalmente, observamos comportamiento indicativo de anidación de la Gallareta Chica *Fulica leucoptera*, una especie que se consideraba como visitante no reproductiva en Bolivia, así como una Gallareta Andina *Fulica ardesiaca*, el primer registro para el depto. Santa Cruz. La reproducción de *F. leucoptera* en la laguna Guapilo fue confirmada el 5 de mayo de 2018 mediante la fotografía de un polluelo.

On 28 January 2018, MLB, AEH, NLH-H and SKH observed several notable birds at Laguna Guapilo (17°46'50"S 63°05'48"W), a semi-urban park 8.9 km east of Santa Cruz city centre, dpto. Santa Cruz, Bolivia. The habitat is dominated by a c.35-ha lagoon, with dense mats of reeds and water hyacinth *Eichhornia crassipes* at the edges, and short trees characteristic of the Chiquitano biome.

### Laughing Gull *Leucophaeus atricilla*

We first observed an immature gull resting on the shoreline at the north edge of the lagoon around 09h00 (Fig. 1A). Only two gull species have been reported in Bolivia<sup>5</sup>: the resident Andean Gull *Chroicocephalus serranus* and vagrant Franklin's Gull *Leucophaeus pipixcan* for which only a handful of records exist. We identified the individual as a Laughing Gull *L. atricilla*, differing from a similarly aged *L. pipixcan* by its relatively longer, thinner bill, less contrasting dark hood, more uniform ash-grey body plumage, and less distinct eye crescents. *Chroicocephalus serranus* is smaller with a thin, almost tern-like bill, and much white in the primaries in flight; thus, we also eliminated this species.

We aged the bird during the observation based on the following combination of characters: uniformly dark primaries, without the white apical spots typical of older birds; a dark tail-band; extensive ash-grey neck and breast; and worn, brownish wing-coverts. These features are typical of an advanced first-year *L. atricilla* in formative plumage<sup>6,14</sup>. Moulting was evident in the wing-coverts, with the replaced, darker grey median secondary-coverts contrasting with the browner, unreplaced juvenile greater, lesser and primary-coverts (Figs. 1B–C). The bird appeared to be healthy, being alert and able to fly strongly (Fig. 1B–C).

*L. atricilla* has not previously been reported in Bolivia<sup>5</sup>. However, there are a number of records from interior South America, including one from southern Paraguay<sup>2</sup> and several inland occurrences in Ecuador (e.g., ML100965921, ML102697931), dptos. Cusco (ML100964311), Madre de Dios<sup>13</sup> and Loreto<sup>10</sup>, Peru, as well as records from Brazil, in Amazonas, Ceará, Rio de Janeiro, Pará and São Paulo states<sup>1,3,11</sup>. Additionally, the species is known to wander widely, with c.300 records from Western Europe (the overwhelming majority in Britain, Ireland and Spain), a few from north-west



Figure 1. Laughing Gull *Leucophaeus atricilla*, Laguna Guapilo, dpto. Santa Cruz, Bolivia, January 2018 (A: Matthew L. Brady), (B–C: Anna E. Hiller)



Figure 2A. White-winged Coot *Fulica leucoptera*, Laguna Guapilo, dpto. Santa Cruz, Bolivia, January 2018 (Anna E. Hiller). B. White-winged Coot *Fulica leucoptera* with chick, May 2018 (Damián I. Rumiz). C. Slate-coloured Coot *Fulica ardesiaca*, January 2018 (Matthew L. Brady)

and West Africa (Morocco, Mauritania, Senegal and Gambia) and many Pacific islands, including Japan, Fiji, Samoa, Hawaii, the Pitcairn Islands, and the Philippines<sup>1,12</sup>. Other medium-sized gulls that could potentially occur in Bolivia include Grey-hooded *C. cirrocephalus* and Brown-hooded Gulls *C. maculipennis*. Both differ in immature plumage from *L. atricilla* in being smaller and paler in coloration, with dramatically different wing patterns in flight, and by having reddish-orange bare parts. These species have been reported in northern Argentina (e.g., ML21353531, ML93434461) and Paraguay<sup>2</sup>, and should be looked for on shallow lakes in southern Bolivia.

#### White-winged Coot *Fulica leucoptera*

Around 10h30, from a boardwalk over the wetland in the centre of the park, we used a 30× telescope to scan the edge of the cattails and floating mats of vegetation. We immediately noticed c.30 White-winged Coots *Fulica leucoptera* (Fig. 2A). The species is currently considered an austral migrant in Bolivia<sup>3</sup>, and we did not anticipate seeing it in January (the austral summer), when this coot would be expected to be in the breeding range in Argentina and Chile<sup>16</sup>. We noticed one individual carrying a small stick in its bill for c.3 minutes before it disappeared into the reeds in the characteristic manner of a bird carrying nesting material. Subsequently, breeding was confirmed by DIR, who visited Laguna Guapilo on 5 May 2018, and photographed a *F. leucoptera* chick on the same pond (Fig. 2B). *F. leucoptera* was first documented at Laguna Guapilo in the breeding season on 4 February 2017 by DIR (ML47603361); however, our observations represent the first confirmed breeding record in Bolivia. Other seasonally unusual records of *F. leucoptera* north of its typical breeding range are from the northern Bolivian Andes (ML47780761), northernmost Chile (e.g. ML34236961) and southern Peru (e.g. ML83874121), where a few individuals have been noted at coastal lagoons. *F. leucoptera* might be

expanding the northern edge of its breeding range, and additional unseasonal records from Peru, Bolivia and northern Chile can be expected.

#### Slate-coloured Coot *Fulica ardesiaca*

At c.11h00 on 28 January 2018, amongst the *F. leucoptera*, we noticed an unusual coot with a dark red frontal shield and yellow bill, quite unlike the yellow frontal shield and white bill of *F. leucoptera*. Using a telescope, we determined that it was a Slate-coloured Coot *F. ardesiaca*, the first record for dpto. Santa Cruz. Additional identification criteria (Fig. 2C) included the all-dark body plumage lacking any white in the wings or tail, and larger size than *F. leucoptera* and Common Gallinules *Gallinula galeata*, which were common at the lake. In Bolivia, *F. ardesiaca* was previously known only from the high Andes in dptos. La Paz, Cochabamba, Oruro, Potosí and Tarija<sup>5</sup>. Our observation at 400 m also represents a significant extension to the lower limit of the species' elevational range in the country; it has previously been reported at 2,550–4,700 m in Bolivia<sup>4,5</sup>. The species is regular at sea level elsewhere in its range<sup>15</sup>. This bird was probably a vagrant; Laguna Guapilo is c.260 km from the nearest record in Cochabamba<sup>5</sup>, and we observed just one individual.

#### Importance of Neotropical wetland surveys

Our observations, based on relatively little effort (four observers over <3 hours), demonstrate the high potential for ornithological discovery in Bolivia. In particular, we recommend future surveys of wetland ecosystems because these communities simultaneously represent a particularly poorly understood Neotropical avifauna<sup>7</sup>, ripe for discovery of notable distributional records<sup>8,9</sup> due to the 'oasis' factor in drier habitats like Chiquitano forest, Chaco woodland and agricultural landscapes of eastern Santa Cruz, and a habitat type that is especially vulnerable to anthropogenic pressures such as land conversion and water extraction<sup>7</sup>.

Lastly, our observations highlight the importance of urban wetland parks for conservation, especially of migratory waterbirds.

### Acknowledgements

We thank J. V. Remsen, Dan Lane and Oscar Johnson for providing feedback on early drafts of this manuscript. Funds for M. L. Brady and A. E. Hiller's work were provided by the Ted Parker Memorial Fund, Louisiana State University Museum of Natural Science. We also thank Ryan Terrill, Miguel Aponte Justiniano, Kathia Rivero, and the Museo de Historia Natural Noel Kempff Mercado for facilitating our work in Bolivia. The following photographs from the Macaulay Library at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology were referenced: ML100965921, ML102697931, ML100964311, ML21353531, ML93434461, ML47603361, ML47780761, ML34236961, ML83874121.

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