

Known from an extremely small area in the semi-arid mountains of north-western Bolivia, this furnariid is reliant on the continued survival of small amounts of natural and man-managed habitat.

DISTRIBUTION Berlepsch's Canastero (see Remarks 1) is only known from the vicinity of Nevado Illampu, in the montane basin of the upper Mapiri valley, La Paz department, north-western Bolivia. The few known localities (coordinates from Paynter *et al.* 1975: see Remarks 2) are as follows: Tacacoma (15°35'S 68°43'W), 20 km north of Sorata, where a bird was taken at 3,495 m in July 1938 (Fjeldså and Krabbe 1989); Chilcani (c.15°44'S 68°40'W), in the río San Cristóbal valley, north-west of Sorata, where a bird was collected at 3,700 m in July 1938 (Fjeldså and Krabbe 1989; also one bird in AMNH); Sorata (15°47'S 68°40'W), where two birds were taken at 2,700 m in July and August 1938 (Fjeldså and Krabbe 1989), with birds recorded on the slopes outside the village in December 1991 (J. Fjeldså *in litt.* 1992); Cotaña (15°49'S 68°37'W), near Sorata, where 10 birds were taken at 3,600 m in July-August 1938 (Fjeldså and Krabbe 1989; also two specimens in AMNH and FMNH); and Monte Illampu (= Nevado Illampu at 15°50'S 68°34'W), on the Tacamara side of which a bird was taken at 3,500 m in July 1938 (Fjeldså and Krabbe 1989).

POPULATION All known specimens of this species originate from a minute area within La Paz department, the majority (15) coming from between Chilcani and Cotaña (see Distribution). During December 1991, the bird was readily found on the slopes just outside the village of Sorata: two nests were found and two birds mist-netted but, although no estimate of numbers was made, the limited extent of suitable habitat in this montane basin suggests that the total population may be just a few hundred pairs (J. Fjeldså *in litt.* 1992).

ECOLOGY Berlepsch's Canastero has only been recorded between 2,600 and 3,700 m on the semi-arid slopes of Nevado Illampu (Fjeldså and Krabbe 1989, 1990). The localities at which specimens were taken in 1938 were variously described as: hilly puna grassland; a rocky area with thorny woodland along a river; a barren stony area with grassy vegetation, some thorny scrub and cultivated fields of maize and potatoes; and an area with some scrub, but widely planted with fig-cactus, mulberry and eucalyptus trees (Fjeldså and Krabbe 1989). Near Sorata, the habitat in December 1991 was noted to be completely converted, with fields, large areas of fallow, shrubs and low scrub, scattered *Eucalyptus* trees and some soil erosion (J. Fjeldså *in litt.* 1992). Birds were seen singly or in pairs, skulking in the hedges separating fields, but at times out in the open, although always near scrub (J. Fjeldså *in litt.* 1992). The two nests found were highly visible, 6-8 m up in *Eucalyptus* trees between fields, c.500 m apart (J. Fjeldså *in litt.* 1992). Two (presumably active) nests were found at the end of December when song activity was generally low, although immature birds have been recorded in July and August (Fjeldså and Krabbe 1990, J. Fjeldså *in litt.* 1992).

THREATS This bird appears to survive well in highly modified habitats (see Ecology), and it is remarkable that nests have been found high up in *Eucalyptus* trees, since the Creamy-breasted Canastero *Asthenes dorbignyi* nests in dense thorn scrub, columnar cacti and *Polylepis* trees (varying between the populations) (J. Fjeldså *in litt.* 1992; also Fjeldså and Krabbe 1990). However, the bird must be regarded as at risk owing to its minute range in one small montane basin, its restricted altitudinal distribution, and the small amount of available vegetation: this semi-arid basin is isolated by mountain slopes with humid yungas scrub and by high cordilleras (J. Fjeldså *in litt.* 1992).

MEASURES TAKEN None is known.

MEASURES PROPOSED Fieldwork is urgently needed to obtain a more detailed assessment of this bird's ecological requirements and population, although its taxonomic status needs to be clarified before any such initiatives are taken (see Remarks 1). Obviously, its long-term survival is dependent on the agricultural practices of the people farming in this area: the importance of hedges, tall trees and scrub along watercourses in preventing soil erosion should be stressed, and local people encouraged to maintain such habitat, or even plant more.

REMARKS (1) Berlepsch's Canastero was considered a full species in Fjeldså and Krabbe (1990) and Sibley and Monroe (1990), and indeed shows a unique combination of “character states”; however, any character may be found in one population or another within the *A. dorbignyi* complex (Fjeldså and Krabbe 1990), which may indicate that *berlepschi* is a relict population from an early phase of dispersal (J. Fjeldså *in litt.* 1992). Species rank is probably justified, although doubts are caused by some tendencies towards *berlepschi* in two specimens of *A. (dorbignyi) arequipae* from near Putina in the northern end of the Lake Titicaca basin, and one from near Río Mauri on the altiplano of western La Paz (J. Fjeldså *in litt.* 1992). A detailed morphological analysis and DNA study is in progress (J. Fjeldså *in litt.* 1992), and should clarify the taxonomy of this complex or superspecies. (2) The type-locality of this bird is given as “Chicani”, on the north slope of Cordillera Real (Cory and Hellmayr 1923). Chicani is situated at 16°28'S 68°04'W (in a very humid climate: J. Fjeldså *in litt.* 1992), some distance further south than Nevado Illampu and the upper Mapiri valley (see Distribution). It seems probable, therefore, that Chicani is a typographical error for Chilcani, whence come a number of specimens (see Distribution).