RUFOUS-FACED CRAKE *Laterallus xenopterus*  

This evidently highly secretive marsh-dwelling bird has been recorded in two areas of Paraguay and one in central Brazil, and its status and needs remain essentially unknown.

**DISTRIBUTION** The Rufous-faced Crake is known from just three widely separated areas, two in Paraguay and one, over 1,200 km to the north-east, in Brazil.

**Paraguay** The type-specimen was collected at Horqueta (see Remarks 1), 40 km east of the rio Paraguay in Concepción department, in November 1933 (Conover 1934). Two specimens were collected 6.3 km north-east (by road) of Curuguaty (24°31’S 55°42’W in Paynter 1989), Caninéyú department, in July 1976 and July 1979, and two were collected 13.3 km north-east (by road) of Curuguaty in August 1978 and July 1979 (Myers and Hansen 1980). It has been suggested that the species may also be found in the wetlands of Concepción (J. Escobar *in litt.* 1991; see also Remarks 2).

**Brazil** A specimen was taken in Brasília National Park, Federal District, in July 1978 (Sick 1979d, Myers and Hansen 1980), and there have been subsequent field observations from this area and the IBGE Ecological Reserve, also adjacent to Brasília (Negret and Teixeira 1984, D. M. Teixeira *in litt.* 1987). One was seen in the Brasília Zoological Garden area in March 1989 (J. F. Pacheco verbally 1992). Presumably the species occurs in wetlands southwards towards Paraguay.

**POPULATION** Numbers are not known. The species is doubtless commoner than suggested by the number of records, since the areas in question are poorly studied, and *Laterallus* rails are secretive birds (Myers and Hansen 1980, Storer 1981, D. M. Teixeira *in litt.* 1987). In the Federal District the species has been judged “relatively frequent” (Negret and Teixeira 1984).

**ECOLOGY** The Brazilian specimen was captured in a snap-trap (baited with peanut butter, cracked corn, and banana) set in perennial bunch-grass growing in a marsh, in water 3-4 cm deep; the average height of the grass, which completely covered the ground, was 53 cm; this marsh was being used extensively by small mammals, especially *Oxymycterus roberti*, *Zygodontomys lasiurus* and *Cavia fulgida* (Myers and Hansen 1980); was bordered by gallery forest on one side and cerrado on the other (see below), and in December 1978 was dry (Sick 1979d). Paraguayan specimens entered traps (baited with peanut butter and rolled oats) set near the edge of a marsh in coarse, grass-like vegetation approximately 1.5-2 m in height, the marsh itself being mostly covered by water 2-3 cm deep or else, in moist places without standing water, by dense bunch-grass-like vegetation no more than 30 cm in height, with plants of the genus *Xyris* and several other monocotyledons present; the vegetation formed a dense mat difficult for a large animal to enter, but penetrated by numerous small channels between clumps of grass in which Ash-throated Crake *Porzana albicollis*, Red-and-white Crake *Laterallus leucopyrrhus* and the mammals *Oxymycterus delator*, *Akodon cursor* and *Lutreolina crassicauda* were also captured (Myers and Hansen 1980; see also Storer 1981). Similar marshes (cañadones or wet campos) commonly form in eastern Paraguay and adjacent parts of Brazil; they range from a few to several hundred metres in width and may form a zone on gently sloping valley sides between upland cerrado and riparian forests (Myers and Hansen 1980). The gonads of the Paraguayan specimens taken in July and August were small (Myers and Hansen 1980). The paucity of records of this species indicates that it must be extremely secretive in its behaviour.

**THREATS** None is known in Paraguay. Wet campos are under threat in central Brazil from drainage and the drying effects of adjacent eucalyptus cultivation, the latter phenomenon being witnessed in one part of Brasília National Park; burning may also affect this vegetation, but its impact is not known (R. B. Cavalcanti *in litt.* 1986), although it is considered a potential threat (Negret and Teixeira 1984). A fuller review of the destruction of primary grasslands in central Brazil is in Threats under Lesser Nothura *Nothura minor*.
**MEASURES TAKEN** None is known, except that the species occurs in Brasilia National Park and the IBGE Ecological Reserve, where it shares its habitat with the near-threatened Ocellated Crake *Micropygia schomburgki* (Negret and Teixeira 1984).

**MEASURES PROPOSED** Work is needed at the two adjacent 1970s sites in Paraguay to relocate the species and record its voice, so that further surveys based on knowledge of calls and the use of taped playback can better define its range and assess its status more accurately. The voice might also be taped in Brasilia, and used to determine the range of the species in the Federal District and beyond.

**REMARKS** (1) What is presumably intended to denote the type-locality on the distribution map in Ripley (1977) actually indicates somewhere in Brazil (Storer 1981). (2) Podtiaguin (1941-1945) listed Lima (San Pedro department) and Pedro Juan Caballero (Amambay) as localities, indicating “C. Schultz” as the collector at the first site and the Paraguay National History Museum as the source of the second; neither of these has received further substantiation.