

GREY-BREASTED FLYCATCHER *Lathrotriccus griseipectus* V/R¹⁰

This flycatcher is confined to the viny understorey of tropical deciduous, semi-deciduous and moist forest from sea level to 1,750 m in south-west Ecuador and northern Peru. It has been reported to be common at only two localities, being otherwise uncommon or rare; it is threatened by habitat destruction.

DISTRIBUTION The Grey-breasted Flycatcher (see Remarks 1) is found in the coastal range and western lowlands and on the Pacific slope of the Andes from Esmeraldas and Pichincha provinces, Ecuador, south to at least the region west of Abra de Porculla, Lambayeque department, Peru, also occurring east of the Peruvian Andes in northern Cajamarca department, where it has been found on the left bank of the middle río Marañón.

Ecuador Localities (coordinates and altitudes in parentheses, unless otherwise stated, from Paynter and Traylor 1977) are as follows: (*Esmeraldas*) río Verde, at 1°05'N 79°30'W, specimen collected in July 1951 (Norton *et al.* 1972: see Ecology); (*Pichincha*) "Mindó, 1,830 m", situated on the Pacific slope at 0°02'S 78°48'W (specimen in BMNH collected in January 1914); Río Palenque reserve, 200 m, at c.0°30'S 79°30'W, several recent sightings (P. Greenfield *in litt.* 1989); (*Manabí*) deciduous forest in hills near the coast just south of río Cuaque, c.0°02'S 80°04'W (heard in January 1991: TAP); Cordillera de Balzar (see Remarks 2), at 0°55'S 79°55'W (coordinates from OG 1957b) (specimen in BMNH collected March 1880); Machalilla National Park, several seen in July 1978 (R. S. Ridgely *in litt.* 1989); (*Los Ríos*) Jauneche reserve, 50-70 m, at 1°10'S 79°30'W, many sightings in July, but also records in September and October 1991 (Williams and Tobias 1991, TAP); Babahoyo (5 m), at 1°49'S 79°31'W (Sclater 1888: two specimens in BMNH taken in August 1859); (*Guayas*) Cerro Blanco reserve, at c.2°09'S 80°03'W (sightings in January 1991: TAP, also R. Jones *in litt.* undated); Bucay (300 m), at 2°10'S 79°06'W, on the border of Guayas and Chimborazo provinces (Chapman 1926); Puente de Chimbo (250-925 m), at 2°10'S 79°10'W, on the border of Guayas and Chimborazo provinces (von Berlepsch and Taczanowski 1883, Chapman 1926: two specimens in AMNH taken in November 1882 and August 1922); Naranjito (30 m), at 2°13'S 79°29'W (Chapman 1926: specimen in AMNH taken in May 1913); Isla Puná (Lawrence 1870; type-specimen in USNM); (*Cañar*) Manta Real, 300-600 m, at c.2°30'S 79°17'W, recently (TAP, R. S. Ridgely *in litt.* 1991: see Ecology); (*Azuay*) San Miguel de Azuay, 2°48'S 79°30'W (one seen in January 1992: M. Whittingham and G. J. Morales *in litt.* 1992, coordinates from B. J. Best *in litt.* 1992); (*El Oro*) 9 km west of Piñas (near Buenaventura), 900-950 m, at 3°40'S 79°44'W (specimen in MECN collected in September 1990; one seen in September 1991: Williams and Tobias 1991); Puyango, 275 m, at c.3°52'S 80°05'W, near the border with Loja (Chapman 1926: specimen in AMNH taken in July 1919); (*Loja*) La Puente, 760 m, at c.3°57'S 80°05'W (coordinates read from IGM 1982) (Chapman 1926: specimen in AMNH taken in October 1921); Guainche, 975 m, at c.4°02'S 80°00'W (coordinates read from IGM 1982) (Chapman 1926); Milagros, 670 m, at 4°07'S 80°07'W (Chapman 1926); Paletillas, 470 m, at 4°11'S 80°17'W (Chapman 1926); 4 km south-west of Sabanilla, 500 m, at 4°13'S 80°10'W (specimens in MECN and WFVZ collected in March 1991); Quebrada Suquinda, 1,750 m, near Sozoranga, at 4°18'S 79°51'W (one sighted February 1991: Best 1992); Quebrada Hueco Hondo, 600-1,100 m, Tambo Negro, near Sabiango, at 4°23'S 79°51'W (4-5 birds sighted February and March 1991: Best 1992).

Peru Localities (coordinates from Stephens and Traylor 1983) are restricted to the north-west of the country as follows: (*Tumbes*) El Caucho (450 m), at c.3°50'S 80°16'W (sighting in late July 1988: Parker *et al.* 1989); Campo Verde and nearby Cotrina, 600-750 m, at c.3°51'S 80°12'W (sightings in March 1986 and late July 1988: M. Kessler *in litt.* 1988, Parker *et al.* 1989); (*Piura*) El Angolo, 700 m, on Cerros de Amotape, at c.4°28'S 80°48'W (two specimens in LSUMZ taken in November 1972); Palambra, at 5°23'S 79°37'W, 1922 (Chapman 1926: specimen in AMNH which, like others collected there by H. Watkins, is labelled from between 1,190 and 1,980 m); (*Lambayeque*) Ñaupé, c.150 m, at 5°36'S 79°54'W (sighting in September 1983: NK); Porculla (south-west of the pass: NK), 1,065 m, near the border with Piura, the pass being at 5°51'S 79°31'W (two specimens in MCZ taken in 1933, with sightings nearby in 1979: Meyer de Schauensee 1966, NK); and, east of the Andes (*Cajamarca*), below San José de Lourdes, c.800 m, and 2 km north of San José de Lourdes, 830 m, on the left bank of río Chinchipe, at c.5°03-04'S

78°54'W (two specimens in FMNH and LSUMZ taken in June 1975 and August 1976); and 9 km south of Jaen, 900 m, at 5°42'S 78°47'W (specimen in LSUMZ taken in July 1968).

POPULATION Parker *et al.* (1982) considered this species to be “uncommon” in Peru, and only at two localities has it been reported to be “very common”: 2 km north of San José de Lourdes, above the río Chinchipe, (FMNH label data) and at Jauneche reserve, Ecuador (TAP). At this latter site, a c.130 ha reserve with c.25 ha of prime habitat for this species, TAP found a population of c.2 pairs per hectare and estimated that more than 100 individuals were present in July 1991: however, in early September and again in October 1991, several birds and one bird (respectively) were recorded, suggesting seasonality at this site (Williams and Tobias 1991, R. Williams *in litt.* 1992: see below). In moist forest at 500-700 m on Cerro San Sebastián smaller numbers were found in an area of comparable size, but some large tracts of suitable habitat occur on adjacent ridges (TAP). The moist forest habitat in the Tumbes National Forest, Peru, and at other prime sites in Ecuador (e.g. the río Cuaque drainage in Manabí) has not been sufficiently surveyed to determine population densities of this and other semi-deciduous/moist forest endemics.

ECOLOGY The Grey-breasted Flycatcher is apparently most numerous in evergreen moist forest, which is characterized by an abundance and diversity of woody vines that fill much of the understorey and middle storey (TAP; see Dodson *et al.* 1985 for a description of this habitat at Jauneche). It also occurs, at least seasonally, in largely deciduous forests where vines form dense tangles, but it also seems to be resident in small numbers in a narrow band of wet forest along the lower slopes of the Andes in south-west Ecuador, as at Manta Real in Cañar (TAP, R. S. Ridgely *in litt.* 1991). Records range from sea level to 1,750 m, rarely higher (see Distribution), but the bird appears to be most numerous below 700 m (TAP). The apparently rapid decline in numbers at Jauneche reserve between July and October 1991 (see above) further suggests strong seasonal movements.

The flycatcher is found singly or in pairs that stay in shaded tangles of vines and branches in the understorey and at mid-heights, but is regularly noted at 3-8 m, or up into the lower canopy of very tall forest (Best 1992, NK, TAP; also label data on specimens in FMNH, LSUMZ and MECN). One observed for at least 20 minutes employed a variety of foraging manoeuvres as it perched 3-5 m above ground on slender vines and branches of small, partially sunlit trees in forest about 20 m tall; it made short aerial sallies of 15-35 cm into a sunlit gap, and 5-20 cm sallies to leaves, stems and branches within a small area of 5 m² (Parker *et al.* 1989). Almost exactly the same behaviour was observed in a pair at Machalilla National Park (R. S. Ridgely *in litt.* 1989). At Jauneche in July (when several males were singing) it was most numerous 2-10 m up in low, 10-15 m tall, viny forest, especially in shady openings under the canopy of vine-covered, medium to small trees, but it also occurred as high as 25 m up in openings in 40 m tall ridge-top forest; it was very active, constantly darting to vines, branches and trunks, occasionally to foliage and air, sallies often as long as 1.5 m forward or down; prey was generally very small, but included two small moths, a small arthropod and a beetle (TAP). Stomachs of two specimens in MECN held insects in one and insects and small bits of bark in the other.

Most recent records (during all seasons) are of vocal individuals or pairs exhibiting territorial behaviour (TAP). One bird was singing near Piñas in September (but had small testes) (NK), as were individuals at Manta Real in July (TAP), at Campo Verde, Peru, in March (M. Kessler *in litt.* 1988), and at Tambo Negro in February (Best 1992). Inactive gonads were found in one bird in late March, five birds in June, one in July, one in August, one in September, one in October and two in November, while two from July were reported to have them slightly enlarged (specimens in AMNH, FMNH, LSUMZ and MECN). An immature was collected in March (specimen in BMNH). Most (perhaps all) bird species in this region probably breed during the wet season (Marchant 1958), which is from January to May (Brown 1941).

THREATS Ecuadorian moist forest is now confined to a few small patches, the Jauneche reserve being perhaps the largest (at 130 ha) surviving below 500 m (TAP). A few larger islands of moist forest persist in the coastal cordillera of Manabí, as at 500-700 m in Machalilla National Park (which is, however, ineffectively protected: TAP), and even as far north as Cerro Mútiles near Esmeraldas city, but all remnants of this habitat are being eroded away or otherwise degraded (TAP, A. Gentry verbally 1991).

Most of the old specimens of Grey-breasted Flycatcher were collected in forests that no longer exist (TAP). Forests that are floristically like moist forests survive in a narrow transitional zone between deciduous forest and cloud-forest on the lower slopes of the Andes in Piura and Lambayeque, Peru, but these too are gravely threatened by a gradually increasing human population and by unwise land-use practices (TAP). Much of the semi-deciduous forest habitat around Palambla in Piura was destroyed earlier this century, and felling of similar habitat around San José de Lourdes in the middle Marañón drainage of Cajamarca was proceeding rapidly in 1984 (NK).

MEASURES TAKEN In Ecuador, this species occurs in the Río Palenque reserve, Machalilla National Park, Cerro Blanco reserve, and Jauneche reserve; it also inhabits the Tumbes National Forest, Peru (see equivalent section under Grey-backed Hawk *Leucopternis occidentalis*).

MEASURES PROPOSED Proper management and increased protection of existing dry and moist forest reserve areas in western Ecuador is critically important to this and a large number of bird species endemic to that region. The establishment of an additional reserve holding the species, at Manta Real in Cañar, is apparently under way (P. Greenfield *in litt.* 1990). Additional comments on the conservation status of key forests, and details of initiatives proposed to preserve the threatened species endemic to south-west Ecuador and north-west Peru, are given in the equivalent section under Grey-backed Hawk, and under Peruvian Pigeon *Columba oenops* for the upper Marañón valley. Further information on the distributional limits, potential seasonal movements, and behaviour of this and other endemics is urgently needed.

REMARKS (1) The Grey-breasted Flycatcher was previously placed in the genus *Empidonax*. Morphologically and vocally it closely resembles Euler's Flycatcher *Lathrotriccus euleri*, and should be treated as a congener of that species (Parker *et al.* 1989), which was removed from *Empidonax* and placed in a separate genus *Lathrotriccus* by Lanyon and Lanyon (1986). (2) Concerning the location of the Cordillera de Balzar, see Remarks 2 under Saffron Siskin *Carduelis siemiradskii*.