

Found in the lowland and foothill forests of westernmost Venezuela and northern Colombia, this furnariid has been recorded from few localities, and has not been recorded in recent years. Deforestation of this area has been extensive, although the bird may be able to survive in dense secondary growth.

DISTRIBUTION The Recurve-billed Bushbird is known from a small number of localities in north-western Venezuela in the Sierra de Perijá, and northern Colombia at the northern ends of the West, Central and East Andes. The type-series, apparently collected in Ecuador, is discussed in Remarks 1. Coordinates (and altitudes in brackets) are from Paynter (1982) and Paynter and Traylor (1981).

Venezuela Records of this bird are restricted to the upper río Negro valley in the Sierra de Perijá, Zulia state, where the few known localities are as follows: Barranquilla (= “Ranchería Julián”, at c.10°07’N 72°42’W; 960 m), mentioned by Phelps and Phelps (1963); El Escondido (untraced, but presumably in the region west of Machiques at c.10°04’N 72°34’W; 1,075 m), where a male, two females and a juvenile male were taken (Aveledo and Pons 1952); La Sabana (c.10°00’N 72°50’W; 1,200 m), mentioned by Phelps and Phelps (1963); Cerro Ayapa (c.10°00’N 72°45’W), where a female was collected (Aveledo and Pons 1952); and Panapicho (c.10°00’N 72°45’W; 300 m, and c.7 km downstream from La Sabana), whence comes a single specimen (Aveledo and Pons 1952).

Colombia This species has been found in some of the northern departments, where the scattered records tend to come from the lowlands and foothills at the northern ends of the West, Central and East Andes (see Remarks 2), with localities (essentially from west to east) as follows: (*West Andes*) west of Quebrada Saisa (untraced, but presumably near Saisa), on the eastern slope of Serranía de Abibe, where a female was observed in 1965 (Willis 1988); río Salvajín, 7°45’N 76°16’W (which, via the río Esmeralda, flows into the río Sinú, Córdoba department), where two males and two females (in USNM) were collected at 185 m during May 1949; (*Central Andes*) Puerto Valdivia, 7°18’N 75°23’W (on the eastern side of the lower Cauca valley, Antioquia department), where a male and female were collected at 180 m in December 1914 (Chapman 1917a, Carriker 1955a); Hacienda Belén, c.7°10’N 74°43’W (13 km west of Segovia, Antioquia), where a female (in USNM) was collected at 245 m in April 1948; La Sofía, 5°38’N 75°04’W (on the southern side of río Samaná Sur, i.e. just inside Caldas department), where a male (in USNM) was taken at 1,145 m in May 1951; Santa Rosa, 7°58’N 74°03’W (10 km west of Simití, at the eastern base of the Serranía de San Lucas, Bolívar department), where 10 birds (in USNM) were taken at 610 m in April and May 1947; (*East Andes*) El Cauca, 8°10’N 73°24’W (at 900 m on the west slope, Cesar department), where two males (in CM, USNM) were taken in August 1916 (also Carriker 1955a); and El Tambor, 7°19’N 73°16’W (at c.500 m on the west slope in Santander department), where birds (in CM) were taken in December 1916 and January 1917 (Carriker 1955a).

POPULATION There are very few records of this species, and apparently none since 1965 (see above). However, 10 specimens were collected between 19 April and 2 May 1947 at Santa Rosa, suggesting that the species may at least be locally not uncommon, and Hilty and Brown (1986) mentioned that the species may be more numerous than records otherwise indicate owing to its shy and secretive nature.

ECOLOGY In Venezuela, localities where this species has been collected range from 300 to 1,200 m (as given in Paynter 1982), although it is unknown at precisely what altitude birds were collected, and Meyer de Schauensee and Phelps (1978) give a range of 900-1,000 m: in Colombia, specimens have been collected between 185 and 1,145 m (see Distribution). The Recurve-billed Bushbird occupies the tropical and upper tropical zone where it inhabits rainforest, apparently favouring dense growth close to the ground, thickets, forest borders, and overgrown (young) second growth (Carriker 1955a, Haffer 1975, Meyer de Schauensee and Phelps 1978, Hilty and Brown 1986, Willis 1988). The bird is shy and secretive, and always stays close to the ground, where it has been observed at an ant-swarm with Rufous-vented Ground-cuckoo *Neomorphus geoffroyi*, Ocellated Antbird *Phaenostictus mcleannani* and Spotted Antbird *Hylophylax naevioides* (Carriker 1955a, Meyer de Schauensee and Phelps 1978, Hilty and Brown 1986), and stripping strands from dead stems in the search for insects (Willis 1988). Four breeding condition birds were collected in April and May (Hilty and Brown 1986), and an immature male (in USNM) was taken at the end of April (all in Córdoba and Bolívar departments, Colombia).

THREATS Owing to imprecise knowledge of this species's ecological requirements, the threats it faces are difficult to assess with any confidence, although it is certain that much of the native habitat within its range has been heavily disturbed and cleared during the present century (LGN), and it is thus likely that the population has both declined in number and been fragmented. In both national parks mentioned below, threats to the species arise from agricultural encroachment causing varying degrees of deforestation (CNPPA 1982). However, if this bird really favours dense secondary growth (see Ecology), and can maintain a viable population in such habitat, it may be relatively secure (see Measures Proposed).

MEASURES TAKEN In Venezuela, the Sierra de Perijá National Park, 295,300 ha, embraces the first two localities listed under Distribution (CNPPA 1982). In Colombia, the río Salvajín (where specimens were taken in 1949) is now within the Paramillo National Park, which covers an area of 460,000 ha within Córdoba and Antioquia departments (CNPPA 1982, Hernández Camacho *et al.* undated).

MEASURES PROPOSED The status of this bird within the national parks mentioned above is in urgent need of assessment, as it is on the Colombian side of the Sierra de Perijá; however, it would benefit the species if the Sierra de Perijá National Park were to be extended to embrace all Venezuelan localities, and also to incorporate suitable areas on the Colombian side of the mountains. The Paramillo National Park is known to have harboured populations of this species, Blue-billed Curassow *Crax alberti* and Red-bellied Grackle *Hypopyrrhus pyrohypogaster* (see relevant accounts), although the status of any one of these species there is unknown: clearly, surveys need to be undertaken to resolve this problem. The Serranía de San Lucas has been an important area for this and other threatened bird species (the details of which are given in the equivalent section under Chestnut-bellied Hummingbird *Amazilia castaneiventris*), and therefore may also warrant some form of protection, although surveys are first needed to determine the current status of the threatened species there, and of any remaining habitat. The ecological requirements of the Recurve-billed Bushbird are essentially unknown, but need clarification if conservation actions are to protect known populations or locate new ones with any efficiency. It must be a priority for any surveys to determine the extent to which the species relies on and maintains viable populations within secondary growth.

REMARKS (1) Elliot (1870) described the species and genus from a male and juvenile male apparently collected on the río Napo, Ecuador. Chapman (1926) mentioned that these specimens were actually labelled from “Equateur”, and because subsequent records were restricted to Colombia, suggested that there is “no satisfactory evidence of its occurrence in... Ecuador”. With the exception of Avelledo and Pons (1952), who reiterated Chapman (1926), the recent literature appears to have ignored these specimens. (2) Some specimens (e.g. in ANSP, BMNH, MCZ) collected during the last century are labelled as from “Bogotá”, or in the “vicinity of Bogotá”, and Chapman (1926) mentioned (presumably on the evidence of these specimens) that the species is known from the Bogotá region. However, these birds almost certainly represent Bogotá trade skins, and the species's occurrence within this region remains unsubstantiated.