

This little known flowerpiercer is restricted to the montane forests of the coastal cordillera and Paria Peninsula, north-eastern Venezuela. The bird may have specialized habitat requirements which render it even more vulnerable to the widespread degradation and loss of forest in this area.

DISTRIBUTION The Venezuelan Flowerpiercer, like five other threatened species (see Threats under White-tailed Sabrewing *Campylopterus ensipennis*), is restricted to the Cordillera de Caripe and the mountains of western Paria Peninsula, Venezuela.

Records of this species, from roughly west to east, and with coordinates from Paynter (1982), are as follows: La Elevacia (= La Elvicia, c.10°00'N 64°05'W; on the eastern slope of Cerro Peonía, where three males and a juvenile male (in CM) were taken between 1,675 and 1,775 m during January 1930; La Trinidad (c.10°12'N 63°57'W), a coffee plantation on the northern slope of Cerro Turumiquire (Chapman 1925), where two males (in COP) were taken between 1,750 and 1,800 m in January 1963; Carapas (c.10°12'N 63°56'W; also on the northern slope of Cerro Turumiquire, and adjacent to La Trinidad, Sucre), where eight males and three females (in AMNH, MCZ; also Chapman 1925) were taken at c.1,700 m in March and April 1925; Cerro Turumiquire (10°07'N 63°29'W, the summit being in Monagas), where 17 birds (in ANSP, FMNH) were collected between 1,525 and 2,440 m during February and March 1932, with two males and a female (in COP) taken at 2,400-2,450 m during February 1963 (Chapman 1925 referred to the specimens collected at Carapas as from Turumiquire); Los Dos Ríos (c.10°15'N 63°53'W; just south of Cumanacoa, Sucre), where a female (in AMNH) was taken in April 1898; Cerro Negro (c.10°14'N 63°30'W, on the border of Sucre and Monagas: see Remarks 2 under White-tailed Sabrewing), a locality mentioned by Phelps and Phelps (1950), and whence come a number of recent records from around 1,700 m (R. Ramírez *in litt.* 1988, Ridgely and Tudor 1989); and Cerro Humo (c.10°40'N 62°30'W, the westernmost peak on the Paria Peninsula), whence come a number of recent sight records from near Melenas, including one in 1985 (B. Swift *in litt.* 1986, Ridgely and Tudor 1989), and a male at 855 m in January 1989 (Gardner and Brisley 1989). The species is unknown from further along the Paria Peninsula, and was not found during fieldwork near Macuro in 1988 (Bond *et al.* 1989).

POPULATION The status of this species is essentially unknown: Ridgely and Tudor (1989) suggested that it is apparently uncommon, and B. Swift (*in litt.* 1988) maintained that there is a viable population in the El Guácharo National Park. Collections at Carapas (11 birds: see Chapman 1925) in March and April 1925, La Elvicia (four birds) in January 1930, and Cerro Turumiquire (17 birds) during February and March 1932 (see Distribution) suggest that the species was not uncommon 60 years ago. However, there are relatively few recent reports: a survey up to 1,800 m on Cerro Turumiquire (in 1979) failed to locate the bird (G. Medina-Cuervo *in litt.* 1986), while on Cerro Negro, a population (of unknown size) has been found in a narrow vegetation/altitudinal band (R. Ramírez *in litt.* 1988, Ridgely and Tudor 1989: see Ecology), and on Cerro Humo single birds have recently been seen (see Distribution) although none were found during quite extensive work there during 1990-1991 (C. Sharpe *in litt.* 1992).

ECOLOGY In the Cordillera de Caripe (i.e. the “mainland”), the Venezuelan Flowerpiercer has been recorded from 1,525 to 2,450 m (records away from Cerro Turumiquire are between 1,675 and 1,775 m), and on the Paria Peninsula (Cerro Humo) birds have been seen at 885 m (see Distribution; also Ecology under White-tailed Sabrewing for an explanation of this altitudinal anomaly). Almost nothing is known about the ecology of this species: records come from the subtropical zone, where it apparently inhabits cloud-forest, forest edge, second-growth woodland and shrubbery within the forest (Meyer de Schauensee and Phelps 1978, Isler and Isler 1987, Ridgely and Tudor 1989); however, on Cerro Negro, the bird is seemingly associated with a small zone (a fringe c.200 m wide around the mountain) of transition between *Clusia*-dominated forest and an area of herbaceous vegetation at 1,700 m (R. Ramírez *in litt.* 1988), an association also recorded on Cerro Humo (Ridgely and Tudor 1989). Birds feed amidst the foliage at “middle” heights (Meyer de Schauensee and Phelps 1978), Gardner and Brisley (1989) observing a male foraging in the middle part of a tall exposed tree (on Cerro Humo). Breeding has not been recorded,

although Chapman (1925) collected three males described as immatures in March and April (at Carapas), and a juvenile male was taken in January (at Elvicia: see Distribution).

THREATS The threats faced by this species are essentially the same as those for the White-tailed Sabrewing (i.e. widespread degradation and loss of montane forest: see relevant account), although because it has a more restricted range and essentially unknown ecological needs, this species is potentially at far greater risk. The suggestion of specialized habitat and altitudinal requirements, such as those noted on Cerro Negro (see above), and which may even be seasonal in nature, simply adds to the danger.

MEASURES TAKEN Two national parks exist within the range of this species and harbour populations of unknown size: (1) El Guácharo National Park (82,900 ha), covering Cerro Negro; and (2) Paria Peninsula National Park (37,500 ha); details of the status of these reserves are given in the corresponding section under White-tailed Sabrewing. At Turumiquire there is a “hydraulic” (presumably watershed) reserve, but this is heavily occupied with scattered human settlements and there is very little control: the species has not been recorded on Cerro Turumiquire in recent years, and was not found there during a survey (up to 1,800 m) in 1979 (G. Medina-Cuervo *in litt.* 1986: see Population).

MEASURES PROPOSED For this species, the priority must be the guaranteed protection of forest on Cerro Negro and Cerro Humo (i.e. the only two localities where the bird has recently been recorded), combined with an ecological study to discover the nature of its habitat requirements. All studies and initiatives should if possible integrate with work on all five threatened species in this area (see Threats under White-tailed Sabrewing).