

*This small undergrowth-haunting bird survives locally in gallery forest and dense streamside vegetation in a limited area of central Brazil, but may be secure in several protected areas.*

**DISTRIBUTION** The Brasília Tapaculo (see Remarks 1) is known from Goiás, the Federal District and Minas Gerais, Brazil.

*Goiás* There is a previously unpublished record from Formosa, where two specimens, now lost, were collected in 1963 (J. Hidasi *per* H. Sick verbally 1988).

*Federal District* The species was described from three specimens collected in May 1957 at 1,100 m in Brasília (Sick 1958), where it was rediscovered only in 1981 (Negret and Cavalcanti 1985, Antas 1989, Vielliard 1990). It occurs in three nature reserves around Brasília (Negret and Cavalcanti 1985, R. B. Cavalcanti *in litt.* 1987; see Measures Taken).

*Minas Gerais* It has been recorded from the headwaters of the rio São Miguel, 15°50'S 46°30'W, June 1988 (Antas 1989, whence coordinates), the Serra Negra (upper rio Dourados), near Patrocínio, March 1973 (G. T. de Mattos *in litt.* 1987), and from the headwaters of the rio São Francisco, Serra da Canastra National Park, October 1983 (Gonzaga 1984), August 1988 (S. G. D. Cook *in litt.* 1988), August 1989 (M. Pearman *in litt.* 1990) and July 1990 (B. C. Forrester *in litt.* 1992). Reports of its occurrence also in the Serra do Cipó, July 1977 (Negret and Cavalcanti 1985) are now confirmed (Willis and Oniki *in press*; see Remarks 2).

**POPULATION** Although the species was once considered rare (Sick and Teixeira 1979, Sick 1985), in the vicinity of Brasília it is found in "reasonable numbers" at least in certain areas (D. M. Teixeira *in litt.* 1987). The existence of 68 birds was confirmed "through an intensive search" using playback techniques in gallery forests around Brasília; results indicate that the species occurs at a "quite low" density (Negret and Cavalcanti 1985), though generally there seems little cause now for concern (Antas 1989).

**ECOLOGY** The species inhabits swampy gallery forest, occasionally also colonizing disturbed areas near streams with impenetrable secondary growths of fern *Pteridium aquilinum* (Negret and Cavalcanti 1985). The first specimens were collected on the ground and lower branches of the tangles in dense, shady, swampy gallery forest with ferns *Blechnum brasiliense* and palms *Euterpe*; other bird species noticed at the site were Olivaceous Woodcreeper *Sittasomus griseicapillus*, the near-threatened Chestnut-capped Foliage-gleaner *Hylocryptus rectirostris*, Sharp-tailed Streamcreeper *Lochmias nematura*, Sulphur-rumped Flycatcher *Myiobius barbatus* and White-throated Spadebill *Platyrinchus mystaceus* (Sick 1958). The stomach of one specimen contained one small centipede, small spiders, termites, beetles (including larvae), fly larvae and a small gastropod (Schubart *et al.* 1965). The holotype had inactive testes in May, although the population was then very vocal: it seems that singing activity is not strictly linked to the breeding season in the species; the song was heard more frequently during the hotter hours than at dawn (Sick 1958) and served to locate at least four individuals around a site (Sick 1985). A female collected in July 1979 had a "well developed ovary" (Vielliard 1990).

**THREATS** In view of its apparently very limited range, the species is presumably under threat from habitat loss around Brasília, but its distribution now seems larger than initially thought (D. M. Teixeira *in litt.* 1987) and swampy gallery forests have escaped clearance, which has primarily affected the adjacent cerrado (R. B. Cavalcanti *in litt.* 1987). There are, however, few woodlots in Serra da Canastra National Park, and these are at considerable risk from fires (M. Pearman *in litt.* 1990).

**MEASURES TAKEN** The Brasília Tapaculo was not protected by Brazilian law in the 1970s (*contra* King 1978-1979) but now is (Bernardes *et al.* 1990). Part of the species's population in the Federal District occurs in the Brasília National Park, which covers 28,000 ha, and in two other nature reserves, Brasília University's Ecological Station, which covers 4,000 ha and the IBGE Ecological Reserve, which covers 1,300 ha (Negret and Teixeira 1983, R. B. Cavalcanti verbally 1988, Antas 1989). Its occurrence in

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the Serra da Canastra National Park, which covers 72,000 ha, provides additional hope for its survival (see Remarks 3).

**MEASURES PROPOSED** This species is responsive to taped calls (Negret and Cavalcanti 1985) and an extended population and distribution survey seems feasible using playback techniques (see Population).

**REMARKS** (1) The Brasília Tapaculo was described as a race of the White-breasted Tapaculo *Scytalopus indigoticus*, but was later recognized as a distinct species (Sick 1960, Meyer de Schauensee 1966, King 1978-1979) forming a superspecies with Mouse-coloured Tapaculo *S. speluncae* (Vielliard 1990). (2) A probably different and as yet undescribed *Scytalopus* has been found in the rocky upland of Caraça Natural Park in Minas Gerais, which some have attributed to *novacapitalis* (B. M. Whitney *in litt.* 1991; see *O Charão* no.15: 14). (3) The threatened Brazilian Merganser *Mergus octosetaceus* also occurs in Minas Gerais in Serra Negra and in Serra da Canastra National Park.