

This small finch is known solely from four birds collected in 1912 on the island of Tumaco, south-west Colombia, a site now so heavily developed that it seems doubtful whether it still survives there.

DISTRIBUTION The Tumaco Seedeater (see Remarks) is only known from Isla de Tumaco (1°49'N 78°46'W; at sea level), less than 1 km from the coast of Nariño department, south-western Colombia (Chapman 1921a; coordinates from Paynter and Traylor 1981).

POPULATION The type-series consists of four specimens (a male, female, and two immature males) collected between 26 and 30 July 1912 (Chapman 1917a, 1921a): there have been no subsequent records, and it seems likely that the bird is now extinct (Ridgely and Tudor 1989).

ECOLOGY Nothing has been recorded of the life history of this species, although Chapman (1917a) described the island as dry and sandy with only stunted vegetation and mangroves on one side. Hilty and Brown (1986) suggested that the type-series was taken in open grassy and shrubby areas. Two of the specimens (collected at the end of July) were immatures, although it is apparently difficult to determine breeding season from the age of young *Sporophila* (Meyer de Schauensee 1952).

THREATS Open habitat, apparently suitable for seedeaters, is still available on this island, although the area where the type-series was collected is now heavily settled and covered by the town of Tumaco, the second largest harbour (and the area supporting the largest shrimp farms) on the Pacific coast of Colombia (LGN).

MEASURES TAKEN None is known: the development of the island appears to have proceeded unchecked and without any conservation initiatives. However, there have been several recent, unsuccessful searches for this species (G. Arango and B. Ortiz verbally 1991).

MEASURES PROPOSED The most obvious priority for the Tumaco Seedeater is to undertake systematic searches across all remaining habitat on the island of Tumaco. If it is found, and if it is to continue to survive, suitable habitat will have to be set aside. Searches may also be warranted throughout the adjacent mainland in Nariño department, Colombia, and Esmeraldas province, Ecuador.

REMARKS Ridgely and Tudor (1989) concluded that this species is almost certainly more nearly allied to (and possibly just an isolated population of) Chestnut-throated Seedeater *Sporophila telasco* than it is to Ruddy-breasted Seedeater *S. minuta*, with which it has traditionally been associated: however, they also suggested that the Tumaco Seedeater may represent a hybrid population between these other two species.

These points need investigation, and studies of plumage variation within the Chestnut-throated Seedeater, which has been seen on the mainland adjacent to Tumaco (Ridgely and Tudor 1989), may help to clarify the situation.