

The Apurímac Spinetail is confined to the slopes of a single mountain massif in Apurímac department, Peru, where it is a common inhabitant of tangled understorey and shrubbery at 2,450-3,500 m.

**DISTRIBUTION** The Apurímac Spinetail is known from some 20 specimens (AMNH, FMNH, LSMUZ, MHNJP, ZMUC), all collected immediately north of Abancay, Apurímac department, south-central Peru, at elevations ranging from 2,450 m (Blake 1971) to 3,500 m (Fjeldså 1987). Specimens were collected at Bosque Ampay, a *Podocarpus hermsianus* wood on the south slope of Nevada Ampay, and on the north-slope of a ridge (Cerro Turronmocco) projecting eastwards from the nevada (Blake 1971, Fjeldså and Krabbe 1986, Fjeldså 1987). On the south slope the species has also been found below the *Podocarpus* wood (Fjeldså and Krabbe 1986), as well as in the shrubbery stretching eastwards to where the road from Abancay to Cuzco leaves the valley of Abancay (Fjeldså 1987).

**POPULATION** Fjeldså and Krabbe (1986) estimated the total population at 250-300 pairs, by extrapolation. With their discovery in 1987 of an additional population on the north slope of Cerro Turronmocco – where, however, the species was far less common than on the south slope (Fjeldså 1987) – the total population may be estimated at 300-400 pairs (NK).

**ECOLOGY** The Apurímac Spinetail inhabits dense undergrowth, vines, bamboo and tangles in *Podocarpus hermsianus* wood, thickets of composites and other shrubs along small streams below the wood (Fjeldså and Krabbe 1986) and shrubbery on the more shaded areas of the same slope further east, as well as dense shrubbery in the cloud-forest on the north slope of Cerro Turronmocco (Fjeldså 1987), apparently without very specific habitat requirements (Fjeldså and Krabbe 1986), and tolerating somewhat drier conditions than the closely related Azara's and Elegant Spinetails *S. azarae* and *S. elegantior* (Fjeldså and Krabbe 1990). Usually found in pairs or family groups, it forages low, occasionally up to 3 m, within the dense tangles (Fjeldså and Krabbe 1986). Six specimens had insect remains in their stomachs (ZMUC). This fairly vocal species responds to recordings of the indistinguishable song of Azara's Spinetail *S. azarae*, with which it may be conspecific (Fjeldså and Krabbe 1990). The only indications of breeding season are a juvenile taken on 16 November 1989, a male with enlarged gonads and a female with slightly enlarged gonads, collected on 9 December, and an immature collected on 18 March (specimens in ZMUC). Birds collected in May and June had undeveloped gonads (specimens in FMNH, LSMUZ).

**THREATS** None is known, but the extremely small range of this species renders it vulnerable.

**MEASURES TAKEN** A local initiative ensured the protection of the *Podocarpus* wood above Abancay, as Santuario Nacional del Ampay, as of August 1987 (P. Hocking *in litt.* 1988). Although most of the spinetails live outside the *Podocarpus* wood, there appear to be enough living within the wood to secure the survival of the species (NK).

**MEASURES PROPOSED** The native shrubbery and cloud-forest adjacent to the *Podocarpus* wood should not be removed to plant *Eucalyptus* or create pasture, if a large population of the Apurímac Spinetail and other yet unnamed endemic forms, such as a *Taphrospilus* hummingbird, a subspecies of Violet-throated Starfrontlet *Coeligena violifer* and a subspecies of Andean Tapaculo *Scytalopus magellanicus*, that live in this area (Fjeldså and Krabbe 1990) are to be secured. This could be achieved by leaving cloud-forest gallery between the pastures, and by leaving corridors of shrubbery through any *Eucalyptus* woods that are planted.

**REMARKS** Blake (1971) placed *courseni* between *S. subpudica* and *S. brachyura*, believing them to comprise a superspecies. Vaurie (1980) believed the nearest relatives of *courseni* to be *S. hypospodia*, *infuscata* and *brachyura*. Fjeldså and Krabbe (1986) pointed out that the vocalizations of *courseni*, *elegantior* and *azarae* are indistinguishable and very different from those of *brachyura*, and they believed these former three taxa form a superspecies or are even members of the same species (Fjeldså and Krabbe 1990), a view also held by personnel at LSMUZ (T. S. Schulenberg verbally 1984). The least subtle difference between these forms is the number of tail-feathers, 10 in *courseni* and usually in *elegantior*,

*Threatened birds of the Americas*

eight in the geographically intervening *azarae* (Fjeldså and Krabbe 1986). However M. K. Poulsen and others (*in litt.* 1989) found individuals of *S. elegantior ochracea* in southern Ecuador to have variably 10 or 8 rectrices, and TAP has found the same to be the case in central Peruvian birds. Remsen *et al.* (1988) presented evidence that *Synallaxis superciliosa* of Bolivia and Argentina is also best treated as a subspecies of *S. azarae*. As the distinguishing features of *courseni* thus fall entirely within the variation of the enlarged species *S. azarae*, it may well be preferable to treat it as a subspecies of that form. An additional taxon *S. frontalis* of south-eastern Brazil is closely related to *S. azarae* (Parker *et al.* 1989).