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Taxonomy, distribution, natural history and conservation of the Russet-mantled Foliage-gleaner *Syndactyla dimidiata* (Pelzeln, 1859) (Aves: Furnariidae)

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Abstract

Russet-mantled Foliage-gleaner is an extremely poorly known species, the range of which is centered in the Brazilian Cerrado, where it inhabits riparian forests. Two subspecies are recognized, but the limits of their ranges are controversial. Furthermore, it was recently suggested that the species is one of the few in the family Furnariidae to show sexual dichromatism. In this paper we examined the plumage coloration and morphometrics of 33 study skins (85% of the available specimens). We conclude that the geographic variation and sexual dichromatism reported for *S. dimidiata* originated from misinterpretation of the plumage variation observed in this species, which is best considered monotypic. We also present natural history data on Russet-mantled Foliage-gleaners and suggest considering it a globally Vulnerable species.

Key words: birds, Cerrado, endemism, gallery forest, morphology, Neotropics

Introduction

The Russet-mantled Foliage-gleaner is one of the least known species in the western hemisphere (Robbins & Zimmer 2005), with just a few records spottily distributed in central-southern Brazil and northeastern Paraguay (Peters 1951; Pinto 1978; Ridgely & Tudor 1994; Remsen 2003; Robbins & Zimmer 2005). It is considered endemic to the Cerrado, the largest South American savannah region (Silva & Bates 2002), where it is rare to locally uncommon in lower and middle growth of semi-humid and gallery forests (Ridgely & Tudor 1994; Remsen 2003). Two subspecies are currently recognized, *S. d. dimidiata* and *S. d. baeri* (Dickinson 2003; Remsen 2003; Clements 2007), but their distribution and taxonomic limits are controversial (Peters 1951; Pinto 1978; Ridgely & Tudor 1994; Robbins & Zimmer 2005).

Based on limited sample sizes, Robbins & Zimmer (2005) suggested that there was sexual dichromatism in the underparts of the Paraguayan population of this species, a rare feature among the Furnariidae (Remsen 2003). However, our examination of specimens refuted the hypothesis of sexual dichromatism. Furthermore, our continued studies revealed a series of misunderstandings and a long cascade of errors in the literature that converted a relatively simple taxonomic history into an intricate problem. Here, we assess morphological variation with respect to sex, age and geography, and analyze the validity of the two subspecies. A detailed revision of the taxonomy, nomenclatural history and range of this species is also presented, as well as notes on its natural history and conservation.

Material and methods

Given the rarity of *S. dimidiata* in collections, we tried to locate and examine every available specimen. During our taxonomic studies of other species (see, for example, Lopes & Gonzaga 2012), we visited ten ornithological collections in Brazil, six in North America, and seven in Europe (see acknowledgments). We also checked online

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