

**Nota Científica**  
**(Short Communication)**

## NOTEWORTHY BIRD RECORDS IN SONTECOMAPAN, VERACRUZ, MEXICO

**Monroy-Ojeda, A. & Isern, S. G.** 2013. Registros notables de aves en Sontecomapan, Veracruz, México. *Acta Zoológica Mexicana (n. s.)*, 29(3): 666-676.

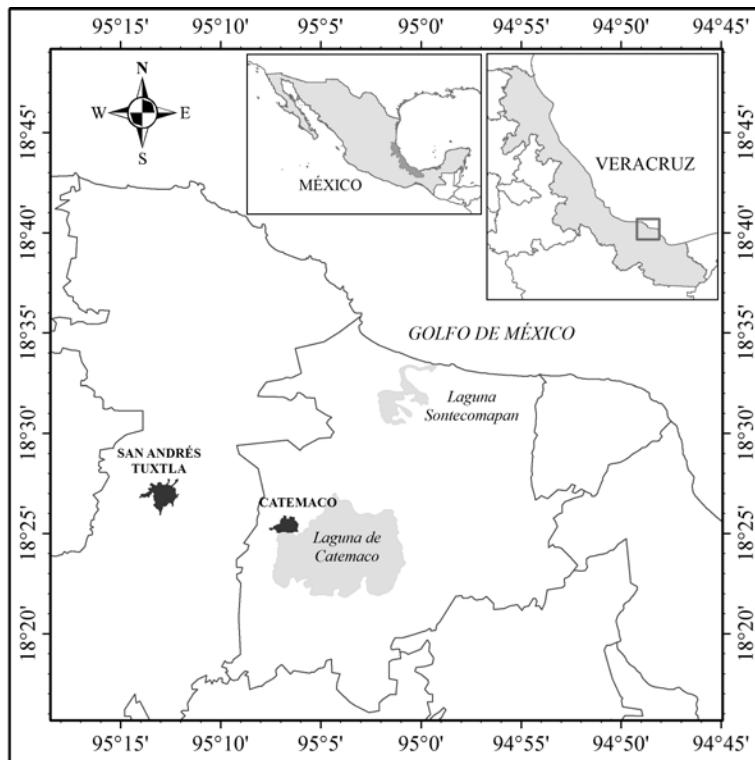
**RESUMEN.** Registramos observaciones sobresalientes de aves en el sur del estado de Veracruz. Se reporta la tercera localidad donde se ha registrado la polluela pechigris (*Laterallus sexilis*) para el país, el primer registro para el estado del rascón cuello rufo (*Aramides axillaris*), el segundo registro de colimbo mayor (*Gavia immer*) para el sur del estado, así como el registro de una pareja de hocofaisanes (*Crax rubra*) en el área de manglar de Sontecomapan.

Los Tuxtlas region in southeastern Veracruz is a site of major importance from the ornithological point of view; its high avifaunistic diversity is calculated in approximately 561 species (Winker *et al.* 1992, Schaldach & Escalante-Pliego 1997) including resident and migratory birds, and still until the 60's it was one of the most extensive humid tropical forests in Mexico. However and despite its recognized high importance for bird diversity conservation, only few ornithological studies have been done and published (Wetmore 1943, Davis 1952, Edwards & Tashian 1959, Andrle 1967, Winker *et al.* 1992, Estrada *et al.* 1997, Schaldach & Escalante-Pliego 1997, Estrada *et al.* 2000, Bojorges & López-Mata 2006) causing that still little is known about the avifauna of the region, its abundance and conservation status. The need to update the information and generate new ornithological studies takes higher importance in a site that has suffered drastic habitat loss and fragmentation in the last decades with the consequent decline in bird populations. Despite the threats that ineffective management has posed upon the region, Los Tuxtlas region is still a clue area for avian conservation (Arizmendi & Márquez-Valdemar 2000, Peterson *et al.* 2000).

In our commitment to contribute to the knowledge of the regional avifauna, here we present noteworthy records done in the Sontecomapan Lagoon, located at Los Tuxtlas Biosphere Reserve (Fig. 1). The lagoon itself is enlisted in the Ramsar index (number 1342). It combines fresh and salty waters, being surrounded by mangrove forest and marsh ecosystems. The high forest structure, its high biological diversity

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Recibido: 19/04/2012; aceptado: 28/05/2013.



**Figure 1.** Location of the Sontecomapan Lagoon in southeastern Veracruz.

and the low pollutants levels makes the mangrove forest of the lagoon, one of the best conserved in the state of Veracruz and Mexico (Carmona-Díaz *et al.* 2004).

Between March 11<sup>th</sup> to March 15<sup>th</sup> 2012 we did two boat trips a day covering the extension of the Sontecomapan Lagoon; one early in the morning before sunrise and the second three hours before sunset. Each boat trip took between three to four hours. The objective of the boat trips was to photographically document the mangrove ecosystem, with no special attention to any group of organism. During the boat trips, the observed fauna, including birds were documented. A total of 156 bird species were recorded inside the Lagoon area (Appendix 1), from which, we describe the four most remarkable records, meaning species seen outside their known geographic range in Mexico or a species, which has become rare in the area.

**Grey-breasted crake (*Laterallus sexilis*).** On March 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> mourning's at least three individuals where recorded; two heard and one heard and seen in the floating vegetation of three different points of the Sontecomapan Lagoon. Two of the sites are

close to the places known as Esperanza and Bagre. During the boat trip we stopped where floating vegetation was abundant. The Grey-breasted Crake song and call playback were played in a mp3 player. After a minute of playing the record, the individuals started to call back. One of them was briefly seen through the grasses.

The Grey-breasted Crake as a new species for Mexico, was in 2012 captured and photographed in a marsh in Minatitlan, Veracruz (Grosselet comm. pers.), and in 2011 an individual was trapped in a barbed wire in Agua Dulce, Veracruz (Grosselet comm. pers.). Both localities are approximately 80 km and 100 km respectively linear to the south from the Sontecomapan Lagoon.

The recordings that were used to attract the birds were done by Manuel Grosselet, who tape-recorded the Grey-breasted Crake in the marsh in Minatitlan (records available at [www.xeno-canto.com](http://www.xeno-canto.com)).

In the points where the individuals were heard and seen, we also played the Ruddy Crake call. Any bird responded to the Ruddy Crake call, even though some Ruddy Crakes were listened during the trip. The Ruddy Crake and the Grey-breasted Crake have a similar churring rattle call, but like Howell and Webb (1995) described, the Grey-breasted Crake call is lower, drier and shorter. Other piping notes similar to the ones recorded by Boesman (2006) were heard in the site. The distinctive marks seen in the observed individual were the greenish base of the bill, gray head and rufous nape. No other marks could be observed.

Taking into account the previous records, these observations represent the third sighting and recorded location of the species in Mexico and the northernmost record for the species. Apparently, the Grey-breasted Crake has been expanding its distribution range to the north, however more studies are needed to corroborate this hypothesis.

**Rufous-necked wood-rail (*Aramides axillaris*).** On March 13<sup>th</sup> midday one individual was observed walking through the mangrove roots very close to the shore. The individual was observed for approximately one minute and a half, at a distance of 6 meters from the boat where the observer was. The individual was walking silently; it observed cautiously for a couple of seconds after it left walking towards the mangrove forest. The individual showed an obvious rufous neck and chest, contrasting with the darker brown back and black short tail. The blue-grey patch on lower hindneck and upper mantle was subtle. Compared to the Grey-necked Wood-Rail (*Aramides cajanea*) -which is a common bird in the Sontecomapan area-, sharing a very similar shape, bright pinkish red legs and yellowish bill, the Rufous-necked Wood-Rail is smaller with a shorter bill and the difference in the color of the neck makes them easy to distinguish between each other.

Along the Pacific Coast, from Sinaloa to Oaxaca, and along the Yucatan Peninsula, the species is a common but local resident (Howell & Webb 1995), but no pre-

vious records are available for Veracruz state (Loetscher 1941, Davis 1945, Lowery 1941, Winker *et al.* 1992, Martínez-Gómez 1996, Montejo-Díaz & McAndrews 2006). This observation represents the northernmost record along its Atlantic distribution, being 345 km north in linear distance to its described northern limit (Howell & Webb 1995) and 96 km to what Navarro and Peterson (2007) reports as its northern limit of its potential distribution. The elusive behavior of this species makes it an easily overlooked bird; thus, it may be probable that the species is resident in the area.

**Common loon (*Gavia immer*).** On March 12<sup>th</sup> morning one individual was observed foraging in the Sontecomapan Lagoon. It was observed for approximately 5 minutes. The individual stayed between 30 to 45 seconds above the surface each time before diving, while stayed between 20 to 25 seconds below the surface before appearing again. The Common Loon showed a winter-like plumage very similar to the plumage shown by the 1<sup>st</sup> summer birds. It had a noticeable white throat and a pale neck and head. The back was dark brown with not very obvious pale dots. The individual was clearly longer-bodied than the Redheads (*Aythya americana*) and American Wigeons (*Anas americana*) that were swimming in the surroundings. The bill was unmistakably straight, daggerlike and gray.

The Common Loon is a frequent winter visitor to the Mexican north coasts (Friedmann *et al.* 1950, Howell & Webb 1995, AOU 1998, Evers *et al.* 2010). The Atlantic winter range reported for the species goes from Tamaulipas to northern Veracruz. There are two previous records of the species in the state (Schaldach & Escalante-Pliego 1997, Howell & Webb 1995), one of them 12 km away from the Sontecomapan Lagoon in Lake Catemaco.

This record becomes the second southernmost sighting in the state, confirming its status as a rare visitor to southern Veracruz.

**Great curassow (*Crax rubra*).** On the March 12<sup>th</sup> afternoon a couple of two males were observed in one of the tributary streams of the Sontecomapan Lagoon. The two males were perching in a tree that stands out from the surrounding marsh and the floating vegetation. The individuals were detected when they were flushed away by the closeness of the boat. Presumably, the birds were perching in their overnight roost.

The large size, the mainly black color and the white lower belly were easily recognizable while they descended flapping from the tree. The first individual flew away and after 3 seconds the second followed him. The yellow swollen knob could be appreciated in the second bird.

Formerly, the Great Curassow was a common bird in the region, but in the last decades it has been extirpated from much of its former range due to constant illicit hunting and forest destruction (Schaldach & Escalante-Pliego 1997, Howell & Webb 1995) leaving the remnant populations confined to island forest patches on steepest

slopes (Schaldach & Escalante-Pliego 1997). The small population at Sontecomapan is found at sea level in a mangrove ecosystem. Despite the fact that the area is under legal protection, the conservation of the Great Curassows should be emphasized among the inhabitants of the local communities.

The present record and other records done by local fishermen indicates that a small population of Great Curassow lives in the isolated forest patches of the Sontecomapan area despite the pressures on the species (Morales & Villa 1998) and the habitat. This cracid is enlisted as threatened according to the Mexican laws (SEMAR-NAT 2010).

In general, the avifauna of Veracruz is still little known and as result, some statuses presented in this list are likely or completely unknown. The authors ask to birdwatchers to update this information about the avifauna of Veracruz through the publication of their records.

**ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.** The authors wish to express their sincerest thanks to M. Grossleit who kindly gave us information and tape recordings of the Grey-breasted Crake. To P. Platas who helped us in the field work and to the anonymous reviewers who provided useful comments and discussion.

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## ANNEX I

Checklist of the birds observed between 12th to 15th march 2012 in the Sontecomapan Lagoon area.

ORDER	FAMILY	SPECIES
<b>Anseriformes</b>	<b>Anatidae</b>	<i>Dendrocygna autumnalis</i> <i>Cairina moschata</i> <i>Anas americana</i> <i>Anas discors</i> <i>Aythya americana</i> <i>Aythya affinis</i> <i>Oxyura jamaicensis</i>
<b>Galliformes</b>	<b>Cracidae</b>	<i>Ortalis vetula</i> <i>Crax rubra</i>
<b>Gaviiformes</b>	<b>Gaviidae</b>	<i>Gavia immer</i>
<b>Podicipediformes</b>	<b>Podicipedidae</b>	<i>Tachybaptus dominicus</i> <i>Podilymbus podiceps</i> <i>Podiceps nigricollis</i>
<b>Pelecaniformes</b>	<b>Fregatidae</b>	<i>Fregata magnificens</i>
	<b>Phalacrocoracidae</b>	<i>Phalacrocorax brasilianus</i> <i>Phalacrocorax auritus</i>
	<b>Pelecanidae</b>	<i>Pelecanus occidentalis</i>
<b>Ciconiiformes</b>	<b>Ardeidae</b>	<i>Botaurus pinnatus</i> <i>Tigrisoma mexicanum</i> <i>Ardea herodias</i> <i>Ardea alba</i> <i>Egretta thula</i> <i>Egretta caerulea</i> <i>Egretta tricolor</i> <i>Bubulcus ibis</i> <i>Butorides virescens</i> <i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i> <i>Nyctanassa violacea</i> <i>Cochlearius cochlearius</i>
	<b>Threskiornithidae</b>	<i>Eudocimus albus</i> <i>Plegadis chihi</i>
<b>Accipitriiformes</b>	<b>Cathartidae</b>	<i>Coragyps atratus</i> <i>Cathartes aura</i>

ORDER	FAMILY	SPECIES
		<i>Cathartes burrovianus</i>
	<b>Accipitridae</b>	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>
		<i>Elanus leucurus</i>
		<i>Chondrohierax uncinatus</i>
		<i>Rostrhamus sociabilis</i>
		<i>Circus cyaneus</i>
		<i>Accipiter striatus</i>
		<i>Buteogallus anthracinus</i>
		<i>Buteogallus urubitinga</i>
		<i>Rupornis magnirostris</i>
<b>Gruiformes</b>	<b>Rallidae</b>	<i>Laterallus ruber</i>
		<i>Laterallus exilis</i>
		<i>Aramides axillaris</i>
		<i>Aramides cajaneus</i>
		<i>Fulica americana</i>
	<b>Aramidae</b>	<i>Aramus guarauna</i>
<b>Charadriiformes</b>	<b>Charadriidae</b>	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>
	<b>Recurvirostridae</b>	<i>Himantopus mexicanus</i>
	<b>Jacanidae</b>	<i>Jacana spinosa</i>
	<b>Scolopacidae</b>	<i>Actitis macularius</i>
	<b>Laridae</b>	<i>Calidris alba</i>
		<i>Leucophaeus atricilla</i>
		<i>Hydroprogne caspia</i>
		<i>Thalasseus maximus</i>
		<i>Thalasseus sandvicensis</i>
<b>Columbiformes</b>	<b>Columbidae</b>	<i>Columba livia</i>
		<i>Patagioenas cayennensis</i>
		<i>Patagioenas flavirostris</i>
		<i>Columbina inca</i>
		<i>Columbina talpacoti</i>
		<i>Leptotila verreauxi</i>
<b>Cuculiformes</b>	<b>Cuculidae</b>	<i>Piaya cayana</i>
<b>Strigiformes</b>	<b>Strigidae</b>	<i>Crotophaga sulcirostris</i>
<b>Caprimulgiformes</b>	<b>Caprimulgidae</b>	<i>Glaucidium brasiliandum</i>
		<i>Nyctidromus albicollis</i>

ORDER	FAMILY	SPECIES
Apodiformes	Apodidae	<i>Streptoprocne zonaris</i>
		<i>Chaetura vauxi</i>
Trogoniformes	Trochilidae	<i>Amazilia candida</i>
		<i>Amazilia tzacatl</i>
Coraciiformes	Trogonidae	<i>Amazilia yucatanensis</i>
		<i>Trogon melanocephalus</i>
Piciformes	Momotidae	<i>Trogon caligatus</i>
	Alcedinidae	<i>Momotus coeruliceps</i>
Falconiformes	Ramphastidae	<i>Megaceryle torquata</i>
	Picidae	<i>Megaceryle alcyon</i>
Psitaciformes	Falconidae	<i>Chloroceryle amazona</i>
		<i>Chloroceryle americana</i>
Paseriformes	Ramphastidae	<i>Chloroceryle aenea</i>
	Picidae	<i>Ramphastos sulfuratus</i>
Psittaciformes	Falconidae	<i>Melanerpes aurifrons</i>
		<i>Dryocopus lineatus</i>
Paseriformes	Psittacidae	<i>Campephilus guatemalensis</i>
		<i>Micrastur semitorquatus</i>
Psittaciformes	Falconidae	<i>Caracara cheriway</i>
		<i>Herpetotheres cachinnans</i>
Paseriformes	Psittacidae	<i>Falco sparverius</i>
		<i>Falco femoralis</i>
Psittaciformes	Thamnophilidae	<i>Aratinga nana</i>
	Furnariidae	<i>Amazona albifrons</i>
Paseriformes	Tyrannidae	<i>Amazona autumnalis</i>
		<i>Amazona oratrix</i>
Psittaciformes	Thamnophilidae	<i>Thamnophilus doliatus</i>
	Furnariidae	<i>Synallaxis erythrophorax</i>
Paseriformes	Tyrannidae	<i>Campylopterus imberbe</i>
		<i>Todirostrum cinereum</i>
Psittaciformes		<i>Contopus virens</i>
		<i>Empidonax minimus</i>
Paseriformes		<i>Attila spadiceus</i>
		<i>Myiarchus tyrannulus</i>
Paseriformes		<i>Pitangus sulphuratus</i>

ORDER	FAMILY	SPECIES
		<i>Megarynchus pitangua</i>
		<i>Myiozetetes similis</i>
		<i>Tyrannus melancholicus</i>
		<i>Tyrannus forficatus</i>
	<b>Tityridae</b>	<i>Tityra semifasciata</i>
		<i>Pachyramphus aglaiae</i>
	<b>nidae</b>	<i>Vireo griseus</i>
		<i>Vireo solitarius</i>
		<i>Cyclarhis gujanensis</i>
	<b>Corvidae</b>	<i>Psilorhinus morio</i>
	<b>Hirundinidae</b>	<i>Stelgidopteryx serripennis</i>
	<b>Troglodytidae</b>	<i>Troglodytes aedon</i>
		<i>Campylorhynchus zonatus</i>
		<i>Pheugopedius maculipectus</i>
	<b>Polioptilidae</b>	<i>Ramphocaenus melanurus</i>
		<i>Polioptila caerulea</i>
	<b>Turdidae</b>	<i>Turdus grayi</i>
	<b>Mimidae</b>	<i>Dumetella carolinensis</i>
	<b>Parulidae</b>	<i>Helminthorus vermicivorus</i>
		<i>Parkesia motacilla</i>
		<i>Mniotilla varia</i>
		<i>Oreothlypis celata</i>
		<i>Geothlypis poliocephala</i>
		<i>Geothlypis trichas</i>
		<i>Setophaga citrina</i>
		<i>Setophaga ruticilla</i>
		<i>Setophaga americana</i>
		<i>Setophaga magnolia</i>
		<i>Setophaga petechia</i>
		<i>Setophaga virens</i>
		<i>Basileuterus rufifrons</i>
		<i>Cardellina pusilla</i>
		<i>Icteria virens</i>
	<b>Thraupidae</b>	<i>Thraupis episcopus</i>
		<i>Thraupis abbas</i>

ORDER	FAMILY	SPECIES
		<i>Volatinia jacarina</i>
		<i>Sporophila torqueola</i>
		<i>Saltator atriceps</i>
	<b>Cardinalidae</b>	<i>Piranga rubra</i>
		<i>Habia fuscicauda</i>
		<i>Cardinalis cardinalis</i>
		<i>Passerina cyanea</i>
	<b>Icteridae</b>	<i>Agelaius phoeniceus</i>
		<i>Dives dives</i>
		<i>Quiscalus mexicanus</i>
		<i>Molothrus aeneus</i>
		<i>Icterus spurius</i>
		<i>Icterus mesomelas</i>
		<i>Icterus gularis</i>
		<i>Icterus galbula</i>
		<i>Psarocolius montezuma</i>
	<b>Fringillidae</b>	<i>Euphonia affinis</i>
		<i>Euphonia hirundinacea</i>