First Bolivian observation of Swallow-tailed Cotinga *Phibalura flavirostris boliviana* in 98 years

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La subespecie *Phibalura flavirostris boliviana* está conocida por solo tres especímenes y sin observaciones desde 1902. La especie tiene una distribución amplia con unos 2.200 km entre la población en Bolivia y la subespecie en el este de Brasil. El plumaje de las dos subespecies es distinto. Durante una investigación cerca de Pata, nor-oeste de Apolo de Parque Nacional Madidi, observé un ejemplar de *P. f. boliviana* en el borde de un bosque húmedo a 2.000 m. Observé con suficiente detalle para verificar la subespecie pero no el sexo. No existe mucha información sobre la historia natural de las dos subespecies y ninguna información de vocalizaciones de *P. f. Boliviana*. Las dos poblaciones están probablemente aisladas genéticamente y es posible que *P. f. boliviana* puede ser significativamente diferente a *P. f. flavirostris* para merecer el estatus de especie. Si *P. f. boliviana* está considerada como una especie sería bajo el estado amenazada crítica.

The type-specimen of the Bolivian Swallow-tailed Cotinga *Phibalura flavirostris boliviana* was collected near Aten (initially published as Atten; 14°56'S 68°19'W, 1,500 m, c.32 km south-east of Apolo), dpto. La Paz, Bolivia and preserved in the American Museum of Natural History by R. S. Williams. He collected a male on 20 August 1902 and a female on 6 August 1902. The record was considered a range extension of c. 2,200 km from the only other known population in south-east Brazil (Bahia south to Rio Grande do Sul), with a few records in Paraguay (west to Guairá) and Argentina (Misiones). Krabbe noted a mounted *P. f. boliviana* in the Zoological Museum, University of Copenhagen, collected prior to 1847, in dpto. La Paz, Bolivia, but without further details.

Chapman described the Bolivian population of Swallow-tailed Cotinga as a new subspecies based on plumage differences. The male *P. f. boliviana* is notably different from *P. f. flavirostris* having the white post-auricular area broader, extending to the posterior half of the throat, with only the chin and anterior half yellow. The abdominal region is unmarked, with less black streaking on the sides and flanks. Female *P. f. boliviana* differs in that the throat is not spotted, the crown and head-sides are greyer, the abdominal region is striped like the male, and the undertail-coverts are unmarked. Both sexes of *P. f. boliviana* have longer retrices than the nominate.

During a Wildlife Conservation Society expedition near Pata, north-west of Apolo in Madidi National Park, I observed *P. f. boliviana* on 9 September 2000 at the edge of a humid valley forest at 2,000 m (14°39'S 68°36'W). At 07h38, I briefly observed a *P. flavirostris* perched c.25 m above ground on an exposed limb c.3 m above the canopy. It was on the edge of a small (2–4 km²) forest fragment among 'slash and burn'-maintained pastures. I noted its long 'swallow tail', the black mask, and yellow back with black scalloping, before it flew over a ridge and into adjacent forest. Three individuals appeared from this valley at 07h43, one landing on the same perch as in the earlier observation. I observed this individual from below for c.30 seconds, noting sufficient detail to verify that it was *P. f. boliviana* due to the broad clean white post-auricular area extending to the throat, but was unable to sex it. The black exposed primary line was seen to be half the width of the Tudor depiction, and the feet were orange, not pink as shown in one photo of *P. f. flavirostris*. The other two probably were *P. f. boliviana* based on size and shape, but I did not observe sufficient detail to accurately identify the
It is possible that this taxon exists north-west of Pata in an extensive area of unstudied, suitable mid-montane forest, of c.1,600 km², in Madidi National Park, and possibly in the poorly studied south-east part of adjacent Tambopata National Reserve, Peru.

The large distance between populations and lack of observations in Argentina and Paraguay since 1977 suggests that the two subspecies probably are isolated genetically. Both taxa are high research priorities with little natural history and no vocalization data for *P. f. boliviana*. It is possible that *boliviana* could be sufficiently distinct from *flavirostris* to warrant species status. *P. f. boliviana*, if considered a species, would warrant Critical conservation attention according to BirdLife International small-range and small-population criteria. More research is urgently needed to determine the taxonomic and conservation status, range, habitat requirements and movements of *boliviana*.

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**References**


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