

oulton, R. 1934. New birds from Angola. *Proc. Biol. Soc. Wash.* 47: 45–48.

Status of wood rails (*Aramides*) in mangroves in north-west Peru

by Gary R. Graves

Received 9 April 2011

Wood rails (*Aramides*) were unknown from the Pacific coast of Peru until Graves (1982) reported a sight record of a Brown Wood Rail *Aramides wolffi* in mangroves at Puerto Pizarro, dpto. Tumbes. Here I review this report, the only record for Peru, and update the status of *Aramides* wood rails in Tumbes.

On 26 September 1977, I encountered a wood rail at low tide at the margin of extensive mangrove forest. I wrote a description and penned a drawing of the rail in my notes later that afternoon (Graves 1982: 237): 'I cornered the rail in an isolated mangrove and approached it within 3 meters. The chicken-sized, "*Aramides*-type" rail had a rather stout yellowish bill, dark olivaceous brown upperparts and pale gray throat. The unbarred breast, belly, and flanks were brown, slightly lighter in shade than the upperparts; the iris

was dull reddish-orange and the legs were dusky coral pink. After clambering on the stilted mangrove roots for a minute or so, the rail ran across the mud flat, taking flight just before it reached the mangroves. The primaries were reddish-brown.'

At the time, there were no previous records of wood rails along the Pacific coast of Peru, but both *A. wolffi* and Rufous-necked Wood Rail *A. axillaris* had been reported from south-west Ecuador (Chapman 1926, Meyer de Schauensee 1970, Ripley, 1977). In fact, both species had been collected at La Chonta (03°35'S, 79°53'W), prov. El Oro, Ecuador (Chapman 1926), c.57 km east of Puerto Pizarro. On returning to the USA several months after the sighting, I compared my notes with plumage descriptions and Landsdowne's illustrations of both species in the recently published *Rails of the world* (Ripley 1977). In the era prior to field guides, Landsdowne was the first to illustrate *A. wolffi*, which was rare in museum collections and has a restricted geographic range in Ecuador (Ridgely & Greenfield 2001) and Colombia (Hilty & Brown 1986). The Puerto Pizarro wood rail resembled Landsdowne's illustration and Ripley's description of *A. wolffi* but bore little similarity to those of *A. axillaris*. However, Ripley's monograph did not describe or illustrate either species' immature plumage. My identification was based largely on the illustrations in Ripley's monograph. Recent photographs of an adult *A. wolffi* (Karubian *et al.* 2011) show that Landsdowne's depiction of soft-part colours based on old museum specimens was inaccurate in lacking a prominent fleshy red orbital ring and red spot at the rictus. These soft-part characters may be absent in the immature plumages of *A. wolffi*, which are undescribed. In any case, the Puerto Pizarro wood rail lacked a red rictal spot and fleshy orbital ring, indicating that it was not an adult *A. wolffi*. To add to the confusion, some immature plumages of *A. axillaris* (Sharpe 1894) superficially resemble *A. wolffi*, which is only slightly larger in linear dimensions (Ripley 1977). Given the uncertain appearance of immature plumages of *A. wolffi*, and the superficial similarities between *A. wolffi* and immature plumages of *A. axillaris*, my Puerto Pizarro sighting provided insufficient evidence for the occurrence of *A. wolffi* in Peru.

The status of *Aramides* in north-west Peru has been clarified considerably in the past 30 years. In February 1986, several adult *A. axillaris* with downy chicks were observed in a wooded ravine at El Caucho, dpto. Tumbes (Parker *et al.* 1995). In July 1988, *A. axillaris* was found to be relatively common in the mangroves of Puerto Pizarro, dpto. Tumbes, where as many as nine were counted simultaneously as they foraged on exposed mudflats (Parker *et al.* 1995). A photograph and several additional sight records (July 1995–April 2000) were published by Valqui & Walker (2002), who noted that 4,814 ha of mangroves remained in dpto. Tumbes. More than half of this area (2,972 ha) is now protected within the Santuario Nacional Manglares de Tumbes. The presence of *A. axillaris* in Peru was finally documented by specimen evidence in 2009 when a joint expedition by the Museum of Natural Sciences of Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, the Centro de Ornitología y Biodiversidad, Lima (CORBIDI), and the National Museum of Natural History, Washington DC (USNM), found the species to be common in mangrove forest near the mouth of the río Tumbes (see specimens).

No additional records of *A. wolffi* have been reported from dpto. Tumbes or in the adjacent Ecuadorian provinces of El Oro and Loja (Ridgely & Greenfield, 2001). However, the species was sighted as recently as 1989 in mangroves at Manglares Churute Ecological Reserve, prov. Guayas (02°30'S, 49°42'W) (Ridgely & Greenfield 2001), c.120 km north-east of the mouth of the río Tumbes.

Specimens: (a) LSUMZ uncatalogued, male, 1 June 2009, coll. Brian K. Schmidt (prep. C. Sánchez 167), c.29 km north-east of Tumbes (03°27'S, 80°18'W), 260 g; (b) USNM 643854, male, 2 June 2009, coll. Brian K. Schmidt, c.29 km north-east of Tumbes (03°27'S, 80°18'W), 218 g; (c) CORBIDI uncatalogued, male, 13 June 2009, coll. Thomas Valqui, Santuario

Nacional de Manglares de Tumbes (03°27'S, 80°17'W), 140 g; (d) CORBIDI uncatalogued, male, 26 June 2009, coll. Jacob R. Saucier, Santuario Nacional de Manglares de Tumbes (03°25'S, 80°17'W), 133 g; (e) USNM 643934, male, 27 June 2009, coll. Christopher C. Milensky, Santuario Nacional de Manglares de Tumbes (03°25'S, 80°19'W), 230 g; (f) CORBIDI uncatalogued, male, 26 July 2009, coll. Jacob R. Saucier, Santuario Nacional de Manglares de Tumbes (03°25'S, 80°19'W), 210 g; (g) LSUMZ uncatalogued, female, 26 July 2009, coll. Walter Vargas (prep. D. Schmitt 6516), Santuario Nacional Los Manglares de Tumbes (03°29'S, 80°18'W), 260 g. All specimens are in immature plumage.

Acknowledgements

I thank Brian Schmidt, Chris Milensky, Dan Lane, Jacob Saucier, Thomas Valqui and Walter Vargas for making a special effort to document *Aramides* in the Tumbes mangroves. Thomas Valqui and César Sanchez provided information and CORBIDI assisted with collecting permits issued by INRENA.

References:

- Chapman, F. M. 1926. The distribution of bird-life in Ecuador. *Bull. Amer. Mus. Nat. Hist.* 55: 1–784.
- Graves, G. R. 1982. First record of Brown Wood Rail (*Aramides wolffi*) for Peru. *Gerfaut* 72: 237–238.
- Hilty, S. L. & Brown, W. L. 1986. *A guide to the birds of Colombia*. Princeton Univ. Press.
- Karubian, J., Carrasco, L., Mena, P., Olivo, J., Cabrera, D., Castillo, F., Durães, R. & El Ksabi, N. 2011. Nesting biology, home range, and habitat use of the Brown Wood Rail (*Aramides wolffi*) in northwest Ecuador. *Wilson J. Orn.* 123: 137–141.
- Meyer de Schauensee, R. 1970. *A guide to the birds of South America*. Livingston Publishing Co., Wynnewood, PA.
- Parker, T. A., Schultenberg, T. S., Kessler, M. & Wust, W. H. 1995. Natural history and conservation of the endemic avifauna in north-west Peru. *Bird Conserv. Intern.* 5: 201–231.
- Ridgely, R. S. & Greenfield, P. J. 2001. *The birds of Ecuador*. Cornell Univ. Press, Ithaca, NY.
- Ripley, S. D. 1977. *Rails of the world: a monograph of the family Rallidae*. D. R. Godine, Boston.
- Sharpe, R. B. 1894. *Catalogue of the Fulicariae (Rallidae and Heliornithidae) and Alectorides (Aramidae, Eurypygidae, Mesitidae, Rhinocetidae, Gruidae, Psophiidae, and Otidae) in the collection of the British Museum*. Trustees of the Brit. Mus., London.
- Valqui, T. & Walker, B. 2002. Importance of mangrove forests in Peru with notes on Bare-throated Tiger-heron *Tigrisoma mexicanum* and Rufous-necked Wood-rail *Aramides axillaris*. *Cotinga* 18: 58–61.

Address: Dept. of Vertebrate Zoology, MRC-116, National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution, P.O. Box 37012, Washington DC 20013-7012, USA.

© British Ornithologists' Club 2011