

SHORT COMMUNICATION

The first record of the avian near-obligate bamboo specialist dusky-tailed flatbill (*Ramphotricon fuscicauda*) in the eastern Acre State, Brazil

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Abstract

Ramphotricon fuscicauda, a South American flycatcher, is recorded in eastern Acre State, Brazil.

Keywords: *Ramphotricon fuscicauda*, Acre, distribution, Tyrannidae, *Hemitriccus flammulatus*, bamboo specialist

Ramphotricon fuscicauda is a poorly known South American flycatcher, which is considered rare (Ridgely & Tudor, 1994) and that lives in bamboo thicket and adjacent dense, tangled undergrowth near forest borders in the Amazon rainforest (Parker, 1984, Kratter, 1997). The species occurs in the western Amazon including Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia and Brazil (Ridgely & Tudor, 1994). The first record of it in Brazilian territory was in 1994 and it was based on the observations that were done, years before, by T. A. Parker III, K. J. Zimmer and colleagues, in the region of Alta Floresta, situated in northern Mato Grosso State (Ridgely & Tudor, 1994; Parker et al., 1997; Zimmer et al., 1997). Later on, *R. fuscicauda* was observed at Serra de Carajás in Pará State and in the forest areas along Tejo and Amônia rivers, both tributaries of Juruá river, western Acre State (Wittaker & Oren, 1999), and at Pinkaiti, on the Xingu river drainage, southwest of Serra de Carajás (Aleixo et al., 2000). In May 2002, we visited Catuaba (10°04'S and 67°37'W), an experimental farm that belongs to the Federal University of Acre, at the boundaries of BR-364 a federal road, from Rio Branco - AC to Porto Velho - RO, distant 30 km from Rio Branco. There, we had the chance to observe and take pictures of an adult *R. fuscicauda* and to record its vocalization in a bamboo thicket (*Guadua weberbaueri*) associated with a second-growth forest dominated by *Cecropia* sp., thus confirming the fifth register of the species in Brazilian territory and the first one in eastern Acre State. It is important to emphasize that the occurrence of *R. fuscicauda* in that region was expected considering that it had already been observed in the forests drained by the Tahuamanu river, tributary of Madre de Dios, in the Pando District, Bolivia,

not far from the border of Acre State (Schulenberg et al., 2000).

For birding, we visited Catuaba farm twice. At that opportunity, on 4-5 May this species was observed for the first time, when we tape-recorded its singing. After that, a play-back of its vocalization was produced resulting in an answering by the individual what helped us to confirm it was really *R. fuscicauda*, as well as permitted us to observe it nearer. The individual was in a bamboo thicket, at the edge of the road, approximately 2,5 km far from the main entrance of the farm. *R. fuscicauda* was perched 3-4 meters above ground and after each play-back of its singing, it attacked us making short, smoothing and forward flights, crossing the road and perching again, but keeping itself hidden among the brushes on the opposite side of the road from where it had come. All the flight attacks and the subsequent perching of the bird occurred with no vocalizations. This behavior was also observed by Zimmer et al. (1997) and it seemed a clear reaction to defend its territory. In the same area was also observed the presence of *Hemitriccus flammulatus*, an obligate bamboo forest specialist species (Kratter, 1997). On 14-15 May H. R. Nobre went back there to try new observations of the species. After forty minutes of playing-back the sounds previously recorded in the first encounter with the species, *R. fuscicauda* answered back to the recordings and behaved itself at the same way mentioned before. This time, however, the bird remained evident after each flight attack and it was possible to note that it became calmer and quieter on the branch, with no movements or sounds during a certain period of time. The bird perched, in some opportunities, close and clear enough to the observer to take pictures of it in several angles (Fig. 1, 2 and 3). These pictures seem to be the first photographic registers of *R. fuscicauda* in the nature, considering that it is an uncommon species and that there are few specimens of it in museums nowadays (Zimmer et al., 1997). Likewise, although several authors (e.g. Parker,

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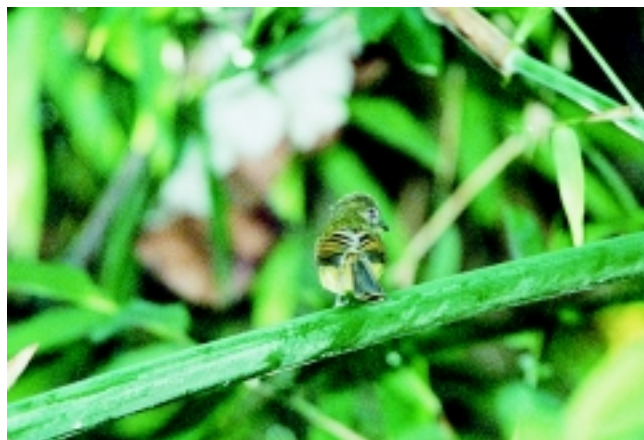


Figure 1 - *Ramphotrigon fuscicauda*, back view. (Photo by H. R. Nobre).



Figure 2 - *R. fuscicauda*, ventral view. (Photo by H. R. Nobre).



Figure 3 - *R. fuscicauda*, side view. (Photo by H. R. Nobre).

1984, Parker et al., 1997, Whittaker & Oren, 1999, Aleixo et al., 2000) have mentioned having tape-recorded vocalizations of this species, these have not yet been either described in detail or illustrated. We could record and recognize three quite distinctive calls, all composed basically by “arched” (i.e. with an upward followed by a downward frequency modulation) notes with a clear harmonic structure and fundamental frequencies between about 1-3 kHz: (i) a frequently uttered and relatively long (>1 s) whistle, with two upward and two downward modulations (Fig. 4a-b); (ii) a “trilled song”, composed of an introductory series of very short (<110 ms) notes followed by two longer (between 300 ms and 500 ms) whistles, the first of which reaching higher (up to 3 kHz) frequencies (Fig. 4c-d); and (iii) a “whistled song”, starting with a longer (>500 ms) whistle followed by a short (< 250 ms) trill and three progressively longer whistles of approximately the same pitch (Fig. 4e). Copies of the tape recordings of vocalizations made by H. R. Nobre are deposited at Arquivo Sonoro Prof. Elias Coelho (ASEC), Department of Zoology, Federal University of Rio de Janeiro.

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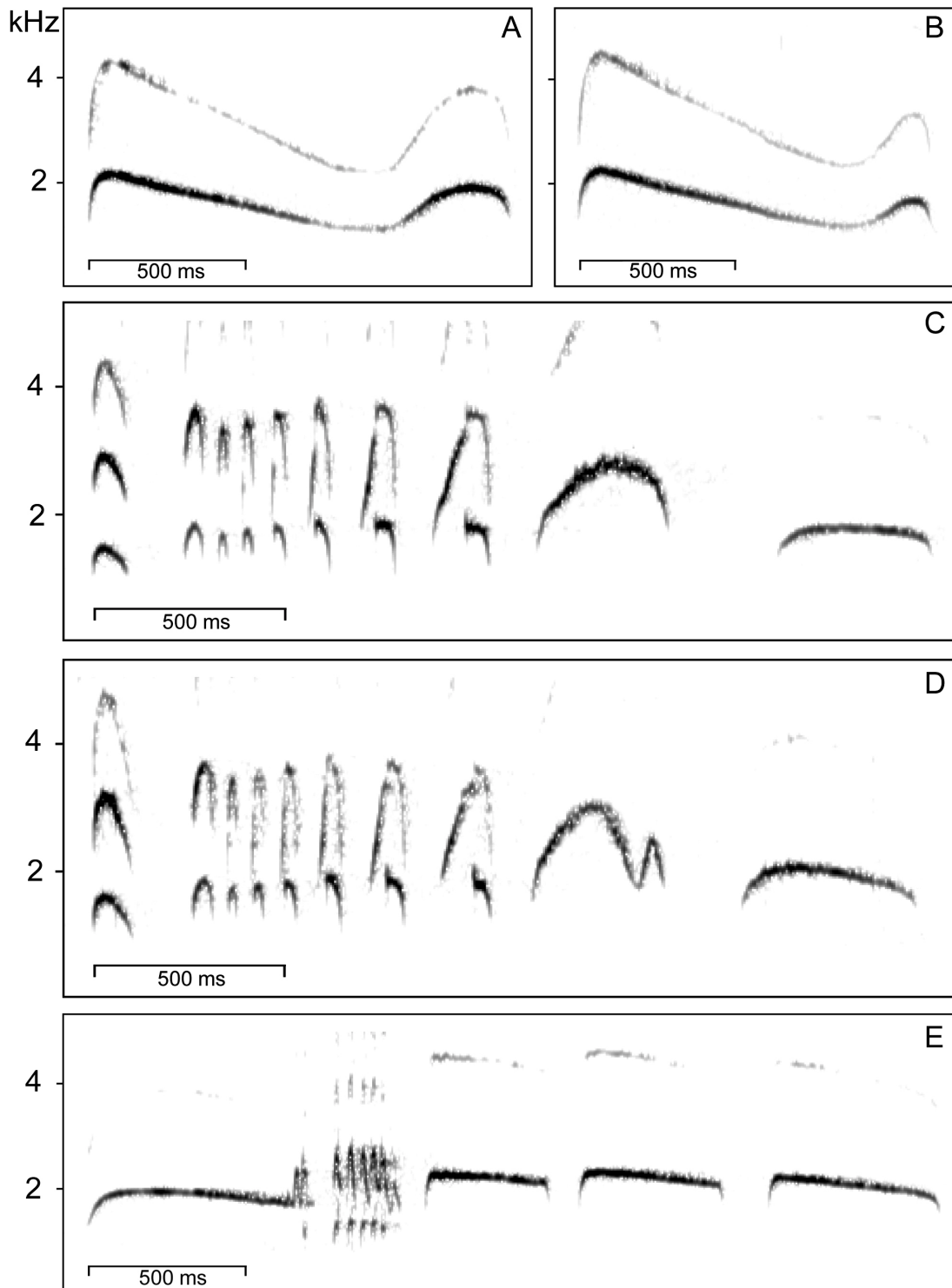


Figure 4 - Narrow-band sound spectrograms of *Ramphotrigon fuscicauda* vocalizations, recorded by H. R. Nobre at Catuaba farm. A-B: two variants of the whistled call, before and after play-back (ASEC # 11538 and 11572) respectively; C-D: two variants of the trilled song, after and before play-back (ASEC # 11572 and 11538) respectively; E: whistled song (ASEC # 11576), several minutes after play-back. Spectrograms were made in an iMac G3/600 microcomputer with Canary software (v. 1.2.4) from Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology (Bioacoustics Research Program). Filter bandwidth 267 Hz, Blackman window.