

SHORT COMMUNICATION

## Description of the downy chick of the slaty-breasted wood-rail *Aramides saracura* (Spix, 1825) (Aves: Rallidae)

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### Abstract

We describe the downy chick of *Aramides saracura* (Spix, 1825) based on individuals captured in the states of Rio Grande do Sul (3) and Minas Gerais (2), Brazil. The downy plumage is predominantly black, with the top of the head brownish. The egg tooth was present in two specimens. The downy chick of *A. saracura* differs from those of *Aramides cajanea* (Statius Müller, 1776) especially by the absence of rusty and brownish tones in their underparts.

**Keywords:** downy chick, *Aramides saracura*, Gruiformes, Atlantic Forest, Brazil.

The slaty-breasted wood-rail, *Aramides saracura* (Spix, 1825) is an endemic species of the Atlantic Forest domain, ranging from southeastern Brazil (from Minas Gerais to Rio Grande do Sul) to eastern Paraguay and northeastern Argentina (Sick, 1997; Taylor & van Perlo, 1998; Brooks et al., 1999). The downy chick of this species is not properly described (Taylor & van Perlo, 1998), and the only information available in the literature is that at least some individuals present rusty coloration (Navas, 1991). Here, we present detailed information on the plumage of the downy young of this species based on five individuals caught in the wild.

Names and codes of the plumage colors are those of the Munsell Soil Color Charts (2000). Nomenclature of the external topographic anatomy follows the English names from Meyer de Schauensee (1982) and Clark (1993).

In November 24, 1999, three downy chicks of *A. saracura* were caught in a pitfall trap in the edge of a forest fragment in the municipality of Dona Francisca (29°25'S, 53°16'W), Rio Grande do Sul state, southern Brazil. Adult birds were heard and observed nearby, while we handled their chicks. Although we did not collect these birds, their plumage was predominantly blackish with dark brownish heads (Fig. 1).

In January 4, 2006, two downy chicks of *A. saracura* were collected close to a stream, in a forest fragment at Fazenda do Engenho (20°02'S, 43°29'W), municipality of Santa Bárbara, Minas Gerais state, southeastern Brazil. These chicks were smaller and less developed than the three captured in Rio Grande do Sul. Both were prepared as study skins and deposited in the ornithological collection of the Coleções Taxonômicas da Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais (currently, in the Department of Zoology of the university) under the numbers DZUFMG 4794 and 4795 (Figs. 2, 3, 4). Measurements (in mm) of these specimens are, respectively: 111.0 and 108.0 (total length), 12.0 and 12.5 (total culmen), 6.8 and 6.6 (nares-tip), 21.0 and 21.4 (tarsus). Body masses (in g) of these specimens were, respectively: 24 and 22.5. Both are predominantly black (10YR 2/1), but the top of the head varies between very dark grayish brown (10YR 3/2) (DZUFMG 4794) (Fig. 3) and very dark brown (10YR 2/2) (DZUFMG 4795). These specimens had dark brown irides, sooty tarsus, black upper mandible, and lower mandible black with distal end varying between grayish cream (DZUFMG 4794) and gray (DZUFMG 4795). A whitish egg tooth is also present in the upper mandible of each specimen (Fig. 4).

These chicks differ from those of the widespread grey-necked wood-rail *Aramides cajanea* (Statius Müller, 1776) for being almost entirely black, with no cinnamon or rusty color as previously described by Navas (1991). Chicks of several other species of rails also present a black downy plumage

Received: 28-VIII-07

Accepted: 13-IV-09

Distributed: 15.VII.09



**Figure 1** - Blackish downy chicks of *Aramides saracura* captured in the municipality of Dona Francisca, Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil.



**Figure 2** - Ventral view of two downy chick specimens of *Aramides saracura* (DZUFMG 4794, 4795) from the municipality of Santa Bárbara, Minas Gerais, Brazil.



**Figure 3** - Dorsal view of the specimen DZUFMG 4794 from the municipality of Santa Bárbara, Minas Gerais, Brazil, showing its brownish head.



**Figure 4** - Egg tooth of the downy chick DZUFMG 4795 of *Aramides saracura* from the municipality of Santa Bárbara, Minas Gerais, Brazil.



**Figure 5** - Ventral view of the chick specimen DZUFMG 2966 of *Aramides cajanea* from Unaí, Minas Gerais, Brazil.



**Figure 6** - Dorsal view of the chick specimen DZUFMG 2966 of *Aramides cajanea* from Unaí, Minas Gerais, Brazil.

(Taylor & van Perlo, 1998). A downy young of *A. cajanea* collected in November 30, 2000 at Fazenda Malhadinha (16°13'S, 47°17'W), municipality of Unaí, Minas Gerais (DZUFMG 2966) has the head top strong brown (7.5YR 4/6), throat yellowish brown (10YR 5/4), neck sides dark yellowish brown (10YR 4/4), neck middle very dark grayish brown (10YR 3/2), breast strong brown (7.5YR 5/6), flanks and thighs very dark grayish brown (10YR 3/2), and crissum black (10YR 2/1) (Figs. 5-6). Wings and upperparts (from nape to rump) are between very dark grayish brown (10YR 3/2) and very dark brown (10YR 2/2) (Fig. 6).

### Acknowledgements

We thank CAPES and the Brehm Foundation for the financial support to our research and IBAMA for the permission to collect specimens. We are also grateful to Santos D'Angelo Neto and Marcos Maldonado Coelho, who helped us to obtain bibliography.

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