

## Confirmation that Little Cuckoo *Coccyzua minuta* occurs in Paraguay

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**Abstract.**– Documented records of the Little Cuckoo *Coccyzua minuta* are provided for two localities in Alto Paraguay department in the Paraguayan Pantanal. These are the first confirmed records for the country. A discussion of previous records is also provided.

**Key words.** Cuculidae, distribution, Pantanal, *Piaya*

The Little Cuckoo *Coccyzua minuta* (Cuculidae) has a wide distribution from southern Panama south to central Brazil and Bolivia. It occurs in two subspecies, *C. m. gracilis* west of the Andes and *C. m. minuta* east of the Andes (Erritzøe *et al* 2012). In Bolivia it is rare to locally common, with records mainly in the north and east of the country from Pando, La Paz, Beni, and Santa Cruz departments (Herzog *et al* 2017). In Brazil it is present in Mato Grosso do Sul bordering the eastern Paraguayan Chaco on the opposite banks of the Paraguay River (Nunes *et al* 2017), but absent from the other Brazilian states that border Paraguay. Since Peters (1945) this species has typically been placed in the genus *Piaya* Lesson 1830 but Ridgway (1916) had earlier noted morphological differences between this and other *Piaya* species, such as the significantly shorter tail and tenth primary wing feather, and much smaller size. Hughes (2000) placed it in

*Coccyzua* Lesson 1830 on the basis of its osteological characters and Hughes (2006) supported the finding based on mitochondrial DNA. Sorenson and Payne (2005) also agreed that it was not closely related to the other two members of the genus *Piaya* and the arrangement was followed by Banks *et al* (2006). Erritzøe *et al* (2012) however continued to retain it in *Piaya*. A photograph of the species by C. P. Kennedy taken on the Bolivian side of the Rio Negro, directly opposite Paraguay was published in Clay *et al* (1998) and a sight record without details from Fortín Patria, Alto Paraguay department during 06 to 16 September 1999 (Mercolli *et al* 1999) led Guyra Paraguay (2004) to treat it as of “possible occurrence” in Paraguay. Del Castillo (2013) drew attention to earlier reports by Jorge Escobar from Chovoreka, Alto Paraguay department during July and September 1996 and added an additional sight record by the author at Estación



FIGURE 1. Photographic evidence that Little Cuckoo *Coccyzua minuta* occurs in Paraguay: a, individual recorded at Bahía Negra, Alto Paraguay department, 14 September 2007; b, individual from Estación Biológica Los Tres Gigantes, Alto Paraguay department, 18 February 2017. Photos: O. Rodríguez (a) and L. Recalde (b).

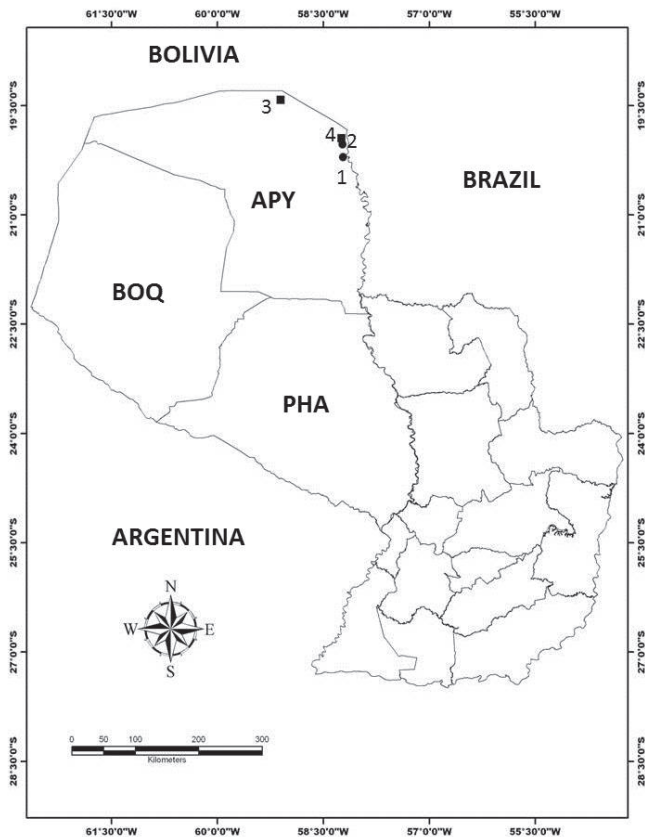


FIGURE 2. Map of localities mentioned in the text. Black circle = documented records: 1, Bahía Negra; 2, Estación Biológica Los Tres Gigantes. Black square = unconfirmed observations: 3, Chovoreca; 4, Fortín Patria. Chaco departmental abbreviations: APY = Alto Paraguay; BOQ = Boquerón; PHA = Presidente Hayes.

Biológica Los Tres Gigantes on 01 August 2007. The species was thus treated as pending documentation, referring to a species for which reliable reports exist but for which no verifiable evidence was available to support them (del Castillo 2013).

On 14 September 2007 a Little Cuckoo was photographed in bushy vegetation on the banks of the Río Paraguay at the town of Bahía Negra (20°14'S–58°10'W) Alto Paraguay department (Fig 1a). Another was then photographed and a short video was taken (FPAVE4258VI: [www.faunaparaquay.com/coccyua\\_minuta.html](http://www.faunaparaquay.com/coccyua_minuta.html)) in gallery forest on the banks of the Río Negro at Estación Biológica Los Tres Gigantes (20°04'S–58°09'W), Alto Paraguay department (Fig 1b) on 18 February 2017, the same locality as the earlier observation (del Castillo 2013). These individuals are assigned to the nominate subspecies on the basis of the geography of the records, but we note that the colouration of the underparts resembles those of Bolivian birds, described as “intermediate” by Erritzoe *et al* (2012).

These documented reports (Fig 2) are the first for the species in Paraguay and it can now be added to the official Paraguayan bird list. The species is probably fairly widespread in gallery forests and bushy marshes in humid areas of the northern Chaco in Alto Paraguay department, but the southern and western limits of its Paraguayan range remain to be determined.

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