First record of Subtropical Pygmy Owl *Glaucidium parkeri* in the Colombian Andes

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The enigmatic Subtropical Pygmy Owl *Glaucidium parkeri*, an uncommon and recently described species (Robbins & Howell 1995), is known from scattered records in the east Andean foothills and subtropics from Ecuador to Bolivia (Hennessey *et al*. 2003, Freile & Castro 2013). The first records in Ecuador and Peru date from the 1960s and 1970s, but confusion with Andean *G. jardinii* and Least Pygmy Owls *G. minutissimum* resulted in the species not being formally described until three decades later (Robbins & Howell 1995). However, it is unsurprising that the species' range is larger than realised, given predictions of its more continuous distribution and that many owls are so poorly known (Robbins & Howell 1995, Freile & Castro 2013).

The slopes of the Colombian Andes are still incompletely known. For example, recent work in remote parts of the central and northern Andes produced several new distributional records for Colombia (Salaman *et al*. 2002, Freeman *et al*. 2011, Olaciregui & Guzmán 2011), even species new to science (Robbins & Stiles 1999, Krabbe *et al*. 2005). In particular, few data exist on the avifauna of the southernmost departments of Nariño and Putumayo due in part to political instability (Calderón-Leyton *et al*. 2011, Sánchez-Cuervo & Aide 2013).

In 2010, the Corporación para el Desarrollo Sostenible del Sur de la Amazonía (CORPOAMAZONIA) initiated a project to search for potential Important Bird Areas (IBAs) in dpto. Putumayo, with the Sibundoy Valley being one of the areas submitted as a new IBA (Acevedo-Charry 2014). Here, coca crop eradication programmes have resulted in some natural forest regeneration, but gold mining presents new threats to biodiversity (Sánchez & Aide 2013). A workshop aimed at building local capacity in bird observation took place in 2013 (Gutiérrez-Zamora *et al*. 2013, Acevedo-Charry 2014). Following this, observers from the Sibundoy Valley Birdwatching Club began sending photographs and field notes to OAA-C.

Figure 1. Subtropical Pygmy Owl *Glaucidium parkeri*, Sibundoy Valley, dpto. Putumayo, south-east Colombia, 18 January 2014 (Judit Jaramillo)

On 18 January 2014, AC, BC-J, WDD & JJ were observing birds between San Francisco and Mocoa, Putumayo (01°04'N, 76°48'W; 1,800 m), where, *c*.15 km east of the main road, they observed and photographed a pygmy owl (Fig. 1) that was tentatively identified as *G. jardinii*. It was subsequently identified as Subtropical Pygmy Owl (by JFF) due to its prominent white coronal

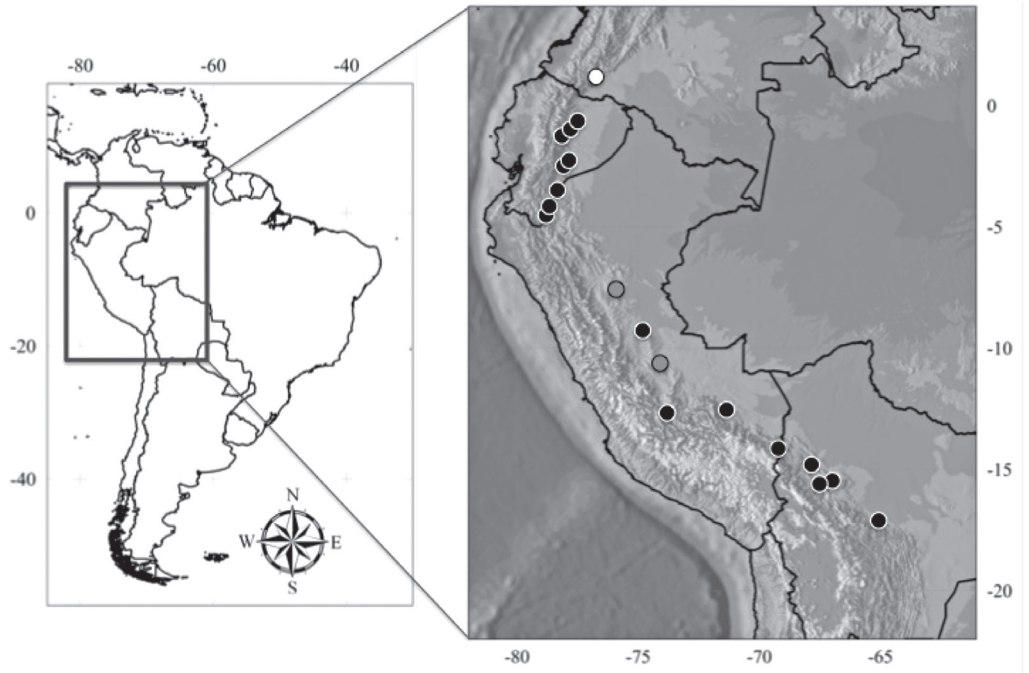

Figure 2. Distribution of Subtropical Pygmy Owl *Glaucidium parkeri* in South America: black dots indicate published localities (Robbins & Howell 1995, Hennessey *et al*. 2003, Walker *et al*. 2006, Freile & Castro 2013, Robbins *et al*. 2013), grey dots those available on xeno-canto (www.xeno-canto.org: XC152822, XC62899, XC628998) and the white dot the first record for Colombia (Sibundoy Valley, Putumayo).

spots, dark greyish-brown head, proportionately short tail and proportionately smaller head compared to *G. jardinii* (*cf*. Robbins & Howell 1995, Schulenberg *et al*. 2007). Although no sound-recordings were made, habitat and elevation also point to *G. parkeri*. The bird was perched in the subcanopy of a tree 18 m tall, for >5 minutes before it flew off. Habitat was similar to that at other known localities for *G. parkeri* (Robbins & Howell 1995, Freile & Castro 2013), with creek slopes *c*.45°. Playback of *G. jardinii* by OAA-C in the Sibundoy Valley yielded no response, but his field work did not include areas below 2,000 m elevation (Acevedo-Charry 2014), at which altitude *G. jardinii* and *G. parkeri* apparently replace one another (Robbins & Howell 1995, Freile *et al*. 2012).

G. parkeri is known from *c*.20 localities (Robbins & Howell 1995, Hennessey *et al*. 2003, Walker *et al*. 2006, Freile & Castro 2013, Robbins *et al*. 2013). Although some authors have suggested that the species might be continuously distributed over the entire Andean foothills from northern Peru to southern Colombia, there are no previous records from outlying ridges in northern Peru, or the Andes of north-east Ecuador and south-east Colombia (Fig. 2). Our record from the Colombian Andes is therefore not entirely unexpected given the species' continuous range in eastern Ecuador and the lack of evident geographic barriers between the northernmost Ecuadorian record, *c*.200 km to the south-west, at Cascada San Rafael, Napo (Ridgely & Greenfield 2001), and the Sibundoy Valley. This range extension is consistent with the discovery of many east slope or Napo endemics in the East Andes of southern Colombia in recent years (Salaman *et al*. 2002, Donegan *et al*. 2010, Olaciregui & Guzmán 2011).

It seems probable that *G. parkeri* ranges further north in the East Andes of Colombia, but has been overlooked due to its apparently low population density, the fact that its voice

was poorly known until recently and the species is not vocal for much of the year (Robbins & Howell 1995). The natural history, habitat, ecological interactions, population dynamics and distribution of several owl species, including *G. parkeri*, in the northern and central Andes are still very poorly known (Freile *et al*. 2012).

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