

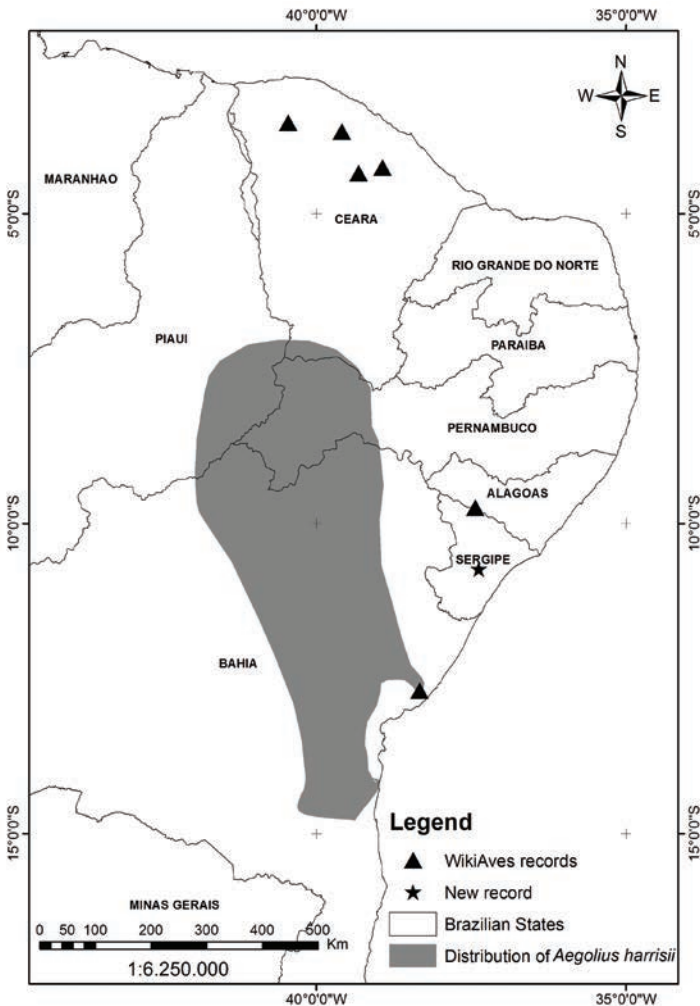
# Range extension for Buff-fronted Owl *Aegolius harrisii* in north-east Brazil and a case of *Heterochromia iridis* in Strigidae

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Buff-fronted Owl *Aegolius harrisii* is one of 22 species of Strigidae in Brazil (Sick 1997). The species has a circum-Amazon range (Barlow & Cuello 1964, Fjeldså & Krabbe 1990, König *et al.* 1999, Barrionuevo *et al.* 2008, Ubaid *et al.* 2012) and is found from sea level to 3,800 m (Lima & Castro 1994, Marks *et al.* 1999, Bravo & Barrio 2014). In Brazil, isolated records indicate that *A. harrisii* is distributed throughout most of the east of the country (Kaminski 2009, Santos 2009, Rebelato *et al.* 2011, Ubaid *et al.* 2012, Santos *et al.* 2014). Here

Figure 1. Present record (star) and isolated records (WikiAves 2016) of Buff-fronted Owl *Aegolius harrisii* from north-east Brazil and its current distributional polygon (in grey) following BirdLife International (2017).



we present the first record of *A. harrisii* in the state of Sergipe, extending the species' known distribution at least 100 km from the nearest localities in Alagoas and Bahia (WikiAves 2016; Fig. 1).

A Buff-fronted Owl was found near Parque dos Falcões, municipality of Itabaiana, Sergipe (10°44'S, 37°22'W) in November 2014. The local ecosystem is characteristic of the more open environments at the ecotone between Atlantic Forest and *Caatinga*. The bird was taken to the park, where it was examined and found to be in good health. We measured its wing (125 mm), total length (19.5 cm) and body mass (140 g). The owl was placed in a mobile enclosure, where it remains in quarantine, and has been registered with IBAMA, the Brazilian federal environment agency (ring no. 173).

In addition, we also observed that the individual possesses an uncommon condition in birds, *Heterochromia iridis*, or different-coloured irides. The right iris is pale yellowish, whereas the left is orange-yellow (Fig. 2). *Heterochromia iridis* can occur in more than 7% of individuals in some vertebrate species (e.g., horses, pigs and buffalo) (Gelatt *et al.* 1973, Misk *et al.* 1998), but few cases have been reported in birds and this appears to be the first pertaining to Strigidae. Given the lack of data for birds, it is unclear whether this condition relates to an inflammation, degeneration of the iris, or some other abnormality.

*A. harrisii* appears to be relatively rare, and is poorly known in museum collections (Studer & Teixeira 1994, Marks *et al.* 1999), which hampers systematic analysis of its biology or distribution. The available records do, however, suggest that the species is uncommon and patchily distributed (Stotz *et al.* 1996). While few records are available from north-east Brazil, mainly from Ceará (Table 1), they indicate that the species is perhaps adapted to the arid *Caatinga*, and may be a habitat generalist. The present record, together with other



Figure 2. *Heterochromia iridis* in Buff-fronted Owl *Aegolius harrisii* at Parque dos Falcões, Itabaiana, Sergipe, Brazil (Juan Ruiz-Esparza)

TABLE 1  
Records of Buff-fronted Owl *Aegolius harrisii* in north-east Brazil.

Brazilian state	Municipality	No. of Records	Biome	Reference
Alagoas	Pão de Açúcar	8	<i>Caatinga</i>	WikiAves (2016)
Bahia	Camaçari	1	Atlantic Forest	WikiAves (2016)
Ceará	Canindé	1	<i>Caatinga</i>	WikiAves (2016)
	Guaramiranga	1		
	Itapagé	1		
	Meruoca	26		
Sergipe	Itabaiana	1	Atlantic Forest	Present study

recent records (WikiAves 2016), indicates a much more ample distribution than that given by BirdLife International (2017).

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