

This grackle is very rare and localized in the West and Central Andes and southern East Andes of Colombia, where it inhabits the severely depleted subtropical forests. Although a few populations have been recorded in recent years, numbers have undoubtedly declined, and the bird is now difficult to find.

DISTRIBUTION The Red-bellied Grackle (see Remarks) has been recorded from Antioquia south to Caquetá department on both slopes of the West and Central Andes, with a disjunct population in the southern East Andes, Colombia. The following records are arranged by locality, mountain range and department from north to south, with coordinates, unless otherwise stated, from Paynter and Traylor (1981):

West Andes (Antioquia) Peque (6°59'N 75°51'W; on the eastern slope), one male (in AMNH) taken at 1,525 m in February 1915 (also Chapman 1917a); Hacienda Potreros (6°39'N 76°09'W; on the western slope), five birds (in USNM) taken at 1,980 m in May and June 1950; (*Risaralda*) Siató (c.5°13'N 76°07'W; on the western slope at 1,600 m) (Hellmayr 1911); Pueblorrico (5°12'N 76°08'W; on the western slope at 1,560 m), one bird (in ANSP) taken at 1,525 m in February 1946 (also Hellmayr 1911); La Selva (c.4°55'N 76°09'W; on the north-western slope of Cerro Tatamá), 10 birds (in ANSP, CM) collected between 1,525 and 1,830 m in January 1946 (also Meyer de Schauensee 1948-1952);

Central Andes (Antioquia) above Puerto Valdivia (7°18'N 75°23'W), birds seen at 800 m in 1962 (Willis 1972, 1988); Valdivia (7°11'N 75°27'W; on the western slope), 12 birds (in USNM) taken at 1,200 m during May 1948; La Frijolera (c.7°10'N 75°25'W; on the western slope above Puerto Valdivia), five birds (in AMNH, BMNH, USNM) taken at 1,525 m in December 1914; Amalfi (6°55'N 75°04'W; at c.1,500 m on the eastern slope), one bird (in FMNH) from November 1912; Botero (6°32'N 75°15'W), two birds (in USNM) taken at 1,095 m in August 1950; on the Barbosa–Santo Domingo road (c.6°27'N 75°15'W), eight birds recently seen at 1,800 m (L. G. Olarte *in litt.* 1992); Medellín (Serna 1980); Santa Elena (6°13'N 75°30'W; at c.2,750 m on the eastern slope) (Sclater and Salvin 1879); Envigado (6°10'N 75°35'W; on the eastern slope), three birds (in BMNH) taken at 1,525 m in 1872; Angelópolis (6°07'N 75°43'W; at 1,955 m on the western slope) (Serna 1980); Caldas (6°06'N 75°38'W; at c.1,750 m: Acevedo-Latorre 1971), three birds (in USNM; also Serna 1980) taken in February 1974; La Camelia (c.6°05'N 75°45'W; at 1,800 m on the western slope) (Meyer de Schauensee 1948-1952); on the upper río Negro (south of Medellín, and east of Caldas) at Fizebad, El Retiro county, where a flock and nest have recently been recorded between 2,100 and 2,400 m (L. G. Olarte and L. J. Olarte *in litt.* 1992); (*Caldas*) Hacienda Sofía (= La Sofía at 5°38'N 75°04'W; on the eastern slope), two birds (in USNM) taken at 1,135 m in May 1951; (*Risaralda*) La Suiza (Ucumarí Regional Park, 1,900 m), recently (Naranjo undated); (*Quindío*) Filandia (4°41'N 75°40'W; at 1,925 m: Acevedo-Latorre 1971) (Chapman 1917a); El Roble (4°41'N 75°36'W; on the western slope), three birds (in AMNH, USNM) taken at 2,195 m in May and November 1911; “Quindío trail” (between Salento and Ibagué) (Chapman 1917a); Salento (4°38'N 75°34'W; on the western slope), five birds (in AMNH, FMNH) taken at 2,135 m in September and October 1911; (*Tolima*) on the slopes of Nevado del Tolima (4°40'N 75°19'W) (Stone 1899); at El Pie de San Juan (untraced, but along the río Toche), and generally along the río Toche (4°26'N 75°22'W; on the south-south-west slope of Nevado del Tolima) (Chapman 1917a); Gaitania (3°09'N 75°49'W; at 2,100 m on the eastern slope) (specimen in ICN; also Olivares 1960);

East Andes (Huila) below Andalucía on the “Caquetá Trail” (1°54'N 75°40'W; on the eastern slope), one female (in AMNH) taken at 2,135 m in June 1912 (also Chapman 1917a); Cueva de los Guácharos National Park (1°35'N 76°00'W; c.2,000 m on the western slope), recently (Hilty and Brown 1986); (*Caquetá*) above Florencia (1°36'N 75°36'W) (Hilty and Brown 1986), and at km 55 north of Florencia where a group of eight birds was seen in 1990 (P. Kaestner *in litt.* 1992). An untraced locality is Soledad (in the upper Magdalena valley), where three birds (in BMNH) were taken at 915 m during the last century.

POPULATION The Red-bellied Grackle was previously not an uncommon bird, and occurred at a relatively large number of localities: Chapman (1917a) found it to be common in small groups along the Quindío trail and beside the río Toche; however, most of the localities where the bird was found in some numbers during the last century and early this century have long since been deforested (see Threats), and it is now a rare, very local, and generally difficult bird to find (Hilty and Brown 1986, Ridgely and Tudor 1989). Recent fieldwork in the Quindío–río Toche area by L. M. Renjifo and P. Kaestner have failed to

find the bird (M. G. Kelsey *in litt.* 1992).

Recent records (post-1960), normally referring to groups of up to 10 birds, come from: (1, the Central Andes of Antioquia) above Puerto Valdivia and along the Barbosa–Santo Domingo road (maximum of eight birds) (Willis 1972, 1988, L. G. Olarte *in litt.* 1992); Caldas and nearby on the upper río Negro, where groups (including breeding birds) of up to 15 were recorded in the late 1980s and early 1990s (see Distribution), and in the region of which Serna (1980) suggested that the bird was not uncommon in pine and cypress plantations (see below); (2, Risaralda) in the Ucumarí Regional Park (see Distribution: Naranjo undated); (3, the East Andes of Huila) in Cueva de los Guácharos National Park (Hilty and Brown 1986); and (4, Caquetá) along the road to the north of Florencia, where, amongst other observations, eight birds were seen as recently as 1990 (P. Kaestner *in litt.* 1992; also Hilty and Brown 1986). There are apparently no recent records from the West Andes.

ECOLOGY The Red-bellied Grackle has been found between 800 and 2,400 m, possibly occurring up to 2,750 m (see Distribution), where birds inhabit the canopy and borders of humid montane forest (Hilty and Brown 1986), including scrubby areas (Chapman 1917a) and old second growth (L. G. Olarte *in litt.* 1992). The area on the upper río Negro where the group of c.15 individuals have been watched by members of the Sociedad Antioqueña de Ornitología (SAO) during the past two years is a small patch of old second growth surrounded by a plantation of *Pinus patulla* (L. G. Olarte *in litt.* 1992), and this is perhaps the reason why Serna (1980) suggested that the species was not uncommon in pine and cypress plantations. This grackle usually occurs in small groups of up to 15 (see below), foraging actively (and noisily) in the outer foliage of trees (feeding on insects and fruit: BMNH label data), sometimes with mixed-species flocks (see Willis 1972), or with other large birds such as oropendolas, Green Jays *Cyanocorax yncas*, Blue-winged Mountain-tanagers *Anisognathus flavinucha*, etc. (Hilty and Brown 1986, Ridgely and Tudor 1989).

In the Central Andes, the Red-bellied Grackle has been recorded breeding in January and February (1992), when a nest (which produced three fledglings) was found in the río Negro region (L. G. Olarte *in litt.* 1992), and a breeding condition bird has been taken at the end of December (specimen in AMNH); however, in the same region and elsewhere within the species's range, breeding condition birds (including females ready to lay), immatures and nestlings have been recorded between March and August (Lehmann 1961, Hilty and Brown 1986; specimens in USNM). Hilty and Brown (1986) suggested that the species is solitary when breeding (presumably meaning that it is not colonial), as seemed to be the case with the single nest observed in January and February (see above) by members of SAO, which, however, was attended by at least eight adults out of a group of 15 birds, suggesting cooperative breeding (L. G. Olarte *in litt.* 1992). The nest and eggs of the species were described by Sclater and Salvin (1879).

THREATS Areas of suitable habitat at altitudes and localities where this species was found in some numbers during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (e.g. around Medellín and on the slopes of the northern Central Andes) have long since been almost totally cleared (Hilty and Brown 1986, Ridgely and Tudor 1989), and this probably explains the rarity and current localized distribution of the species. However, there are still tracts of forest remaining in the species's range (LGN), although its occurrence in them has in most cases yet to be proven. The usage of old second growth (see above) is encouraging, but whether the species can sustain a viable population in plantations of non-native trees (see Ecology) is unknown. Like many places in the areas around Medellín, the patch of habitat at El Retiro (río Negro region) is protected by the owners, but is in great demand from developers wishing to build on it (L. G. Olarte *in litt.* 1992).

MEASURES TAKEN In the West Andes, this grackle has been recorded from what are now the Paramillo (460,000 ha) and Tatamá (54,300 ha) National Parks (both referring to old records); in the Central Andes from Ucumarí Regional Park (recent records); and in the East Andes from Cueva de los Guácharos National Park (9,000 ha) (Hernández Camacho *et al.* undated, IUCN 1992).

MEASURES PROPOSED Remaining habitat within the range of this species is in urgent need of protection, as a number of national parks (e.g. Los Nevados: see equivalent section under Rufous-fronted Parakeet *Bolborhynchus ferrugineifrons*) only protect areas at too high altitudes (see Hernández Camacho *et al.* undated). Priority should be given to the areas where the bird has been recorded during recent years.

Other areas should be investigated for its presence, although such surveys would benefit from a more detailed appreciation of its ecological requirements, which will hopefully be forthcoming from (e.g.) the SAO observations of the breeding group south of Medellín (see Ecology). Where possible, all conservation initiatives should consider the needs of the other threatened species found in this area, as well as near-threatened species such as Sooty Ant-tanager *Habia gutturalis* (see Willis 1972). In Paramillo National Park, the Red-bellied Grackle is sympatric with Blue-billed Curassow *Crax alberti* and Recurve-billed Bushbird *Clytoctantes alixii*, but for the threatened species and proposals made for other important areas see the equivalent sections under Black-and-gold Tanager *Buthraupis melanochlamys* (for Tatamá National Park and the area around Mistrató where this species probably occurs); Multicoloured Tanager *Chlorochrysa nitidissima* (for Ucumarí Regional Park); Moustached Antpitta *Grallaria alleni* (for the area around Salento); Tolima Dove *Leptotila conoveri* (for the río Toche valley, Tolima); and Moustached Antpitta (for Cueva de los Guácharos National Park).

REMARKS The Red-bellied Grackle represents the only member of the genus *Hypopyrrhus*.