

*Records of this poorly known wetland bird of southern Uruguay and northern Argentina come chiefly from Buenos Aires province; the evidence links a probable decline to the development of marsh areas and particularly the intrusion of cattle.*

**DISTRIBUTION** The Dot-winged Crake has been recorded from southern Uruguay and Buenos Aires west to La Rioja province, Argentina (Hellmayr and Conover 1942). In most cases, records at individual localities are of single birds being collected or observed.

**Argentina** Records within provinces below are organized from north to south with coordinates taken from Paynter (1985).

*La Rioja* The species has only been recorded from Paso del Recreo (untraced, but presumably in the north-central part of the province near La Rioja: Paynter 1985) (Giacomelli 1923; see Remarks 1).

*San Juan* There is a record from “east of San Juan” (Dabbene 1910); apparently based on this, Hellmayr and Conover (1942) and Olrog (1963) listed the species with no further information (see Remarks 2).

*San Luis* Olrog (1963, 1978) and Nores *et al.* (1983) listed the species with no further information.

*Córdoba* Records are from Bañados del río Dulce (30°31’S 62°32’W), where eight to ten birds were observed on 1 November 1973, two on 8 February and one on 16 October 1974 (Nores and Yzurieta 1975). A bird collected in May 1925 is simply labelled “Provincia de Córdoba” (specimen in MACN).

*Santa Fe* A bird was collected in “Santa Fé” in April 1906. De la Peña (1977b) included the species for the province, but no localities were given.

*Buenos Aires* Records are from: Isla Ella (untraced), somewhere in the Paraná Delta (J. C. Chebez *in litt.* 1992; also a site for Marsh Seedeater *Sporophila palustris*: see relevant account), February 1917 (specimen in BMNH); Otamendi (near Campana), currently (Narosky and di Giacomo *in prep.*, M. Pearman *in litt.* 1991); a small area (c.4 ha) in the río Luján marshes (34°16’S 58°58’W), where a maximum of two birds was observed in 1989 and 1991 (M. Babarskas, B. M. López Lanús *per* M. Pearman *in litt.* 1991); Zelaya (34°21’S 58°52’W), October 1924 and November 1925 (Pereyra 1927), and June 1934 (specimen in MACN); Belgrano (34°34’S 58°28’W), where the type was caught in a garden by a dog in August 1876 (Durnford 1877); Barracas al Sud (34°39’S 58°22’W), where two birds (male and female) were taken in June 1900 (Hartert and Venturi 1909) and a female in November 1904 (specimen in AMNH); Punta Lara (34°49’S 57°59’W), near Villa Elisa (34°51’W 58°04’S), undated (Narosky and di Giacomo *in prep.*); Pradere (35°15’S 62°55’W), undated (Serié 1923); Veinticinco de Mayo, September 1982 (B. M. López Lanús *per* M. Pearman *in litt.* 1991); Estación Biológica Punta Rasa (= Punta Norte del Cabo San Antonio, 36°17’S 56°47’W), October 1986 (M. Babarskas *in litt.* 1992), with a juvenile following an adult there sometime in 1987-1988 (reported to M. Pearman), June 1989 (M. Pearman *in litt.* 1990), and November 1990 (B. M. Whitney *per* M. Pearman *in litt.* 1991); neighbourhood of Cabo San Antonio, where two birds were taken in September 1899 (Gibson 1920) and it was recorded around 1986 or 1987 (J. C. Chebez *in litt.* 1992); San Clemente del Tuyú (36°22’S 56°43’W), March 1971 (specimen in MACN) and May 1978 (M. Nores and D. Yzurieta *in litt.* 1986); General Lavalle, October 1933 (specimen in MACN); Azul (36°47’S 59°51’W), undated (Narosky and di Giacomo *in prep.*); “Albufera Mar Chiquita” (= Laguna Mar Chiquita) (37°37’S 57°24’W), currently (Narosky and di Giacomo *in prep.*). A female collected in 1868 is simply labelled “Buenos Aires” and another bird was collected in “Provincia de Buenos Aires” in June 1934 (specimens in MACN).

**Uruguay** The species has been recorded at two localities (coordinates from Rand and Paynter 1981): Barra de Pando (= Arroyo Pando, 34°48’S 55°52’W), Canelones department, sometime prior to 1926 (Dabbene 1926; see Remarks 3), and Arroyo Solís Grande (34°49’S 55°24’W), Maldonado department, February 1973 (Escalante 1980).

**POPULATION** The status of this poorly known and secretive bird is far from clear. Pereyra (1927, 1938) reported it to be “abundant” in the cord grass *Spartina densiflora* in north-eastern Buenos Aires province, and Durnford (1877) “frequently” flushed a “small crane” (see Remarks 4) from the grass near the river at Belgrano. Narosky and Yzurieta (1987) included the Dot-winged Crane in the category of “rare” or “very difficult to find”, while M. Pearman (*in litt.* 1990) reported it to be “scarce” but “regularly seen” at Punta Rasa Biological Reserve, where it was observed by two Asociación Ornitológica del Plata groups during 1986, and where B. M. Whitney *in litt.* (1991) has found it “fairly common”. The observations in this reserve and at río Luján (see Distribution) suggest that the species may prove to be far commoner in Buenos Aires province than records suggest, with lack of sightings attributable to lack of observers (M. Pearman *in litt.* 1991); however, T. Narosky (*in litt.* 1992) believes that the population at Punta Rasa is decreasing (see Threats). Giacomelli (1923) considered the species “rare” in La Rioja, and de la Peña (1977b) also referred to it as “rare” and “difficult to see”, and while it was common in Bañados del río Dulce (Córdoba) in 1975 its habitat there seems to have been affected (M. Nores *in litt.* 1992; see Threats); the bird's current status in this and other interior provinces of Argentina remains uncertain and more investigation is obviously needed to clarify the situation. In Uruguay, it was considered “rare” and probably a “local resident” (Gore and Gepp 1978); the record of an immature in February (see Distribution) suggested breeding in the area but not necessarily permanent residence (R. Escalante *in litt.* 1991).

**ECOLOGY** The Dot-winged Crane occurs in fresh and brackish surroundings, temporary and tidal marshes, swamps, wet marshy meadows, grassland, sometimes dry grassland, cord grass, riparian scrub and even on occasion gardens (Durnford 1877, Meyer de Schauensee 1970, Blake 1977, de la Peña 1977b, Ripley 1977, Gore and Gepp 1978, Narosky 1985, Narosky and Yzurieta 1987, M. Pearman *in litt.* 1990). The species's habitat in the río Luján marshes is dominated by *Spartina densiflora* and small areas of *Eryngium*; in this area, all observations have occurred in dense *Spartina* (to a height of 70 cm) with permanent saline (brackish) surface water; a bird at Veinticinco de Mayo was flushed from *Paspalum* (M. Pearman *in litt.* 1991). Feeding habits are little known; Gibson (1920) noted that a bird collected at Cabo de San Antonio was feeding on insects, seeds and marsh weeds. The only recorded nest was found near Buenos Aires, although no other details were given (*Ibis* [5]6 [1888]: 285; also Hellmayr and Conover 1942).

**THREATS** Reclamation of wetlands for agricultural purposes, overgrazing and burning of grasslands (T. Narosky *in litt.* 1991) are perhaps the most serious current risks. M. Pearman (*in litt.* 1991) noted that both in río Luján and at Punta Rasa (two apparently healthy areas for the species) cattle are absent; however, the latter area is at risk of being altered by a recreational development project, and it is believed that the population there is declining presumably because of an increase in visitors in recent years (T. Narosky *in litt.* 1992). Flooding of Mar Chiquita appears to have affected the habitat adversely in the Bañados del río Dulce (M. Nores *in litt.* 1992), but whether this is a natural or man-made phenomenon is not clear.

**MEASURES TAKEN** The Dot-winged Crane occurs in the río Dulce marshes, a small part of which has been protected, in the Laguna Mar Chiquita, which has been protected as a provincial reserve (Scott and Carbonell 1986), and in the recently created Otamendi Strict Nature Reserve (T. Narosky *in litt.* 1992), which is also important for the Speckled Crane *Coturnicops notata* (see relevant account).

**MEASURES PROPOSED** Surveys in appropriate habitat within the known range should be conducted; results would probably be optimal during the austral summer when an effort should be made to record the species's voice, e.g. in Punta Rasa Biological Reserve and by the río Luján, which could then greatly facilitate the further location of birds elsewhere. Moreover, near these localities a study might be made of the species's ability to colonize suitable areas following the better management of cattle; the results could be of importance for future conservation of this and other threatened rallids such as Austral Rail *Rallus antarcticus* (see relevant account).

**REMARKS** (1) This record however, could well refer to the similar Black Crake *Laterallus jamaicensis* (J. C. Chebez *in litt.* 1992). (2) Despite being listed under Dot-winged Crake by Hellmayr and Conover (1942), this record may also refer to the Black Crake (J. C. Chebez *in litt.* 1992). (3) According to Dabbene (1926) three specimens (date not given) were kept alive in the Zoological Garden in Montevideo, but were not preserved (Escalante 1980). (4) After having been given a bird of this species, Durnford (1877) attributed his previous sightings at Belgrano to the same species, although he could not be absolutely certain.