

PROPOSAL FOR INCLUSION OF SPECIES ON THE APPENDICES OF THE CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF MIGRATORY SPECIES OF WILD ANIMALS

A. PROPOSAL: Listing of the Capuchino de Collar (*Sporophila zelichi*) in **Appendix I** of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals.

B. PROPONENT: **Government of the Argentine Republic**

C. SUPPORTING STATEMENT

1. Taxonomy

- 1.1_ Class: Aves
 1.2 Order: Passeriformes
 1.3 Family: Emberizidae (Subfamily: Emberizinae)
 1.4 Genus & Species: *Sporophila zelichi* (Narosky 1977)
 1.5 Common name: Capuchino de Collar (spanish)
 Zelich's Seedeater (english)

2. Biological data:

2.1 Distribution (present and historical)

The known range of the species refers to the localities sited in the Argentine provinces of Corrientes and Entre Ríos, and to one locality in Paraguay: Nu Guazú, Itapúa. Records referring to Entre Ríos are concentrated in the lower section of the Uruguay river, approximately between parallels 30 and 34. In Corrientes they refer to the region of the Iberá marshlands. All records are recent, since the species was first described in 1977. The presence of the species has been assumed also to cover Uruguay since it has been recorded on the Argentine shores of the Uruguay river.

2.2 Population (estimations and trends)

There are no estimates of population size or of trends. According to the information obtained by Narosky (1977) the inhabitants of the range area in the province of Entre Ríos have known the species since at least 1925-1930 when it was less frequent. In the seventies and eighties the species was very popular with collectors and bird catchers. It is the rarest species of the genus, there are very few very precise records and on every occasion few individuals have been observed.

2.3 Habitat (short description and trends)

It has been recorded in mesopotamic grassland areas (*Panicum*, *Paspalum*, *Eryngium*) with clumps of acacia trees, generally in the vicinity of streams or marshlands (Narosky 1977, Collar *et al* 1992, Pearman & Abadie 1993).

2.4 Migrations

Because of its rarity we have so far only summer records, except for one possible visual record for winter (for the month of May in the El Palmar National Park, Baliño 1984). The fact that there are no other winter records in the range area would suggest a possible migration of individuals of this species together with others of the same genus (*S. palustris*, *hypochroma*, *cinnamomea*, *ruficollis* and *hypoxantha*). Latitudinal migration along the river corridors of the Paraná-Paraguay and Uruguay is a behaviour evidenced by some species of the *Sporophila* genus and other species of the same family. Little is known about their movements, though a recent study suggested migration is important in this group of species (Di Giacomo & Contreras, 1998). According to this study, in some of the above mentioned species the largest part of the population remains in the river valley of the Paraná-Paraguay and in the wetlands related to the Iberá- Neenbucú system (*S. hypoxantha* and *S. ruficollis*, for instance). In other species the largest part of the population reaches the flood-prone grasslands in the savannahs of Eastern Bolivia (*S. hypochroma*, for instance), or the river valley of the High Paraná, in the Brazilian plateau, and the Pantanal of Mato Grosso (*S. cinnamomea* and *palustris*, for instance).

3. Threat data

3.1 Direct threats

This species, as other species of the same genus, is much coveted by bird collectors and dealers.

3.2 Habitat destruction

The habitat of the species is under direct threat due to changes in land use, presently from cattle raising to plantations of eucalyptus trees. The consequences of the draining of the marshlands where the species has been recorded are unknown.

3.3 Indirect threats

Intoxication by pesticides in Entre Ríos province, also affecting doves (*Zenaida auriculata*) has been observed, though the toxicity effects on this species are unknown (Iolster & Krapovickas 1999). In the eastern part of the province of Córdoba, the frequent sprinkling of the sides of wire fences with pesticides and herbicides in order to keep locusts and weeds under control, is the likely cause of the abandoning of nests by the *Sporophila* species, which often nidify there, as observed (personal observation by Di Giacomo).

3.4 Threats connected especially with migrations

It is possible that these species of the *Sporophila* genus may have a phenology which adjusts to the periodic fluctuations on the shore environment (substratum, vegetation) linked to river dynamics of the Paraná-Paraguay axis. It is also evident that all this biotic-abiotic system might respond to large scale perturbations, such as extensive flooding or wet periods associated to the El Niño changes, as evinced by other studies (Popolizio 1983, Basabe 1998). Profound alterations to the complex river dynamics (such as those created by dams, for instance) might affect more severely the environment of the species than any direct low scale intervention (such as the

disappearance of the natural grazing lands) because of the migratory character of these species (Di Giacomo & Contreras 1999).

3.5 National and international utilisation

The species of the *Sporophila* genus are often caged, due to their singing abilities and colourful plumage. Capuchino de Collar is a highly prized species (Chebez 1994) on account of its particular colour pattern and of its rarity.

4. Protection status and needs

4.1 National protection status

To date the habitat is present in two large protected areas, the El Palmar National Park (Entre Ríos province) and the Iberá Provincial Park (Corrientes province). The species is often found also in the periphery of Gualeguaychú (Entre Ríos) where it has no protection (Wege & Long 1995). In the Argentine it is considered to be at risk (Fraga 1997). The National Wild Fauna Directorate (Dirección de Fauna Silvestre de la Nación) considers it a rare species.

4.2 International protection status

The species has been listed as threatened and as critically endangered by consensus among the specialists on threatened species of BirdLife International (Collar et al 1992 and BirdLife International, in preparation). There is no protected area outside the Argentine where the species has been recorded. Not listed by CITES either, despite the commercial catching that afflicts it.

4.3 Additional protection needs

All commercial capture must be prohibited, as well as any commercial dealing in this species and in others of the same genus which might be under permanent threat. It is also important, in the management of this group of threatened species, to take into account the idea of environmental planning and regulation of the rural areas of greater activity (in the vicinity of roads and rivers). For this purpose account should be taken of the need to preserve some areas of unused grazing lands, for instance, and to appropriately manage the land to the side of roads, the shores of streams and the borders of clumps of trees, which are all used by the species for protection and reproduction. We must try to acquire more information on the selection of habitat, nourishment and migration in order to detect the causes of the likely decrease of the population.

5. Range states

Argentina, Paraguay, (Uruguay?).

6. Comments by the range states

7. Other comments

The taxonomic status of *S. zelichi* as a valid species has been discussed by some authors who consider it as a hybrid of as yet unknown origin (Vuilleumier & Mayr 1987). Olrog (1979) considers it hybrid between *S. palustris* and *S. cinnamomea*. In general, however, it is

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considered a proper species in all the bibliography dealing with matters of conservation of neotropical birds (Collar et al 1992, Wege & Long 1995, Stattersfield 1998) and in present taxonomic listings (Sible & Monroe 1990, Ouellet 1992).

8. References

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