



**CONVENTION ON
MIGRATORY
SPECIES**

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Agenda Item 30.2

**PROPOSAL FOR THE INCLUSION OF
THE IBERA SEEDEATER (*Sporophila iberensis*)
ON APPENDIX II OF THE CONVENTION***

Summary:

The Governments of Brazil and Argentina have jointly submitted the attached proposal for the inclusion of the Ibera seedeater (*Sporophila iberensis*) on Appendix II of CMS.

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**PROPOSAL FOR THE INCLUSION OF
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A. PROPOSAL

Inclusion of the Ibera seedeater (*Sporophila iberensis*) in Appendix II of the Convention. This proposal follows the recommendation of the Scientific Council, since that the species was listed at the Annex to the CMS Resolution 14.20, that takes note of the potential avian taxa for listing in the Appendices of the Convention and invites Parties, among others, to develop listing proposals.

B. PROPONENT

Brazil, Argentina

C. SUPPORTING STATEMENT

1. Taxonomy

1.1 Class: Aves

1.2 Order: Passeriformes

1.3 Family: Thraupidae

1.4 Genus, species or subspecies, including author and year: *Sporophila iberensis* (Di Giacomo & Kopuchian, 2016)

1.5 Scientific synonyms:

1.6 Common name(s), in all applicable languages used by the Convention:

English – Ibera seedeater, Iberá seedeater

French – Sporophile d'Ibera

Spanish – Capuchino Iberá, Semillero del Iberá

Portuguese - Caboclinho-do-pantanal, Caboclinho-do-iberá

2. Overview

Ibera seedeater *Sporophila iberensis* is a recently described, sexually dimorphic, small passerine bird, currently known from northeastern Argentina, Paraguay, southwestern Brazil and northeastern Bolivia (Plurinational State of). It would appear to vacate its Argentinean and Paraguayan (at least) breeding range during the austral winter, presumably migrating northwards (like other southern 'capuchino' or 'capped' seedeater species) to as yet unconfirmed wintering grounds in central Brazil and/or Bolivia (Plurinational State of). A grassland specialist, it breeds in wet and seasonally flooded areas with tall, tussock-forming grasses and sedges (in which it nests), and feeds on the seeds of tall grasses (particularly of the family Poaceae) – including in flocks with other migratory 'capuchinos' (e.g. chestnut seedeater *S. cinnamomea* and marsh seedeater *S. palustris*; both already listed in Appendix II of the Convention) outside the breeding season. Originally assessed as Endangered (when its breeding range was still believed to be restricted to northeastern Argentina), *S. iberensis* is currently categorised as Near Threatened for the global IUCN Red List. Although locally abundant (and possibly increasing) at key breeding sites in northeastern Argentina, the global population is currently estimated to number fewer than 10,000 mature individuals, and is suspected to be declining overall, in line with the loss and degradation of grassland habitats

in its range (mainly as a consequence of afforestation, conversion to agriculture, overgrazing, burning and drying of wetlands).

3 Migrations

3.1 Kinds of movement, distance, the cyclical and predicable nature of the migration

S. iberaensis would appear to be an austral migrant, arriving in its Argentinean and Paraguayan breeding range between late September and December, and remaining through the austral summer until around March (Di Giacomo *et al.*, 2023). Initially, the small number of records further north from Mato Grosso and Mato Grosso do Sul, Brazil were believed to relate to non-breeding (wintering, migrant or ‘over-summering’) individuals, but subsequent observations (see subsections 3.2 and 4.4) now suggest this area probably also forms part of the breeding range. The status of the disjunct population in Bolivia (Plurinational State of) remains uncertain, but the species’s apparent absence from its subtropical breeding grounds during the austral winter (subsection 3.2) suggests that – as with most other ‘southern capuchino’ seedeaters (*sensu* Lijtmaer *et al.*, 2004) – it probably migrates to as yet unconfirmed wintering grounds in central Brazil and/or Bolivia (Plurinational State of).

In Iberá National Park (Argentina), the species is absent during the winter months. During 2023–2024, geolocators were deployed on breeding males, and data recovered the following year from several individuals provided preliminary evidence that their migratory route extends into Paraguay and Brazil (Di Giacomo *in litt.*, 2025).

3.2 Proportion of the population migrating, and why that is a significant proportion

Categorised as a “full migrant” by BirdLife International (2024a). All Argentinean records of *S. iberaensis* made directly or reviewed by Di Giacomo & Kopuchian (2016) fell between early October and mid-March. In Paraguay, the vast majority of the records initially compiled by Galluppi-Selich *et al.* (2018) were from September to January (just one during the austral winter, from June 2004), with a more recent review of Paraguayan eBird records finding nearly 90% also fell during this period (despite multiple visits to key sites year-round; Benitez & Clay, 2025). Similarly, inspection of the c.140 photos from Brazil currently attributed to *S. iberaensis* on the WikiAves website reveals that 95% (all but two, in August 2015) of the dates fell between mid-October and mid-March (WikiAves, 2025), with a similar pattern evident in (the smaller number of) eBird observations from Brazil (eBird, 2025). Although the c.80 eBird observations from Bolivia (Plurinational State of) currently attributed to *S. iberaensis* mainly date from November to February, there are records from all months of the year but July and August (eBird, 2025).

4 Biological data (other than migration)

4.1 Distribution (current and historical)

S. iberaensis was originally described from northeastern Argentina (Di Giacomo & Kopuchian, 2016), and subsequently confirmed from neighbouring southern (Ñeembucú, Misiones, Itapúa and Caazapá departments) and central Paraguay (e.g. Cordillera, San Pedro, Amambay and Presidente Hayes; Galluppi-Selich *et al.*, 2018; Benitez & Clay, 2025). The species is now also well-documented for Mato Grosso do Sul (Aquidauana, Corumbá, Miranda and Terenos municipalities) and Mato Grosso (Poconé) states in southwestern Brazil (e.g. WikiAves, 2025), with a single isolated eBird record from Amazonas state, west-central Brazil. In Bolivia (Plurinational State of), most records currently attributed to *S. iberaensis* in eBird are from the northeastern department of Beni (eBird, 2025).

Breeding has been confirmed in Argentina (e.g. Turbek *et al.*, 2019; Browne *et al.* 2021) and Paraguay (at least Cordillera department; Galluppi-Selich *et al.*, 2018) and now appears to have also been documented in Brazil (photographs of recent fledgling from site in Mato Grosso do Sul; WikiAves, 2025). There are various eBird records of singing males (eBird, 2025).

4.2 Population (estimates and trends)

Although *S. iberaensis* is reportedly locally abundant during the breeding season in Iberá National Park, Argentina (Di Giacomo & Kopuchian, 2016; Turbek *et al.*, 2019), elsewhere numbers would appear to be comparatively low, and the overall population has been suggested to number less than 10,000, and possibly no more than 1,000, mature individuals (Galluppi-Selich *et al.*, 2018). With the proviso that accurate quantification was urgently required, the global population was preliminarily placed in the band 2,500–9,999 mature individuals by BirdLife International (2024a). Despite suggestions that there *may* be two separate subpopulations in Paraguay (the southern one contiguous with the Argentinean population; Galluppi-Selich *et al.*, 2018), the overall number of subpopulations was provisionally assumed by BirdLife International (2024a) to be one, albeit noting that – if breeding were confirmed in Brazil and/or Bolivia (Plurinational State of) – it could in practice be as many as three.

The species may be increasing in the southern part of its range (based on an analysis of breeding-season eBird records from Argentina and Paraguay showing a significant increase in reporting rate probability during 2014–2019; Turbek *et al.*, 2021), but the global population trend has not been directly quantified, and overall declines are suspected, precautionarily, on the basis of habitat loss and degradation within the range (BirdLife International, 2024a). Its population size and trend in Brazil is little known (Marini *et al.*, 2021).

4.3 Habitat (short description and trends)

Like other ‘capuchino’ seedeaters, *S. iberaensis* is a grassland specialist, breeding mainly in seasonally flooded or permanently wet grasslands and marshes (or indeed the margins of roadside drainage ditches, at least in Argentina) with tussocks of tall grasses (particularly of the family Poaceae) and sedges, but also occurring in drier grasslands (Galluppi-Selich *et al.*, 2018; Turbek *et al.*, 2019; Browne *et al.*, 2021; Di Giacomo *et al.*, 2023). Its grassland habitats are being lost and degraded due to a variety of factors (see subsection 5.3), which is in turn suspected to be causing population declines (BirdLife International, 2024a).

4.4 Biological characteristics

S. iberaensis is a small, sexually dimorphic, granivorous passerine, which feeds on the seeds of tall grasses such as *Andropogon lateralis*, *Paspalum* spp. and *Hymenachne* sp. (all Poaceae), sometimes in flocks with other ‘capuchino’ species, e.g. chestnut seedeater *Sporophila cinnamomea* and marsh seedeater *S. palustris*, outside the breeding season (Di Giacomo *et al.*, 2023). Although the full details of its seasonal movements remain unclear, they may be linked to grass phenology, as is the case for many other *Sporophila* spp. (Silva, 1999).

During the breeding season, males can be very conspicuous, singing from high perches and vigorously defending territories from conspecifics and indeed other intruding ‘capuchino’ species (Di Giacomo *et al.*, 2023). In Argentina, nesting is known to occur during October to January, peaking in November–December (as with the syntopic tawny-bellied seedeater *S. hypoxantha*), but might also extend until February or early March in years when conditions are suitable (Turbek *et al.*, 2019; Browne *et al.*, 2021). In Brazil (Mato Grosso do Sul), a fledgling still being provisioned by its parents was photographed in mid-February (WikiAves, 2025). The open-cup nest is typically constructed c.40–45 cm above the ground in an isolated

stand of tall (average: 93 cm), dense tussock-forming grass (especially *Paspalum durifolium*) or sedge (e.g. *Rhynchospora corymbosa*) in areas with standing water (Turbek *et al.*, 2019; Browne *et al.*, 2021). The modal clutch size is two (range: 1–3 eggs), with incubation undertaken by the female and lasting 11–12 days; both sexes provision the nestlings, which fledge after 9–11 days (Turbek *et al.*, 2019; Browne *et al.*, 2021). Nesting success in Argentina was found to be low, with only 22% of 69 monitored nests successfully fledging young, mainly owing to predation (61% of nest failures), but also damage to nests from strong winds during storms (25% of failures) and/or nest abandonment for other reasons (Turbek *et al.*, 2019; Browne *et al.*, 2021). Renesting was observed following the failure of initial nesting attempts, but was always unsuccessful (Browne *et al.*, 2021).

Although 47% of males colour-banded on the Argentinean breeding grounds during 2016 and 2018 ($n = 43$) were resighted the following year, the equivalent resighting rates for females ($n = 20$) and birds banded as nestlings ($n = 31$) were just 10% and 9% respectively, with none of the latter two resighted more than one year following banding (cf. 28% and 6% of males in the second and third years post-banding respectively), potentially suggesting sex-biased site fidelity or sex-biased mortality (if not solely a consequence of the higher 'detectability' of males; Browne *et al.*, 2021).

4.5 Role of the taxon in its ecosystem

No information.

5. Conservation status and threats

5.1 IUCN Red List Assessment (if available)

Globally Near Threatened (BirdLife International, 2024a). Originally categorised as globally Endangered when first assessed in 2016, but reassessed as Near Threatened (approaching the thresholds for criterion C2a(ii)) in 2024, to reflect improvements in knowledge of the geographic range (and hence likely population size; see subsection 4.2) in the interim, plus the ongoing uncertainties over the overall population trend (declines only *suspected*) and subpopulation structure (BirdLife International, 2024b).

Nationally, the species has been assessed as Vulnerable in Paraguay ([ref. pending]) and Data Deficient in Brazil (assessed in 2018; Marini *et al.*, 2021).

5.2 Equivalent information relevant to conservation status assessment

Not applicable; global IUCN Red List assessment updated in 2024.

5.3 Threats to the population (factors, intensity)

S. iberaensis is believed to be threatened primarily by the loss and degradation of its grassland habitats, as a consequence of conversion of native grasslands to agriculture, increases in livestock grazing pressure, annual burning (to improve forage), spread of exotic grasses, afforestation and drying of wetlands due to water abstraction (Galluppi-Selich *et al.*, 2018; Turbek *et al.*, 2019; Browne *et al.*, 2021; Marini *et al.*, 2021; BirdLife International, 2024a). Although each of these threats may have a relatively low (e.g. localised and/or gradual) impact individually (BirdLife International, 2024a), the cumulative effect could be significant, given the breeding biology of the species and its likely sensitivity to changes in vegetation structure and water levels (Browne *et al.*, 2021).

Additional threats include high levels of nest predation, potentially owing to 'mesopredator release' following the local extinction of apex predators at breeding sites, and the increase in

extreme climatic events (and hence wind/storm-damage to nests) predicted with climate change (Browne *et al.*, 2021). The species is potentially also threatened by illegal capture for the pet trade (A. Di Giacomo *in litt.* 2016, per BirdLife International, 2024a).

5.4 Threats connected especially with migrations

None known. Although the threats outlined above are primarily based on studies in (the southern part of) the species's breeding grounds, many of them likely also apply elsewhere within its range, including at sites utilised on migration to/from the as yet unconfirmed wintering grounds.

5.5 National and international utilization

No specific information available (yet) for *S. iberaensis*, but other sympatric species of seedeater are known to be subject to capture for the pet trade (e.g. Azpiroz *et al.*, 2012; BirdLife International, 2024c,d).

6. Protection status and species management

6.1 National protection status

The species has been declared a Natural Monument ("*Especie Monumento Natural*") in the province of Corrientes, Argentina, under Law No. 6538/20.

6.2 International protection status

Not applicable.

6.3 Management measures

Although not currently one of the focal species listed, *S. iberaensis* should benefit from some of the measures undertaken by Range States (all signatories) under the auspices of the Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation of Southern South American Migratory Grassland Bird Species and their Habitats.

6.4 Habitat conservation

The main breeding sites of *S. iberaensis* in Argentina, are protected within the Reserva Natural del Iberá (provincial and private lands) and Parque Nacional Iberá (Di Giacomo *et al.*, 2023). The species is not known from any formally protected areas in Paraguay (Galluppi-Selich *et al.*, 2018).

6.5 Population monitoring

Since 2015, research teams led by A. S. Di Giacomo at the Centro de Ecología Aplicada del Litoral del Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas (CECOAL, CONICET) in Corrientes, Argentina, have been conducting banding and breeding monitoring of *S. iberaensis* at several localities within Iberá National Park and Iberá Provincial Reserve. Field data are being used to investigate factors influencing reproductive success, such as grazing, fire, and the reintroduction of large, formerly extinct predators in the grasslands. In collaboration with L. Campagna from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, genomic studies are also being undertaken to examine speciation and hybridization within the genus *Sporophila*, using *S. iberaensis* as a central model species.

7. Effects of the proposed amendment

7.1 Anticipated benefits of the amendment

The inclusion of the species in the CMS appendix will bring visibility to it, which, it is expected that will culminate in increased scientific knowledge, a better understanding of its population dynamics and threats and, consequently, its conservation status.

Symbolically, the inclusion of a species that carries the name Iberá and Pantanal, during a COP held in the Brazilian Pantanal, can help to focus attention and conservation not only of the species, but also of all its habitats related to wetlands in the Range States.

7.2 Potential risks of the amendment

None foreseen.

7.3 Intention of the proponent concerning development of an Agreement or Concerted Action

8. Range States

Argentina, Bolivia (Plurinational state of), Brazil, Paraguay

9. Consultations

10. Additional remarks

Although ‘capuchino’ seedeaters with plumage now known to relate to adult male *S. iberaensis* have been observed in Argentina and Paraguay since the late 1990s, their taxonomic status remained unclear for many years owing to similarities with the pre-definitive plumage of young male dark-throated seedeaters *S. ruficollis*, and the species was only belatedly described formally in 2016 (Di Giacomo & Kopuchian, 2016; Galluppi-Selich *et al.*, 2018; Di Giacomo *et al.*, 2023). A subsequent study has since revealed extremely low genomic differentiation (and no mitochondrial divergence) between *S. iberaensis* and the sympatric and syntopic tawny-bellied seedeater *S. hypoxantha*, with assortative mating and reproductive isolation potentially driven by differences in male plumage patterning and song (Turbek *et al.*, 2021).

11. References

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