

Note

New record of Torrent Duck (*Merganetta armata colombiana*) (Aves: Anatidae) and comments on its distribution in Venezuela

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Abstract. The torrent duck (*Merganetta armata*) is an endemic anatid from South-America classified as endangered in Venezuela. The available information on this species is scarce and it is a priority for its conservation to upgrade the knowledge concerning its distribution and status. The sub-specie *Merganetta armata colombiana* present in venezuela has been reported in the states of Merida and Tachira. In this paper we present the known records in Venezuelan biological collections and a new report of a specimen collected in Lara State, representing a significant range extension for this sub-species in the country. At the same time, we comment on the distribution of the Torrent Duck based on formal and informal reports.

Key words. Torrent Duck. *Merganetta armata colombiana*. Distribution. Andes. Venezuela.

Nuevo registro del pato de torrentes (*Merganetta armata colombiana*) (Aves: Anatidae) y comentarios sobre su distribución en Venezuela

Resumen. El pato de torrentes (*Merganetta armata*) es un anátido endémico de Suramérica que se encuentra en peligro de extinción en Venezuela, la información disponible sobre esta especie es escasa y es prioritario para su conservación actualizar el conocimiento sobre su distribución y situación. La sub-especie *Merganetta armata colombiana* presente en Venezuela ha sido reportada en los estados Mérida y Táchira. En este artículo se presentan los registros conocidos en las colecciones biológicas venezolanas y un nuevo reporte de un ejemplar recolectado en el Estado Lara que constituye una ampliación de distribución significativa para la sub-especie en el país. Al mismo tiempo se comenta sobre la distribución de la especie a partir de reportes formales e informales.

Palabras clave. Pato de torrentes. *Merganetta armata colombiana*. Distribución. Andes. Venezuela.

The Torrent Duck (*Merganetta armata*) is a bird endemic to South America. It is the only species of waterfowl adapted to live in the fast flowing rivers of the Andean mountains. In Venezuela the species has been classified as "Endangered" *sensu* the "Red Data Book" of the Venezuelan Fauna (Rodríguez and Rojas-Suárez 1999). The Torrent Duck's range has been severely fragmented by means of habitat conversion because it shares with humans some of the most intensively-used and threatened landscapes of the continent (Monasterios 1980, Dinerstein *et al.* 1995).

Merganetta armata occurs in an ample geographic range along both sides of the Andean Mountain Range, at elevations between 1800-3700 m, extending along some 8000 km from Cordillera de Mérida in northwestern Venezuela to Tierra del Fuego at the southern limit of Argentina (Phelps and Meyer De Schauensee 1978, Gómez-

Dallmeier and Cringan 1989, Fjeldså and Krabbe 1990). The subspecies *M. a. colombiana* is distributed from western Venezuela to northern Ecuador (Fjeldså and Krabbe 1990). In spite of this wide distribution, the available information about its natural history, distribution and population status it is still very scarce (Johnson 1963, Wright 1965, Johnsgard 1966, Weller 1968, Moffet 1970, Gómez-Dallmeier and Cringan 1989, Fjeldså and Krabbe 1990, Naranjo and Avila 2003, Múnera 2004). An examination of the Biological Museums in Venezuela (Table 1, Figure 1); revealed only ten (10) specimens of *M. a. colombiana* collected in the Venezuelan Andes: seven (7) from Táchira State, two (2) from Mérida State and one (1) from Lara State (Table 1; Fig. 1). The latter record implies an unpublished locality that extends the species range (see below; Phelps and Meyer de Schauensee 1978, Gómez-Dallmeier and Cringan 1989, Hilty 2003).

In a preliminary inventory of fauna carried out in Dinira National Park, located between the states of Trujillo and Lara, northern limit of the Cordillera de Mérida, one subadult male of *M. a. colombiana* was sighted and later collected by the first and third authors of this report on 25 April, 2005. The specimen was deposited at the Museo de la Estación Biológica de Rancho Grande (EBRG 12188). The locality of capture is a fast flowing river near the hamlet of Buenos Aires, in the State of Lara (09°36'N-70°04'W; 1,900 m a.s.l.), one of the primary headwaters of the upper Tocuyo River. The surrounding landscape is dominated by Evergreen Montane Forest (*sensu* Huber and Alarcón 1988) with moderate human intervention. The Torrent Duck is well known by local inhabitants; however, no further individuals were seen by the authors during the ten days visit.

This new record amplifies considerably the range of *M. a. colombiana* in Venezuela. At the same time, it represents the most septentrional locality known for this taxa, situated approximately 148 km NW of the nearest previous known locality in Venezuela (specimen code 5610: Table 1). Thus, a new species is added to the list of birds of the State of Lara (Goodwin and Lentino 1990).

On the other hand, not many specific localities related to the presence of the Torrent Duck in Venezuela are referred in technical papers. In the State of Mérida, Hilty (2003) only mentions the localities of “La Mitisús” and “Hotel Los Frailes”, while Gómez-Dallmeier and Cringan (1989) report an imprecise place between “Laguna Negra” and “Laguna Los Patos” within the Sierra Nevada National Park. Mora and Torres (2003) reported the presence of the Torrent Duck in the State of Barinas, in the southern slope of the Sierra Nevada National Park.

The Torrent Duck is an intriguing and threatened species depending on urgent research and conservation measures. An increase of the knowledge on its current distribution is crucial for the design a pragmatic action plan for its conservation in Venezuela.

Table 1. Specimens of *Merganetta armata colombiana* collected and deposited in venezuelan biological collections.

Collection	Specimen Code	Record Number	Prepared by	Date prepared	Date collected	Sex	Locality	State	Altitude m a. s. l.	UTM Latitude (N)	UTM Longitude (E)
Colección Ornitológica Phelps	7377	1	Castro, M.	27-Ago-1980	19-Ago-1980	M	Las Copas; La Revancha	Táchira	2,200	824907	130135
	24458	2	Benedetti, F.	10-Dic-1943	30-Nov-1943	M	Boca de Monte; Pregonero	Táchira	1,950 – 2,000	890917	187675
	24459	3	Urbano, R.	07-Dic-1943	21-Nov-1943	F	Boca de Monte; Pregonero	Táchira	2,400	890917	187675
	24460	4	Urbano, R.	04-Dic-1943	30-Nov-1943	M	Boca de Monte; Pregonero	Táchira	1,950 – 2,000	890917	187675
	14176	5	Urbano, R.	11-Sep-1941	31-Ago-1941	M	La Culata	Mérida	2,750	964170	270783
	10783	6	Barnés, V.	12-Feb-1941	10-Feb-1941	M	Páramo de Tamá; Villa Páez	Táchira	2,200	828669	120953
	10784	7	Benedetti, F.	13-Feb-1941	10-Feb-1941	M	Páramo de Tamá; Villa Páez	Táchira	2,200	828669	120953
Museo de la Estación Biológica de Rancho Grande	5610	8	Bermúdez, P. A.	-	13-Mar-1967	F	Páramo Mucuchíes	Mérida	-	-	-
Museo de Historia Natural La Salle	12188	9	Bermúdez P. A.	25-Apr-2005	25-Apr-2005	M	Buenos Aires, Dinira National Park	Lara	1,900	1061381	382946
	8935	10	Naranjo, C. and Musso, A.	-	31-Jan-1980	M	Las Copas; La Revancha	Táchira	2,200	824907	130135

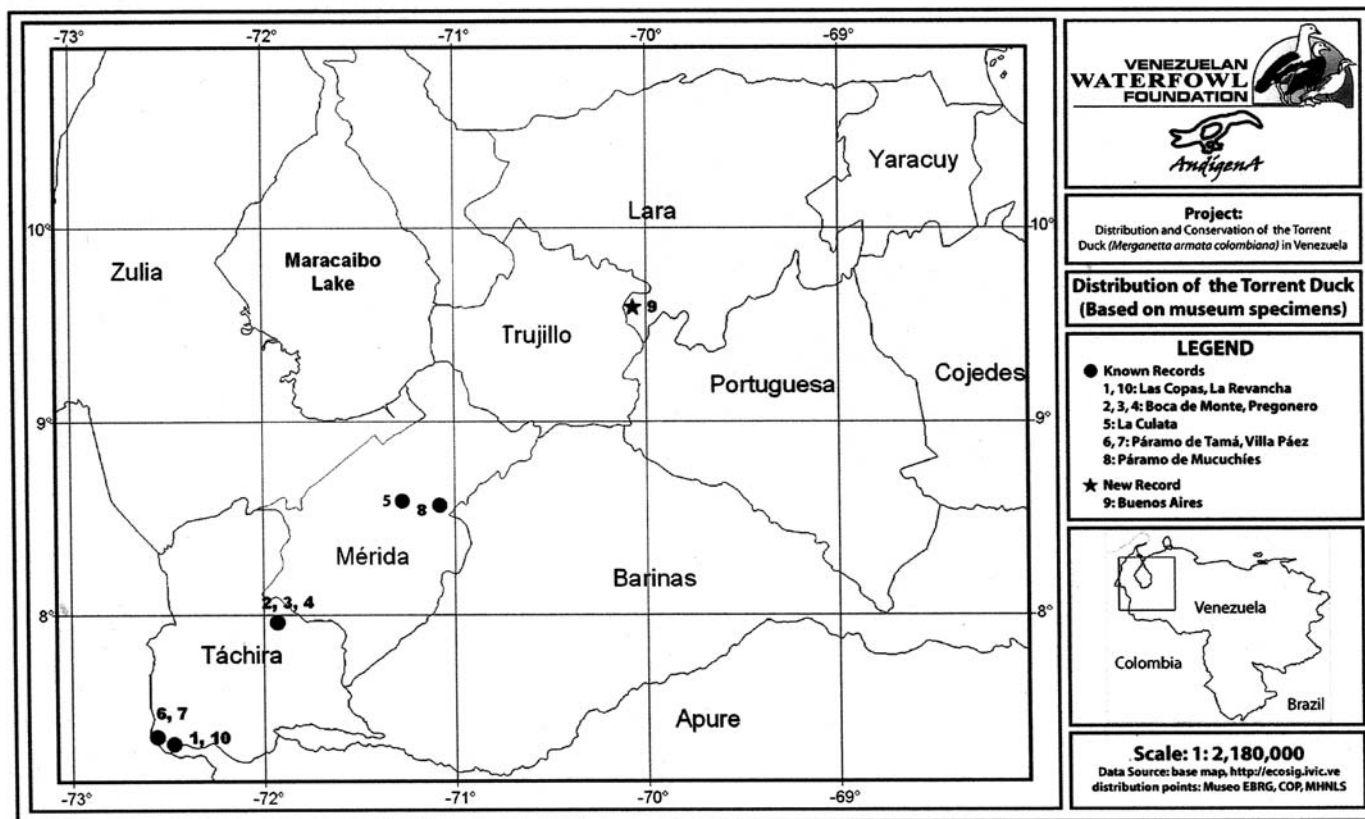


Figure 1. Distribution of specimens of *Merganetta armata colombiana* collected and deposited in venezuelan biological collections.

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