

= Perijá tapaculo =

The Perijá tapaculo ( *Scytalopus perijanus* ) is a species of passerine bird in the family Rhinocryptidae ( tapaculos ) . Endemic to the Serranía del Perijá mountain range on the Colombia ? Venezuela border , the Perijá tapaculo is found at altitudes of 1 @, @ 600 ? 3 @, @ 225 metres ( 5 @, @ 200 ? 10 @, @ 600 feet ) . It measures 10 to 12 centimetres ( 3 @. @ 9 to 4 @. @ 7 inches ) , and its tail is around 40 mm ( 1 @. @ 6 in ) long . Specimens have long been stored in museums , but the species was only described in 2015 based on sixteen specimens found between July 2008 and February 2009 . It is considered endangered .

Adults have neutral grey heads , brown necks , brown @-@ sepia striped backs , and grey @-@ white bellies , breasts , and throats . Males have some buff markings on their breasts , and less sharp brown spots on their napes than females . The Perijá tapaculo is a secretive bird and therefore difficult to observe ; as a result its ecology is poorly known . It feeds on insects and reproduces between April and July . Its range is partially within Chamicero de Perijá Bird Reserve in Colombia and the Sierra de Perijá National Park in Venezuela .

= = Taxonomy = =

Tapaculos are the most primitive family of suboscines , divided into 12 genera containing 60 species . *Scytalopus* , the genus to which the Perijá tapaculo belongs , has an abundance of similar species , many of which are difficult to classify through appearance . Some individual species from other genera are like *Scytalopus* in size and plumage , but have different behaviour and morphological features . Vocal studies and mitochondrial DNA analysis are often used to differentiate between species within the genus ; a number of visually identical species previously classified as subspecies of the Magellanic tapaculo ( *S. magellanicus* ) have been identified through these methods , and the majority of subspecies within the genus have subsequently been reclassified as separate species .

Between 1941 and 1942 , American ornithologist Melbourne Armstrong Carriker collected 27 specimens of the Perijá tapaculo in six locations on the western side of the Serranía del Perijá . He identified them as specimens of the northern white @-@ crowned tapaculo ( *S. atratus* ) , despite size and colour differences , and sent them to the National Museum of Natural History in Washington , D.C. In 1953 , the specimens began to attract the attention of biologists , and were successively identified as the brown @-@ rumped tapaculo ( *S. latebricola* ) , the Caracas tapaculo ( *S. caracae* ) , and the Mérida tapaculo ( *S. meridanus* ) . Some further believed that the specimens could belong to an undescribed species , or constitute a subspecies of the pale @-@ bellied tapaculo ( *S. griseicollis* ) or the Mérida tapaculo based on morphological studies , but they were never classified as any of these .

In September 2006 , biologists Juan Pablo López and Alexander Cortés Diago found two specimens in a cloud forest at an altitude of 2 @, @ 450 m ( 8 @, @ 000 ft ) on the western side of the Serranía del Perijá in Colombia , but the information collected was insufficient to identify a new species . Between July 2008 and February 2009 , sixteen new specimens were collected in an area previously explored by Carriker . New vocal , morphological , genetic , and ecological studies of these specimens confirmed that they constituted a new species , *Scytalopus perijanus* , first described by Jorge Enrique Avendaño et al. on 11 March 2015 following a three @-@ year expedition , and accepted by the South American Classification Committee . The Latin word *perijanus* refers to the Serranía del Perijá mountain range , and the genus name *Scytalopus* comes from the Greek *skutale* ( stick ) and *pous* ( foot ) .

The type specimen of the Perijá tapaculo , an adult male , was found in the Serranía del Perijá near the El Cinco vereda of Manaure , Cesar Department , Colombia , at an altitude of 2 @, @ 450 m ( 8 @, @ 000 ft ) . Jorge Enrique Avendaño lured the specimen by playing a recording of its song on 10 July 2008 at the edge of a montane forest . Sequence analysis of the mitochondrial gene ND2 from the Perijá tapaculo showed that its nearest relatives are the brown @-@ rumped tapaculo , Caracas tapaculo , and Mérida tapaculo .

## == Description ==

The Perijá tapaculo is a small bird, 10 to 12 cm ( 3 @. @ 9 to 4 @. @ 7 in ) in length with an average mass of 17 to 18 grams ( around 0 @. @ 6 oz ) . The bill averages 6 @. @ 8 millimetres ( 0 @. @ 27 inches ) long , 2 @. @ 9 mm ( 0 @. @ 11 in ) wide , and 3 @. @ 5 mm ( 0 @. @ 14 in ) high . The legs are about 21 mm ( 0 @. @ 83 in ) long . The Perijá tapaculo 's tarsus averages 21 @. @ 1 millimetres ( 0 @. @ 83 in ) long . The wings measure 57 @. @ 4 mm ( 2 @. @ 26 in ) on average and the tail is about 40 mm ( 1 @. @ 6 in ) long with between 8 and 12 rectrices .

The forehead , lores , crown , mantle , and scapular area are a neutral grey colour . There is a brown spot on the nape . The top of the tail is brown , and the bottom is faintly striped brown . The bird 's back and rump are striped brown @-@ sepia , and the throat , breast , and belly are grey @-@ white . Its lower belly and flanks are tawny . The iris is dark brown . Male specimens are distinguished by having less sharp brown spots on their napes , and the bottom of their breasts are mixed with a pale buff colour . The legs are brown on the back and whitish on the front . Young birds have a yellowish appearance with striped brown flanks .

The bird 's plumage colouration is most similar to the pale @-@ bellied tapaculo . The S. g. morenoi subspecies of the pale @-@ bellied tapaculo can be differentiated from the Perijá tapaculo by its entirely brown back and nape , and its different calls . Juveniles of this subspecies have a dull ventral plumage , while the Perijá tapaculo has a more yellow plumage . It also resembles the Caracas tapaculo but has a duller ventral colour .

## == Ecology and behaviour ==

Like other species in genus *Scytalopus* , the Perijá tapaculo is secretive and therefore difficult to observe . The call and song differ from those of most other species in the genus , and the latter is composed of two short churrs repeating up to 65 times at 0 @. @ 5 to 3 second intervals . The diet of the species is little known , but studies of the stomach contents of seven specimens suggested that they fed exclusively on insects .

Little is known about the reproduction of the species , but it is believed to nest between April and July . The species builds its globular nests in underground cavities about 12 cm ( 4 @. @ 7 in ) in diameter and around 14 @. @ 5 cm ( 5 @. @ 7 in ) in height , lined with mosses , grasses , and plant roots around a central space about 9 cm ( 3 @. @ 5 in ) wide . The nests are accessed by a short tunnel with a depth of 10 cm ( 3 @. @ 9 in ) and a diameter of 4 @. @ 2 cm ( 1 @. @ 7 in ) . Young birds may leave the nest at the end of June . Like those of other *Scytalopus* species , male specimens have demonstrated involvement in parenting .

## == Distribution and habitat ==

The Perijá tapaculo is endemic to the Serranía del Perijá , a mountain range on the Colombia ? Venezuela border known for its high rates of endemism . It has been observed in nineteen localities on both sides of the border between altitudes of 1 @, @ 600 and 3 @, @ 225 m ( 5 @, @ 200 and 10 @, @ 600 ft ) above sea level ; in its northern range , there are no suitable forests below 1 @, @ 600 m ( 5 @, @ 200 ft ) . The bird has been observed at 1 @, @ 800 ? 3 @, @ 120 m ( 5 @, @ 900 ? 10 @, @ 200 ft ) on the Venezuelan side , and at 1 @, @ 600 ? 3 @, @ 225 m on the Colombian side .

The Perijá tapaculo lives in and on the edges of humid rainforests , as well as in elfin forests and amongst woody páramo shrubs in high @-@ mountain grassland areas , especially at altitudes of 2 @, @ 500 ? 3 @, @ 000 m ( 8 @, @ 200 ? 9 @, @ 800 ft ) . Some specimens have been observed feeding in dense thickets within 1 m ( 3 ft ) of the ground , often near the forest . Others have been observed running through open grassy areas between bushes .

The species has not been identified as being sympatric with any other species of the genus *Scytalopus* . However , there is a possibility that its range overlaps with that of the *S. atratus nigricans* , which occupies a different micro @-@ habitat on the eastern side of the Serranía del

Perijá at altitudes of 1 @, @ 500 ? 1 @, @ 900 m ( 4 @, @ 900 ? 6 @, @ 200 ft ) ; or that it may be found within the range of the pale @-@ bellied tapaculo in the lower reaches of the Serranía de Los Motilones mountain range , south of the Serranía del Perijá .

= = Threats and protection = =

Jorge Enrique Avendaño et al. wrote in the original description of the Perijá tapaculo that the size and quality of the species ' range are being reduced , although it can tolerate a certain level of fragmentation of its range . Its natural habitat covers about 5 @, @ 000 square kilometres ( 1 @, @ 900 sq mi ) . The description suggests that this species meets the International Union for Conservation of Nature ( IUCN ) criteria for an endangered species . The authors believe that to protect the Perijá tapaculo , conservation measures on the Colombian side of the border should reflect those on the Venezuelan side , as the forests of the Serranía del Perijá have been largely destroyed on the Colombian side by logging activities and forest clearance for agriculture .

On 28 January 2014 , prior to the formal description of the bird , the Chamicero de Perijá Bird Reserve was created by Fundación ProAves to maintain one of Colombia 's most fragile habitats . In addition to the Perijá tapaculo , several other Perijá @-@ endemic endangered species , such as the Perijá metaltail ( *Metallura iracunda* ) and Perijá thistletail ( *Asthenes perijana* ) are protected within this reserve 's 749 hectares ( 1 @, @ 850 acres ) . The Colombian section of the Serranía del Perijá is dangerous for scientific excursions due to the presence of the FARC guerrilla group in the region . In Venezuela , the Sierra de Perijá National Park covers 300 @, @ 000 hectares ( 740 @, @ 000 acres ) and partially protects the habitat of the Perijá tapaculo .