

Little Wood Rail *Aramides mangle*, a Brazilian endemic, found in French Guiana

by Johan Ingels, Maxime Dechelle & Rasmus Bøgh

Received 18 January 2011

Little Wood Rail *Aramides mangle* is the smallest (c.30 cm) of the seven Neotropical *Aramides* species. It occurs in coastal eastern Brazil between approximately 00°S and 25°S, i.e. from north-east Pará to south-east Paraná (Taylor & van Perlo 1998). An early claim of its occurrence as far north as Guyana lacked evidence (Burmeister 1856), and following Peters (1934) and Hellmayr & Conover (1942) subsequent authors have considered Little Wood Rail as a Brazilian endemic (Meyer de Schauensee 1970, Taylor 1996, Taylor & van Perlo 1998).



Figure 1. Little Wood Rail *Aramides mangle*, Kourou River, Kourou, French Guiana, 10 July 2010 (Maxime Dechelle)

A. mangle occurs in dense coastal mangroves, swamps and nearby forest, although it also occurs inland, with records from humid highland forest in the Serra do Mar and northern Ceará, and in dense *caatinga*, sometimes far from water, in the interior from Ceará to Bahia (Sick 1993, Taylor 1996, Taylor & van Berlo 1998, Albano & Girão 2008, Redies 2010). However, it is uncertain if the species is resident in the Caatinga, or whether it departs in the dry season, as this wood rail probably undertakes local migrations (Sick 1993, Redies 2010).

Just one species of *Aramides* is known in French Guiana. Grey-necked Wood Rail *A. cajanea* is a large wood rail (c.40 cm), widespread but local in marshy areas and along creeks in lowland forest. Its head to upper mantle and breast is grey, and there is a faint to distinct rufous patch on the occiput (Tostain *et al.* 1992, Taylor 1996, Taylor & van Berlo 1998). Undocumented records of the small Rufous-necked Wood Rail *A. axillaris* (Tostain *et al.* 1992) are now considered unreliable and the species is excluded from the avifauna of French Guiana by the Comité d'Homologation de Guyane (CHG) (O. Claessens & A. Renaudier pers. comm.). *A. axillaris* is only slightly larger than Little Wood Rail, and its head, neck and ventral plumage are typically bright chestnut.

On 10 July 2010 at 10.47 h, MD photographed a wood rail (Fig. 1) foraging at low tide in mangrove along the Kourou River near the port in the centre of Kourou (05°09'N, 52°39'W), c.1 km from the Atlantic coast. MD identified the bird as a Grey-necked Wood Rail, but when RB saw the photographs, he identified it as *A. mangle*, which was confirmed by JL. Little Wood Rail differs from all congeners in having a red base to the maxilla, and in the grey hindneck and rufous lower foreneck. These are the main diagnostic characters for identification. Moreover, rufous on the belly extending to the lower breast and therefore not forming a clear-cut 'band' distinguishes it from Grey-necked Wood Rail. The record was validated by the CHG as the first documented record of Little Wood Rail for French Guiana and the Guiana Shield (O. Claessens & A. Renaudier pers. comm.).

The discovery of Little Wood Rail so far north of the Amazon was most unexpected. The distance along the Atlantic coast between its northernmost Brazilian locality, Vista Alegre do Pará, near Marapanim (00°39'S, 47°45'W) in extreme north-east Pará (Novaes 1981), and Kourou at 05°N in French Guiana, is c.900 km. Further observations are needed to establish whether resident populations of Little Wood Rail occur in Amapá (Brazil) and French Guiana, or whether this bird was a vagrant. The latter hypothesis seems more likely, considering the species' known range. If so, the occurrence of a Little Wood Rail so far from its breeding grounds and north of the Amazon illustrates the species' dispersive capabilities, as already noted for other Rallidae (Remsen & Parker 1990). Should a resident population in French Guiana be confirmed, then this *Aramides* would no longer be a Brazilian endemic.

Acknowledgements

We are grateful to Alexandre Renaudier, Olivier Claessens and the Comité d'Homologation de Guyane for information concerning the record's validation. We are obliged to Frederick Brammer, Olivier Claessens and Des Jackson for providing important literature and for helpful comments on the manuscript.

References:

- Albano, C. & Girão, W. 2008. Aves das matas úmidas das serras de Aratanha, Baturité e Maranguape, Ceará. *Rev. Bras. Orn.* 16: 142–154.
- Burmeister, H. 1856. *Systematische Uebersicht der Thiere Brasiliens, welche während einer Reise durch die Provinzen von Rio de Janeiro und Minas geraës gesammelt oder beobachtet wurden*, Teil 3. Verlag Georg Reimer, Berlin.
- Hellmayr, C. E. & Conover, B. 1942. Catalogue of birds of the Americas and adjacent islands, pt. 1(1). *Publ. Field Mus. Nat. Hist., Zool. Ser.* 13(1).
- Meyer de Schauensee, R. 1970. *A guide to the birds of South America*. Livingston Publishing, Wynnewood, PA.
- Novaes, F. C. 1981. Sobre algumas aves do litoral do Estado do Pará. *Anais Soc. Sul-Riogrand. Orn.* 2: 5–8.
- Peters, J. L. 1934. *Check-list of birds of the world*, vol. 2. Mus. Comp. Zool., Cambridge, MA.

- Redies, H. 2010. Little Wood Rail *Aramides mangle* in the Caatinga: vocalisations and habitat. *Cotinga* 32: 137–141.
- Remsen, J. V. & Parker, T. A. 1990. Seasonal distribution of the Azure Gallinule (*Porphyryla flavirostris*), with comments on vagrancy in rails and gallinules. *Wilson Bull.* 102: 380–399.
- Sick, H. 1993. *Birds in Brazil: a natural history*. Princeton Univ. Press.
- Taylor, P. B. 1996. Family Rallidae (rails, gallinules and coots). Pp. 108–209 in del Hoyo, J., Elliott, A. & Sargatal, J. (eds.). *Handbook of the birds of the world*, vol. 3. Lynx Edicions, Barcelona.
- Taylor, B. & van Perlo, B. 1998. *Rails. A guide to the rails, crakes, gallinules and coots of the world*. Pica Press, Robertsbridge.
- Tostain, O., Dujardin, J.-L., Énard, C. & Thiollay, J.-M. 1992. *Oiseaux de Guyane*. Société d'Études Ornithologiques, Brunoy.
- Addresses:* Johan Ingels, Galgenberglaan 9, B-9070 Destelbergen, Belgium, e-mail: johan.ingels@skynet.be.
Maxime Dechelle, 34ter rue de Villandry, F-37130 Lignières de Touraine, France, e-mail: anubis18mx@hotmail.fr.
Rasmus Bøgh, Asgaardsvej 20, DK-8700 Horsens, Denmark, e-mail: rasmus_boegh@yahoo.dk