

## SHORT COMMUNICATIONS

### On the Status of *Xolmis dominicana*

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The Black-and-white Monjita (*Xolmis dominicana*), a striking flycatcher endemic to south-central South America from coastal southern Brazil (Paraná and Rio Grande do Sul) and central Paraguay south through the more mesic chaco of Argentina to the province of Buenos Aires (Meyer de Schauensee, 1970, *A Guide to the Birds of South America*, Wynnewood, Pa., Livingston Pub. Co.; Olrog 1959, *Las Aves Argentinas*, Tucumán, Universidad Nacional de Tucumán, Instituto "Miguel Lillo"; Short, 1975, *Bull. Amer. Mus. Nat. Hist.* 165:167), is a poorly known bird. While studying marsh breeding blackbirds near Pinamar on the coast of Buenos Aires Province, I observed monjitas regularly throughout my stay from early October to late November 1973, but encountered them only within 1 km of the inward edge of the large coastal sand dunes. They were fairly common between Pinamar and Villa Gessel, a distance of 10 km, but probably occur both south and north of this section where there are no access roads to the coast. I found foraging monjitas in the swales among the dunes and the sedge meadows joining the dunes with large marshes behind them, where the vegetation ranged from clumps of pampas grass (*Cordateria selloana*) with relatively open space between them to low sedge-rush-grass meadows with clumps of low dense vegetation interspersed with more open patches. Often there was standing water up to 10–15 cm deep. Though I worked extensively in all other marsh vegetation types in the region and regularly traversed upland habitats, I never encountered the species elsewhere.

Monjitas hunted by sitting on low perches, usually less than 2 m high but always higher than the prevailing vegetation, affording views of the ground. Favored perches included pampas grass inflorescences, fence posts and wires, and weedy composite stalks protruding above the grasses and sedges. I witnessed only a few captures, but in all cases prey were taken from the ground by dropping from an elevated perch as is typical also of the more open-country *Xolmis irupero*. One bird observed on a high telephone wire was preening rather than hunting.

At one sedge-rush meadow I regularly observed three monjitas during November. Two of them, presumably adults, were pure white dorsally. The third, with brownish-gray tips to feathers on the nape of the neck and back, was probably a fledged young of the year, already foraging entirely for itself.

Common breeding birds in the same habitats with *Xolmis* were the Spectacled Tyrant (*Hymenops perspicillata*), Great Kiskadee (*Pitangus sulphuratus*), Freckle-faced Thornbird (*Phacellodomus striaticollis*), Lesser Canastero (*Asthenes pyrrholeuca*), Bay-capped Wren-spinetail (*Spartanoica maluroides*), Correndera Pipit (*Anthus correndera*), Yellow-winged Blackbird (*Agelaius thilius*), Brown-and-yellow Marshbird (*Pseudoleistes virescens*), Great Pampa-finch (*Embernagra platensis*), Grassland Yellow-finch (*Sicalis luteola*), and Rufous-collared Sparrow (*Zonotrichia capensis*).

The apparent rarity of *Xolmis dominicana* is probably due to its rather restricted habitat requirements. Within the chaco it is confined to bushy growth in open country and edges of gallery forest (Short, op. cit.). It appears to require open areas in seasonally wet habitats where the ground is readily visible from low perches. These conditions are not obviously as restricted as the range and habitat distribution of the species seem to imply, and its hunting methods are similar to other members of its genus, some of which are much more common and widespread. Whether competition with these species is partly responsible for its restricted range can only be conjectured.

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### Auditory Censusing of Greater Sandhill Cranes

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The use of tape recorded avian vocalizations has recently proven to be a valuable aid in the censusing and capture of many species. Bohl (1956) used a taped assembly call to locate and census Chukars (*Alectoris chukar*) in New Mexico. Stirling and Bendell (1966) have used recorded calls of the