

Rediscovery of *Hylopezus (macularius) auricularis*: Distinctive Song and Habitat Indicate Species Rank

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The first four specimens of *Hylopezus (macularius) auricularis* were collected in northern Bolivia in 1937 by Alfonso M. Olalla, who was leading an expedition undertaken by the Royal Natural History Museum in Stockholm, Sweden. The taxon first was described as a new species (Gyldenstolpe 1941), but later was named as a subspecies of the Spotted Antpitta (*H. macularius*; Gyldenstolpe 1945).

On 5 April 1994, about 10 km from the original collecting site, after playback of a song unknown to me, a bird showed up that I described in my notebook as "a Spotted Antpitta with a big black mask." In consulting with Morton and Phyllis Isler, we concluded that I had rediscovered *auricularis*. A specimen was collected on 12 June 1995, compared with the original four specimens in Stockholm (and found to belong to the same taxon; P. Ericsson pers. comm.), and deposited in the Natural History Museum "Noel Kempff Mercado" in Santa Cruz, Bolivia (specimen 1220).

The song is a long, fast, slightly descending series of short notes (Fig. 1; see also Mayer 1996, 1st recording). It resembles the song of the Amazonian Antshrike (*Thamnophilus amazonicus*), but is louder. The song is very unlike the songs of other taxa within the *Hylopezus macularius* species group (Fig. 2) and also is unlike the song of any other species of *Hylopezus* (S. Maijer unpubl. data, Ridgely and Tudor 1994). I heard a call consisting of a quick succession of two or three melodious notes followed by a shorter, lower-pitched note (Fig. 3A; see also Mayer 1996, 2nd recording) and another consisting of a single note (Fig. 3B; see also Mayer 1996, 3rd recording). Both calls were always heard at dusk and were the last sounds of the day that I heard from the diurnal birds in the area. The more elaborate call (Fig. 3A) also is used when the bird is alarmed.

I heard and saw the species along the short road (2 km) from Riberalta, departamento Beni, to Hamburgo (11°02'S, 66°06'W; elevation 135 m), which is where a ferry crosses the Río Beni to Victoria (Victoria is where the first four specimens were collected in what is now departamento Pando). During three weeks of intensive birding around Riberalta, I did not hear the bird anywhere else. J. V. Remsen (pers. comm.) saw *auricularis* in similar habitat ("low, dense, wet second-growth") in 1976 between Lago Tumi Chucua and the Río Beni (11°07'S, 66°10'W), less than 20 km from the other two locations, but did not realize the significance of the observation.

Habitats in the low-lying and muddy area where I found the bird are heavily disturbed by people, and range from clay pits (for brick-making) to grassy open spaces to low secondary forest. All of the birds that I heard sang from thickets adjacent to open areas. I did not hear singing birds inside a muddy forest, whereas at least two birds were singing at its edge. However, a bird giving alarm calls was seen inside this forest, so it seems possible that birds go from the forest interior to the edge to sing. Other taxa within the *H. macularius* group appear to occur primarily in *terra firme* forest (M. and P. Isler pers. comm.), so its habitat sets *auricularis* apart.

The only other ground-dwelling antbird that I found with *auricularis* was the Black-faced Antthrush (*Formicarius analis*), which occurred with *auricularis* only inside the forest. It may be noteworthy that nowhere around Riberalta did I hear the conspicuous song of the Amazonian Antpitta (*Hylopezus berlepschi*).

I recommend that species rank be reconsidered for *auricularis* on the basis of its distinctive plumage and unique song, which is supported by differences in habitat with other taxa in the *macularius* species group. I propose the English name Masked Antpitta, based on its distinctive plumage character.

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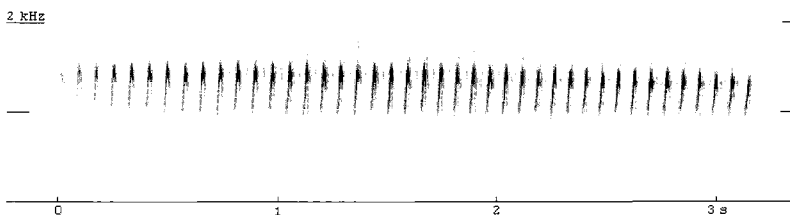


FIG. 1. Song of *Hylopezus (macularius) auricularis* recorded in response to playback, 1 April 1994, Riberalta, Beni, Bolivia (11°02'S, 66°06'W).

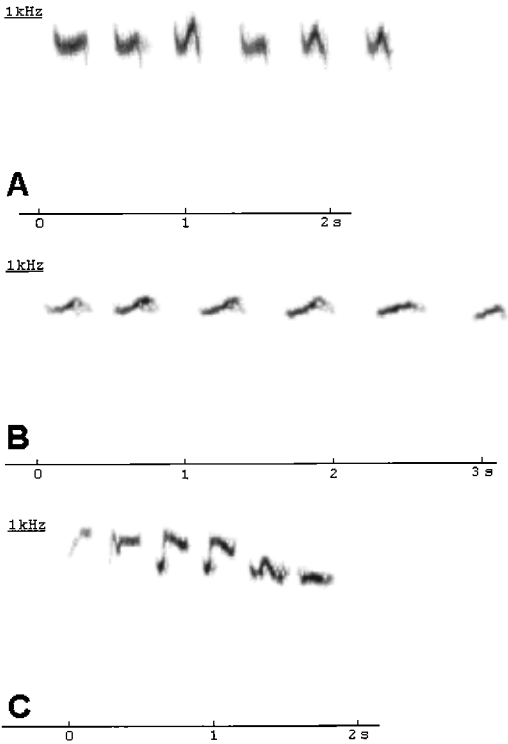


FIG. 2. Songs of other taxa within the *Hylopezus macularius* complex. (A) *H. m. macularius*, 25 February 1996, Serra do Navio, Amapá, Brazil (01°00'N, 52°20'W), recorded after playback by Tom Gullick; bird was not collected. (B) *H. m. paraensis*, 25 September 1996, Alta Floresta, Mato Grosso, Brazil (09°41'S, 55°54'W), recorded by Andrew Whittaker; bird was not collected. (C) Presumed *H. m. diversa*, 21 August 1985, Pithecia Biological Station, Peru, (05°05'S, 74°35'W), recorded after playback by Robert Ridgely; bird was not observed.

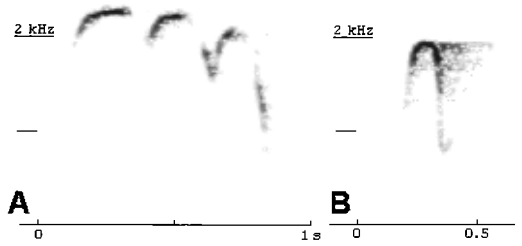


FIG. 3. Calls of *Hylopezus (macularius) auricularis*. (A) Excited bird at 1000, 12 June 1995. (B) Bird at 1845 (dusk), 28 March 1994. Both recordings made at Riberalta, Beni, Bolivia (11°02'S, 66°06'W).

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