



Pseudasthenes, a new genus of ovenbird (Aves: Passeriformes: Furnariidae)

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Abstract

Phylogenetic analysis of the family Furnariidae (Aves: Passeriformes) indicates that the genus *Asthenes* is polyphyletic, consisting of two groups that are not sister taxa. *Pseudasthenes*, a new genus of ovenbird, is described for one of these groups. The four species included in the new genus, formerly placed in *Asthenes*, are *P. humicola*, *P. patagonica*, *P. steinbachi*, and *P. cactorum*.

Key words: *Asthenes*, *Oreophylax*, *Schizoeaca*, phylogeny, taxonomy

Asthenes Reichenbach 1853, a genus of the Neotropical avian family Furnariidae, currently contains 22 species of small ovenbirds restricted to Andean and southern South American temperate and subtropical regions, where they inhabit open areas dominated by rocks, shrubs and grasses (Remsen 2003). Members of the genus, commonly known as canasteros, are extremely diverse in behavior, ecology, and nest architecture, suggesting that *Asthenes* is not monophyletic (Pacheco *et al.* 1996; Zyskowski & Prum 1999; Remsen 2003; Vasconcelos *et al.* 2008).

A recently published phylogeny of the Furnariidae provided the first genetic evidence of lack of monophyly in *Asthenes* (Irestedt *et al.* 2006). This phylogeny included two species of *Asthenes*, one of which—*A. cactorum* Koepcke (Cactus Canastero)—was sister to *Pseudoseisura* Reichenbach, whereas the other—*A. urubambensis* (Chapman) (Line-fronted Canastero)—formed a clade with *Oreophylax* Hellmayr and *Schizoeaca* Cabanis. Gonzalez and Wink's (2008) phylogeny of the Synallaxinae included three species of *Asthenes*. They found that *A. cactorum* and *A. humicola* (Kittlitz) (Dusky-tailed Canastero) formed a clade that was sister to *Pseudoseisura*, whereas *A. urubambensis* formed a clade with *Schizoeaca* and *Oreophylax*. In a broader genus-level study of the infraorder Furnariides, Moyle *et al.* (2009) found *Asthenes* to be paraphyletic with respect to *Schizoeaca* in that *S. helleri* Chapman (Puna Thistletail) was nested within a group that contained *A. humilis* (Cabanis) (Streak-throated Canastero), *A. urubambensis*, and *A. baeri* (Berlepsch) (Short-billed Canastero). These findings suggested the need for a new phylogenetic classification for taxa currently included in *Asthenes* and related genera.

As part of a project to reconstruct the phylogenetic relationships of all species in the Furnariidae from DNA sequences, our extensive taxon-sampling allowed us to determine conclusively that the genus *Asthenes* consists of two groups that are not sister taxa. One group consists of four species of *Asthenes* (*A. cactorum*, *A. steinbachi* (Hartert) (Steinbach's Canastero), *A. patagonica* (d'Orbigny) (Patagonian Canastero), and *A. humicola*), whereas the second group consists of all remaining species of *Asthenes* as well as all species sampled from the genus *Schizoeaca* and *Oreophylax*. The type species of *Asthenes* (*A. sordida* (Lesson), currently considered a subspecies of *A. pyrrholeuca* (Vieillot) (Sharp-billed Canastero)) belongs to the large second group. Because no generic name is available for the clade consisting of *A. cactorum*, *A. steinbachi*, *A.*