



Article

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Clinal pattern of morphological variation in *Sakesphorus luctuosus* (Lichtenstein, 1823), with comments on the enigmatic *Sakesphorus hagmanni* Miranda-Ribeiro, 1927 (Passeriformes: Thamnophilidae)

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Abstract

Sakesphorus luctuosus (Glossy Antshrike) is endemic to Brazil, harboring two subspecies. The nominal subspecies is widespread in the Amazon region, and *S. l. araguayae* is endemic to the Rio Araguaia valley. In this paper we investigated the hypothesis that *S. l. araguayae* represents the end of a cline. We examined 588 specimens housed in Brazilian, North American and European museums and based our conclusions on plumage coloration and morphometric characters. We found no significant differences in morphometric characters between subspecies, except for culmen length, which was slightly shorter in *S. l. araguayae*, but with wide overlap in measurements. The main proposed diagnostic character between subspecies (length of the white tips to tail feathers) showed clinal variation, with northern birds showing more white on the tail, and southern birds showing less white on the tail, irrespective of hydrographic basin. The other diagnostic character proposed (width of the white edges to the outer webs of the scapular feathers) showed high individual variation and no taxonomic consistency. We conclude that *S. l. araguayae* is a junior synonym of the nominal taxon. On the other hand, *S. hagmanni*, known only from the holotype and long thought to be a junior synonym of the nominal taxon, proved to be a unique specimen that should be considered as *species inquirenda* until further investigations determine its status.

Key words: Glossy Antshrikes, Rio Araguaia, river-created-habitats, taxonomy

Introduction

The Glossy Antshrike *Sakesphorus luctuosus* (Lichtenstein, 1823) (Thamnophilidae) is endemic to the Amazon region of Brazil (Sick 1997; Zimmer & Isler 2003; Ridgely & Tudor 2009), where it is found mainly in river-created habitats, inhabiting dense successional riparian thickets in areas subject to seasonal flooding (Renssen & Parker 1983; Zimmer & Isler 2003; Ridgely & Tudor 2009). The nomenclature and taxonomic history of this species is summarized below.

Lanius luctuosus Lichtenstein, 1823 was described from a male specimen collected in “Pará” and housed in the Museum für Naturkunde, Berlin, Germany. This specimen was collected by Friedrich Wilhelm Sieber, who collected for 11 years (1801–1812) in the Brazilian state of Pará, Amazon region, working as a servant of the Count Johann Centurius von Hoffmannsegg (Stresemann 1950). The type locality was subsequently designated by Hellmayr (1924) as “Cametá, Rio Tocantins”, a well known ornithological locality in the state of Pará (Paynter & Traylor 1991) visited by Sieber (Stresemann 1950). Pinto (1947) stated that the type locality should be Belém, the capital of the state of Pará, because this city was also known as Pará at the beginning of the 19th century. Nevertheless, we agree with Hellmayr (1937, p. 141) that “Pará means doubtless the province and not the city of that name” because: 1) some birds labeled by Sieber as collected in “Pará”, such as *Mimus s. saturninus*, do not occur in Belém (Novaes & Lima 2009); and 2) *S. luctuosus* is not a common species in the Belém area (see Appendix). This taxon was subsequently allocated to the genus *Thamnophilus* by Sclater (1855) and *Myrmelastes* by Ménégaux & Hellmayr (1906), until Hellmayr (1924) transferred it to the genus *Sakesphorus*, in which it has been included since.