

Scientific note

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The identity of No. 236 Chiclí and No. 237 Cógogo**Paul Smith^{1,2}¹ FAUNA Paraguay, Encarnación, Dpto. Itapúa, Paraguay; www.faunaparaguay.com² Para La Tierra, Centro IDEAL, Mariscal Estigarribia 321 c/ Tie. Capurro, Pilar, Dpto. Ñeembucú, Paraguay;
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Abstract. The descriptions of birds provided by Félix de Azara (1742–1821) from his time in Paraguay constituted some of the first and most detailed descriptions of the South American avifauna from the period. Whilst many formed the basis for scientific names still in use today, others have remained inconclusively identified. In this paper the identities of two of these descriptions referring to spinetails of the genus *Synallaxis* are elucidated. There has been considerable disagreement amongst previous authors as to the correct identity of two of these descriptions. No. 236 Chiclí is shown to refer to Sooty-fronted Spinetail *Synallaxis frontalis* and No. 237 Cógogo to Pale-breasted Spinetail *S. albescens*.

Key words. Pale-breasted Spinetail, Sooty-fronted Spinetail, *Synallaxis frontalis*, *Synallaxis albescens*.

The ornithological magnum opus “Apuntamientos para la historia natural de los pájaros del Paraguay y Río de la Plata” (1802–1805) by the Spanish military engineer Félix de Azara (1742–1821) was one of the first serious attempts to document the avifauna of the Southern Cone of South America produced by a researcher living in the study area. Based in Asunción, Paraguay, Azara was a meticulous student of the fauna, geography and culture of the land he now called home, a broad area he called “Paraguay and La Plata”, which includes modern day eastern Argentina, Paraguay, extreme southern Brazil and Uruguay. Working in close conjunction with the Jesuit priest Padre Nosedá, who resided in the town of San Ignacio, Misiones department, he produced simple, but highly detailed descriptions of 448 different “species”, over half of which were unknown to science at that time. A detailed chronology of his movements, life and work is provided by Contreras (2010).

Despite over two centuries having passed since the publication of Azara's work, not all of Azara's descriptions have been conclusively associated with known species and a series of authors have attempted to identify and apply them to known taxa (Sonnini in Azara 1809; Hartlaub 1847; Burmeister 1861; von Berlepsch 1887; Bertoni 1901; Laubmann 1939; Pereyra 1945; Smith 2018; Smith et al. 2018). Despite this some species remain unidentified, whilst others have been the subject of disagreement between authors. In this paper I provide identifications for two of Azara's spinetails for which there has been no previous consensus in the literature. Note that Azara's

measurements are given in inches (= 25.4 mm), lines (= 2.21 mm) and varas (= 83.6 cm).

No. 236 CHICLÍ (Azara Volume 2: 266)

“Le doy este nombre, porque lo canta con claridad en tono alto y agudo, oyéndose de muy léjos, y repitiéndolo de modo, que las pausas no duran mas que los cantares. No dudo que la hembra es silenciosa, y que no difiere del macho; pues seguramente he visto y tenido cien individuos idénticos, todos en el Paraguay. Es estacionario y solitario sin abundar. Habita entre los caraguatas ó aloes y matorrales espesos, sin subir jamas á dos varas de altura, ni dexarse ver á descubierto. Está en movimiento continuo, sin salir á los campos, ni internarse en bosques grandes, y sin duda come arañas é insectos. Sus vuelos se reducen á pasar de un matorral á otro inmediato: y aunque no conoce esquivez, es difícil verle en sus guaridas, y al oírle se figurará el que no lo conozca que está en lo alto del árbol ó matorral, quando se halla al pie entre la ramazón ó caraguatás.

Longitud 6 ¼ pulgadas: cola 3: braza 7. El angosto tupé es pardo, y sobre la cabeza, el encuentro, cobijas y cola, de un bermellón algo obscurecido en la cola. De esta al cogote pardo acanelado, y los remos como la cola. Baxo de la cabeza hay una mancha de plumas negras, con las puntas casi blancas, que tapan lo negro quando están bien ordenadas. De allí al pecho pardo blanquizco, como la ceja y el costado de la cabeza. Baxo el cuerpo

mas blanquizco : sus costados como el lomo, pero mas claros; y las tapadas de canela clara y linda.

Remos 19, cóncavos y endebles, el cuarto mayor: la cola 10 plumas agudas, débiles y en escalera: la de afuera 24 lineas mas corta: pierna 13: tarso 10, verdoso aplomado: dedo medio 6 ½ : pico 5, muy comprimido por los costados, recto con la puntita poco corva, que excede á la mitad inferior, obscuro encima, blanquizco debaxo, y el iris color de caña roxiza.”

(My translation)

“I give it this name because it sings it with clarity in a high and sharp tone, being audible from far away, and repeating it in a way that the pauses between notes are of lesser duration than the notes themselves. I don’t doubt that the female is silent, and doesn’t differ from the male; in fact I have surely seen and had hundreds of identical individuals, all in Paraguay. It is resident and solitary, but not abundant. It lives amongst the bromeliads or aloes, and in dense scrub, without ever rising to a height of more than 1.67 metres, nor does it let itself be seen in the open. It is continuously on the move, without ever coming out into the fields or entering the great forests, and without a doubt it eats spiders and insects. Its flight is reduced to passing from one patch of scrub to the next: and although it isn’t shy, it is difficult to see it in its haunts, and upon hearing it the inexperienced observer will think that it is high in the tree or scrub, when in fact it is at the base amongst the bushes and bromeliads.

Length 158.8 mm: tail 76.2 mm: wing span 177.8 mm. The thin forehead is grey, and the top of the head, the wing bend, coverts and tail are bright reddish, slightly darker on the tail. From the forehead to the nape brownish-cinnamon, and the flight feathers like the tail. Under the head there is a spot of black feathers with the tips white, which cover the black when they are well ordered. From there to the breast brownish-grey, as with the supercilium and sides of the head. Under the body more greyish : the sides as the back, but paler; the underwing an attractive pale cinnamon.

Flight feathers 19, concave and weak, the fourth is longest: the tail with 10 sharp, weak feathers, increasing in size towards the centre pair: the outermost 53 mm shorter: leg 28.7 mm: tarsus 22.1 mm, greenish-grey: mid-toe 14.4 mm: bill 11.1 mm, very compressed at the sides, straight with a slightly hooked tip, that is longer than the lower mandible, dark grey above, pale grey below, with the iris the color of red rum.”

Associated with *Synallaxis ruficapilla* Vieillot, 1819 by Hartlaub (1847) and Burmeister (1861), *Synallaxis frontalis frontalis* von Pelzeln, 1859 by Bertoni (1901) and Laubmann (1939) and *Synallaxis albescens albescens* Temminck, 1823 by Pereyra (1945). The description of

the voice, habits, measurements, forehead and tail colour indeed identify it as Sooty-fronted Spinetail *Synallaxis frontalis* von Pelzeln, 1859, a species that is abundant and widespread in Paraguay (Guyra Paraguay 2005).

Though Pereyra (1945) noticed that the measurements and throat colour were more consistent with *S. frontalis*, he seems to have erred when he stated that the voice indicated *S. albescens*. Apparently unfamiliar with the species in the field and unduly convinced by the similarity of Azara’s call description to the common Argentinian name Pujiuí or Chiclí that he attributed to this species (today the former being a generic name for any *Synallaxis* spinetail in Argentina) he opted for *S. albescens*. In fact Azara’s name *Chiclí* (which is based on the call note) is a near perfect rendition of that of *S. frontalis*, and quite unlike the typical *wee-bidget* call given by Paraguayan *S. albescens*.

No. 237 CÓGOGO (Azara Volume 2: 268)

“Noseda y yo encontramos bastantes por septiembre y octubre en las cercanías del pueblo de S. Ignacio guazú del Paraguay; y observamos, que aunque iban solos, las hembras no estaban léjos, ni diferian en medidas y colores. El canto, peculiar del macho, no es brillante, pero puede pasar entre los adocenados, aunque tiene poca variedad, y lo repite con mucha frecuencia. Habita los matorralitos, mantillas y pillas de leña de los campos, sin internar en los bosques grandes, ni subir á las mantillas altas y aparentes; y desde el momento que se posa empieza á corretear lo interior y mas baxo de la escoba ó matorrañito, prefiriendo al parecer los secarrones y que tienen al pies mas broza que verdura. Tanto por su continua inquietud, como por el cuidado con que se esconde huyendo del lugar ó costado donde le puedan ver; es muy difícil matarlo. Sus vuelos son por lo comun cortos ; pero á veces los prolonga para buscar matorrales lejanos, con mayor velocidad de la que parece compete á sus alas. Vive de los insectos que pilla en dichos matorralitos y entre el pasto muy alto y cerrado. Le llamo Cógogo, porque me aseguran que asi canta en tiempo que no es de amor, con la gravedad y fuerza que un páxaro grande; pero no salgo fiador de que esto sea verdad.

Longitud 5 ⅔ pulgadas : cola 2 ¼, braza 6 ½. Viendo que este páxaro no diferia del anterior; maté á un Chiclí y á un Cógogo en el mismo dia para compararlos, buscando á uno y otro en sus respectivos domicilios, dirigiéndome por su voz, á fin de evitar toda equivocacion. Los exáminé con todo mi cuidado, y hallé que las formas del todo y de cada una de las partes eran absolutamente idénticas, sin que la mayor perspicacia pudiese notar, sino que el Chiclí tiene el ala ménos tendida. Por lo que hace á colores y el lugar que ocupan, son identicos, sin exceptuar los del pico, iris y tarso, pues aunque con la mayor atencion se nota que el Cógogo no tiene tan en-

Table 1. Mean and range measurements of Azara's descriptions compared with morphometrics of mist-netted individuals of the two proposed species (P. Smith unpublished data). *Synallaxis albescens* three individuals from Encarnación, Itapúa department (October 2005), Laguna Blanca, San Pedro department (November 2005) and Parque Nacional Teniente Enciso, Boquerón department (July 2006); *Synallaxis frontalis* four individuals from Encarnación, Itapúa department (August and October 2005).

	No. 237 Cógogo	<i>Synallaxis albescens</i> (n=3)	No. 236 Chiclí	<i>Synallaxis frontalis</i> (n=4)
Total Length	143.8	151 (148–159)	158.8	156.1 (155–157)
Tail	74.1	72.8 (67–77.5)	76.2	76.4 (75–78.5)
Wingspan	165.1	NA	177.8	NA
Leg	NA	NA	28.7	NA
Tarsus	NA	19.3 (18–20)	22.1	23.6 (23–25)
Middle Toe	NA	13.7 (12–16.5)	14.4	14.1 (13–15)
Bill	NA	10.5 (10–11)	11.1	12.4 (11.5–13)

cendida la cola, sobre la cabeza, y cobijas; y que el color sobre el cuerpo es poquito ménos acanelado, y por debajo algo mas blanquizo: estas diferencia son tan pequeñas que caben sobradamente en la misma especie, y solo se advierten en el cotejo inmediato, sin poderse expresar con palabras; de modo que pueden decirse nulas, y que es imposible distinguir los páxaros por otros caracteres que la voz y costumbres; pues aunque la magnitud sea algo diferente, es tan corta cosa, que cabe en la propia especie, y aun en el modo de medir.

Remos 19, poco cóncavos, no muy débiles, el primero bastante corto, y el tercero, cuarto y quinto iguales: cola 10 plumas en todo como la del Chiclí, y en ámbos la central agudísima, las demas no tanto: el resto como en el anterior."

(My translation)

"Noseda and I found many during September and October close to the town of San Ignacio Guazú in Paraguay; and we observed that, although they went alone, the females were not far away, and they didn't differ in form or colour. The song, unique to the male, is not brilliant, but can pass as mediocre, although it shows little variety and is repeated frequently. It inhabits scrub, bushes and wood piles in the fields, without entering the great forests, nor climbing the tallest most conspicuous bushes; and from the moment it lands it begins to hop around the interior and lowest bush, preferring it would seem the drier parts and with the base more brushy than leafy. It is extremely difficult to kill, as much for its constant restlessness as for the care it takes to hide itself by fleeing from the place it can be seen. Its flights are typically short; but occasionally they are prolonged to find more distant patches of scrub, with greater speed than it seems from how it beats its wings. It lives on insects that it finds in the aforementioned scrub and amongst the high, dense grass. I call it Cógogo, because they assure me that this is how it sings

outside of the reproductive season, with the gravity and strength of a large bird; but I cannot personally vouch for this being true.

Length 143.8 mm : tail 74.1 mm, wing span 165.1 mm. Seeing that this bird did not differ from the previous species, I killed a Chiclí and a Cógogo on the same day to compare them, looking for each one in their respective haunts, being guided by the voice so to avoid mistakes. I examined them with all my care, and found that the structure of both was absolutely identical, and with only the most careful attention was it noticeable that the Chiclí has the wing less elongated. In terms of colour and the parts of the body where they occur, they are identical, except for the bill, iris and tarsus, and with the greatest of attention it can be noted that the Cógogo does not have the colour of the tail, top of the head and coverts so brightly coloured; and that the colour of the upperparts is a little less cinnamon, and below it is somewhat paler : these differences are so slight that they fit within the variation of a single species, and they are only obvious in direct comparison, without being able to express them in words; to the point where it could be said they are non-existent and that it impossible to distinguish the species by characters other than the voice and their behaviour; you see although the size is somewhat different, it is so minor a difference that it is consistent with the same species, and even with the method of measurement.

Flight feathers 19, slightly concave, not very weak, the first very short, and the third, fourth and fifth equal: tail 10 feathers, as in the Chiclí, and in both the central feathers are very sharp, the others not so much: the rest is as for the previous species."

The identity of this form has been much debated, with Sonnini in Azara (1809) stating that it was a hitherto unknown species, Hartlaub (1847) noting only that the bird was not mentioned by Vieillot, Burmeister (1861) associating the description with *Synallaxis fuliginiceps*

(= *Leptasthenura fuliginiceps* d'Orbigny & Lafresnaye, 1837 which does not occur in Paraguay), von Berlepsch (1887) and Bertoni (1901) identifying it only so far as *Synallaxis* sp., Laubmann (1939) preferring not to offer an identification and Pereyra (1945) opting for *Synallaxis frontalis frontalis* von Pelzeln, 1859.

Azara notes that with Padre Nosedá they found “several during September and October close to the town of San Ignacio Guazú” (Misiones department). He describes this species as extremely similar to the “Chicli”, differing in voice, habitat, paler underparts, slightly smaller size (Tab. 1) and less “cinnamon” upperparts including the tail, crown and coverts which are less “brightly-coloured.” These differences are clear enough to identify this bird as Pale-breasted Spinetail *Synallaxis albescens* Temminck, 1823 in that area of Paraguay, where it occurs sympatrically with *S. frontalis* the only other species with which it may be confused (Guyra Paraguay 2005, Narosky & Yzurieta 2006).

Azara states that he uses the name Cógogo because he has been assured that this is how the bird sings in the non-breeding season “with the gravity and strength of a large bird”. However he clarifies that he cannot vouch for the veracity of that statement, indicating that he never heard the bird produce such a call. The description of the call is possibly due to confusion by locals with Chotoy Spinetail *Schoeniophylax phryganophila* Vieillot, 1817, a superficially similar bird that occurs in the same areas and habitats, and with a call that may be rendered in such a way. Regardless Azara’s admission that the information is secondhand and the fact that no Paraguayan *Synallaxis* is known to change its call during the non-breeding season is enough to discard it from consideration.

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