

Tapera naevia (Striped Cuckoo or American Striped Cuckoo)

Family: Cuculidae (Cuckoos and Anis)

Order: Cuculiformes (Cuckoos, Anis and Turacos)

Class: Aves (Birds)



Fig. 1. Striped cuckoo, *Tapera naevia*.

[https://www.icesi.edu.co/wiki_aves_colombia/tiki-index.php?page=Tres+Pies+--+Tapera+naevia, downloaded 5 March 2017]

TRAITS. *Tapera naevia* is the only member of the genus *Tapera* (Wikipedia, 2012). Adult male and female striped cuckoos are alike, measuring 26-30cm in length with a long tail, generally streaked brown and black with a buff chest (Fig. 1). The wings are brown or reddish-brown heavily streaked with black, measuring 101-121mm in females and 103-125mm in males. There is a white streak above the eyes, the throat white with brown and black streaks, the belly is white streaked with black. When in flight the base of the wings is white. Juveniles have spots instead of streaks (Fig. 2) (Payne and Sorenson, 2005).

DISTRIBUTION. *Tapera naevia* occurs from the south of Mexico to Venezuela, Paraguay, northern Argentina and Trinidad (Fig. 3); no sightings have been made in Tobago (Erritzae et al., 2012). There are a great number of subspecies which are identified primarily by differences in size; populations in the north are smaller than those in the south (Lowther, 2010).

HABITAT AND ACTIVITY. *Tapera naevia* are found mostly in mangroves, shrubs, open areas, and temporarily wet or humid forests and bush (Erritzae et al., 2012). These birds are common at approximately 800-2500m above sea level in South America (Payne and Sorensen, 2005). They are known as shy and solitary birds and tend to hide in bushes or trees (Wikipedia, 2012). They are mostly heard but rarely seen (Payne and Sorensen, 2005).

FOOD AND FEEDING. The striped cuckoo feeds primarily on grasshoppers, caterpillars and other insects (Arango, 2015). The young are parasitic and will eat whatever food is brought to them by their foster parents. They are commonly solitary eaters and their technique to catch prey on the ground is by landing and hopping, they flush their alula wing and by spreading them they move in to attack the prey (Payne and Sorensen, 2005).

REPRODUCTION. Eggs are laid in the nests of other birds, that is, these cuckoos practise brood-parasitism. The nest of the chosen host is usually small. The female striped cuckoo would enter the host nest through a narrow opening at dawn and lay when the host parents are out foraging. The nesting bird would repair any damage done by the striped cuckoo upon entry. Its eggs are white, blue or greenish-blue (Arango, 2015; Payne and Sorensen, 2005); colour of eggs depends on the geographic location and host species. One or sometimes two eggs are laid in the host nest with an incubation period of 15-18 days; this also varies with the geographical location. When the nestling *Tapera naevia* is big enough, within 1-3 days of hatching, it kills the host young with its bites, and the host bird would then remove its dead young from the nest. The young cuckoo grows to twice the size of the host young within days (Payne and Sorensen, 2005; Erritzae et al., 2012).

BEHAVIOUR. Apart from being generally solitary, they forage on the ground or in very low vegetation. When they are resting on the ground they are observed balancing from side to side and moving their alula wing rapidly for social interaction (Arango, 2015). It uses a mellow whistle which typically lasts for 0.5-0.6 seconds. The young imitates its host by giving a shorter whistle than the one given by the adult *Tapera naevia* (Payne and Sorensen, 2005). When frightened or disturbed it flashes its alula wing which is very noticeable against its pale chest (Erritzae et al., 2012).

APPLIED ECOLOGY. This species is listed as Least Concern (IUCN, 2017) because they are generally common in a wide range of geographic areas (Erritzae et al., 2012).

REFERENCES

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Author: Sofia Mendoza

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Fig. 2. Juvenile striped cuckoo, *Tapera naevia*.

[http://neotropical.birds.cornell.edu/portal/species/gallery?p_p_spp=24014, downloaded 3 March 2017]

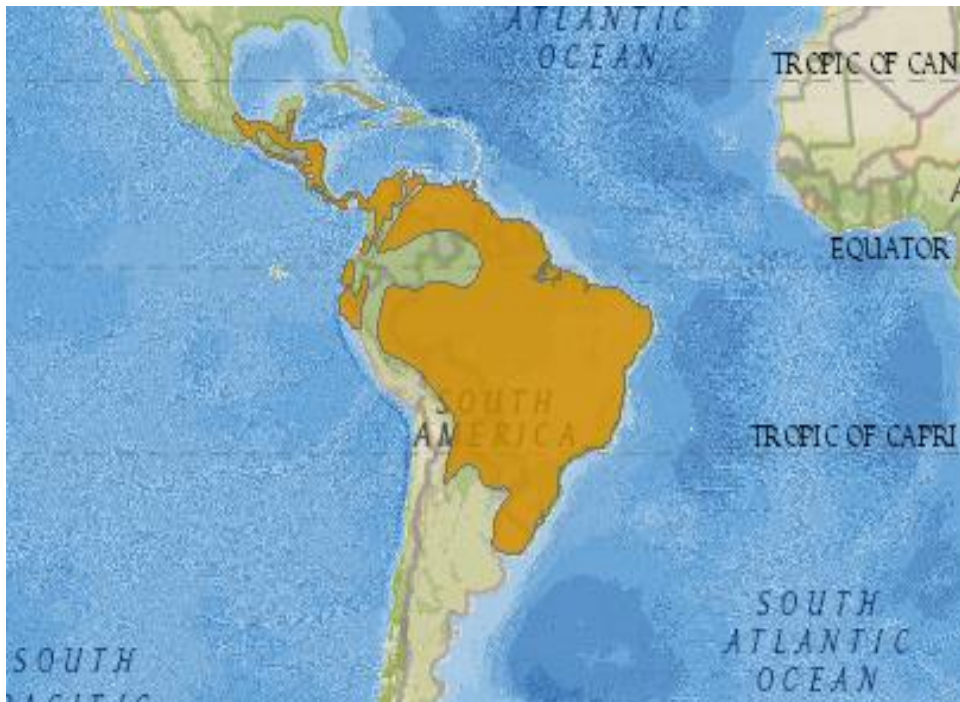


Fig. 3. Distribution of *Tapera naevia*.

[<http://maps.iucnredlist.org/map.html?id=22684444>, downloaded 5 March 2017]

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