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NOTES ON GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION

First record of *Vanellus resplendens* (Tschudi, 1843) (Aves, Charadriidae) from Podocarpus National Park, Ecuador

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Abstract. We document the first record of *Vanellus resplendens* (Tschudi, 1843) (Charadriidae) in Podocarpus National Park, southern Ecuador. On 15 May 2025, an adult was observed at 2,802 m a.s.l. in El Tiro (Abra de Zamora), Zamora Chinchipe. This record extends the species' Ecuadorian range 60 km east from El Oro and 110 km south from Azuay, reduces the gap between northern and southern portions of its discontinuous Andean distribution, and underscores the park's importance for conserving high-Andean bird assemblages.

Key words. Andes, Huancabamba depression, new record, range extension

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Introduction

Vanellus resplendens (Tschudi, 1843), the Andean Lapwing, is a high-Andean shorebird belonging to the family Charadriidae. It typically occurs between 2,700 and 4,700 m a.s.l. and has a discontinuous distribution that extends from the central Andes of southern Colombia to northern Loja Province in Ecuador. It is largely absent across much of the Huancabamba Depression (Ordóñez-Delgado et al. 2019) but reappears from northern Peru towards western Bolivia, northeastern Chile, and northwest-ern Argentina (Navas and Camperi 2005; Wiersma and Kirwan 2024).

Vanellus resplendens is about 34 cm, and has coral-pink legs, a reddish iris, adark-tipped bill, and a pale-grey head and breast. A thin black line separates the breast from the belly. The foreface is whitish, and the upperparts are bronzy olive (Freile and Restall, 2018; Wiersma and Kirwan 2024). Within its range, *V. resplendens* is generally common and easily observed, inhabiting high-Andean lakes, rivers, paramo grasslands, and agricultural areas (Ortiz 2015; Freile and Restall 2018; Montenegro-Ávila et al. 2022). Its global (BirdLife International 2025) and national (Freile et al. 2019) conservation status is Least Concern. Its populations are stable and, indeed, some authors have suggested that its dis-tribution is expanding as a result of changes in land use that are affecting high-Andean ecosystems (Mena-Valenzuela 2018).

Documenting new localities for species with discontinuous ranges is essential for understanding ecological requirements and their responses to land-use and climate changes. Southern Ecuador remains undersurveyed, and transitional paramo–cloud forest ecotones, such as the El Tiro, are espe-cially poorly known. Here, we present the first confirmed record of *V. resplendens* from Podocarpus National Park; this represents the southernmost locality in Ecuador, and our observation reduces the distributional gap between known populations of this species.

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Methods

On 15 May 2025, we observed an adult *Vanellus resplendens* on the northern edge of Podocarpus National Park (03°59′24″S, 079°08′42″W; 2,800 m a.s.l.) in the sector of the park known as El Tiro (Ordóñez-Delgado et al. 2020; Székely et al. 2020), on the border between Loja and Zamora Chinchipe provinces (Figure 1). The bird remained in the area for at least three days and was seen again at 10:00 h on 16 and 17 May.

The upper part of Abra de Zamora harbours a paramo ecosystem characterized by predominantly herbaceous and low-shrub vegetation adapted to cold climatic conditions and high solar radiation (Ministerio del Ambiente de Ecuador 2013). The climate is humid and cold, with annual precipitation exceeding 4,385 mm (Rollenbeck and Bendix 2011) and a mean annual temperature of 7.3 °C, which is typical of high-Andean zones (Maldonado 2002). The area is frequently covered by moderate to dense fog and exposed to strong winds for much of the day. Representative plant taxa include grasses of the genus *Calamagrostis* Adans., rosette-forming bromeliads of the genus *Puya* Molina, and shrubs from the families Ericaceae Durande and Melastomataceae Juss., including *Miconia* Ruiz & Pav. (Lozano 2002).

Results

***Vanellus resplendens* Tschudi, 1843**

Figures 1, 2

New record. ECUADOR – **Loja** • Parque Nacional Podocarpus; El Tiro - Abra de Zamora; 03°59′24″S, 079°08′42″W; 2800 m a.s.l; 15.V.2025; Wilson Zúñiga-Sarango, Jhony Arboleda and Leonardo Ordóñez-Delgado obs.; 1 adult.

Identification. The following morphological characteristics were used to assign the individual to the species *V. resplendens*: pink legs and bill, grey breast and head, and iridescent wing feathers (Figure 2B, C); our observations were corroborated with the species descriptions in the field guides of Ridgely and Greenfield (2006) and Freile and Restall (2018). In flight, the greater coverts and tertials display a characteristic white "V" pattern (Figure 2D). Its flight was slow and undulating, repeatedly returning to the same point or nearby. Vocalizations deposited in the Xeno-Canto database (Xeno-Canto 2025) under code XC999117 (Ordóñez-Delgado 2025) were compared with other recordings available on the site.

Vanellus resplendens shares certain similarities with *V. chilensis* (Molina, 1782), Southern Lapwing; however, in Ecuador the geographic distributions of these two species do not overlap. *Vanellus resplendens* mainly inhabits páramos above 3,000 m a.s.l., whereas *V. chilensis* occurs in the northern lowlands of both the eastern and western regions of the country, with scattered records in the northern inter-Andean valleys up to 2,600 m (Freile and Restall 2018). Additionally, *V. resplendens* lacks the crest and the characteristic black facial, throat, and chest pattern present in *V. chilensis* (Santos 2020).

Discussion

This record constitutes the first documented evidence of *Vanellus resplendens* from Podocarpus National Park, extending the species' Ecuadorian range 60 km east of the nearest occurrence in El Oro

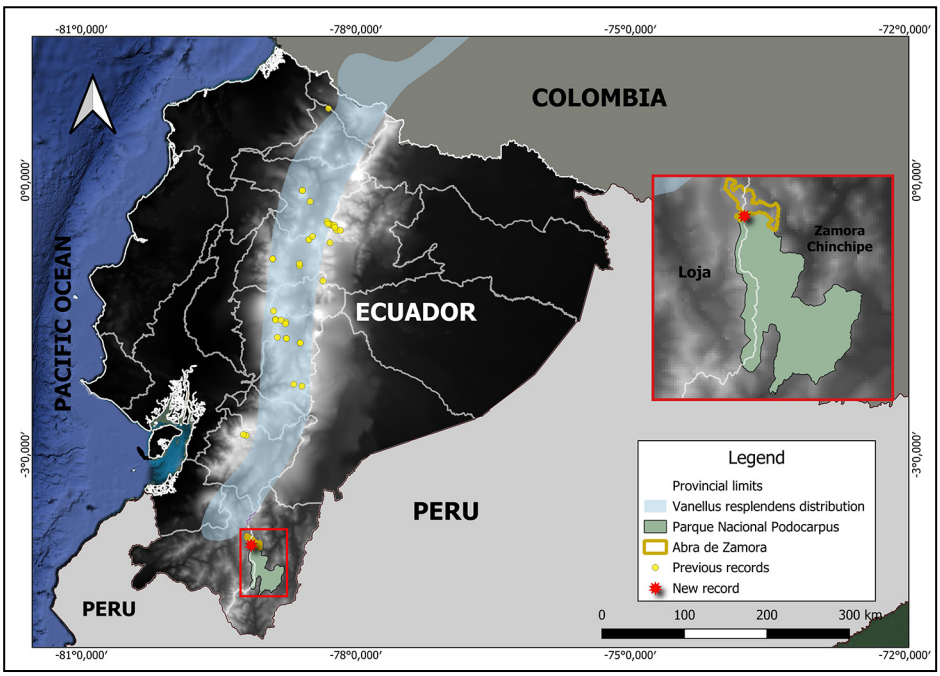

Figure 1. Distribution of Vanellus resplendens in Ecuador. The light blue area shows the species' distribution according to BirdLife International (2025), the yellow dots indicate records from GBIF (2023), and the red dot (inside the red box) represents the new record reported in this study.

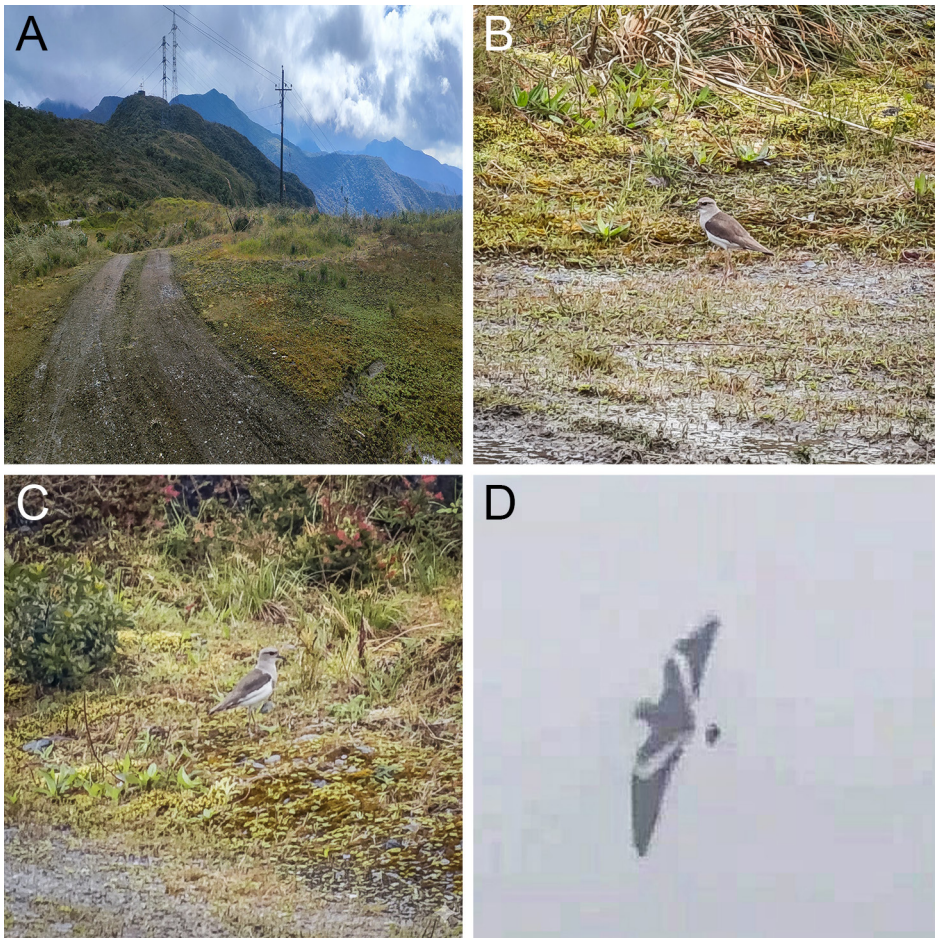

Figure 2. Photographs of *Vanellus resplendens* in Podocarpus National Park. **A.** Habitat where the individual was recorded. **B, C.** Side views of the individual. **D.** Dorsal plumage markings in flight.

Province and 113 km south of sightings from Azuay Province (eBird 2025), making it the southernmost record for the species in Ecuador. This observation slightly reduces the gap between the two discontinuous portions of the species' global distribution.

According to Mena-Valenzuela (2018), *V. resplendens* seems able to exploit human-modified environments, which may explain the increasingly atypical distributional patterns. In Ecuador, this species is common in the páramos of the northern Andes, in ecosystems at high altitude, pasturelands covered by herbaceous plants interspersed with lagoons or marshes (Ministerio del Ambiente de Ecuador 2013). In contrast, southern Ecuadorian páramos are shrub-dominated, with very small grasslands confined to some higher peaks (Cuesta et al. 2005). These conditions could restrict the availability of foraging resources and may explain the rarity of this species in the region.

Despite substantial knowledge of the avifauna of Podocarpus National Park, our new record of *V. resplendens* shows that the area still holds potential for novel discoveries. This observation most likely represents a vagrant individual; however, the species may have been overlooked because the park's páramos are among the least surveyed in the region (Córdova-González and Ordóñez-Delgado 2025).

Many bird species are currently exhibiting longitudinal and altitudinal expansions in their distribution ranges, driven by increasing anthropogenic factors such as the expansion of the agricultural frontier and the growth of urban environments (Orihuela-Torres et al. 2020; Crespo-Ramírez et al. 2024), as well as by climate change (Crick 2004; Huntley et al. 2006). In this context, well-documented records such as the one reported here provide essential baseline information for tracking changes in species distributions over time. By formally documenting a new locality for an Andean species within a protected area, this record contributes to the growing body of distributional data published in the specialized scientific literature and supports comparative biogeographic assessments at regional and continental scales. Our finding refines the known distribution of Andean birds in southern Ecuador and provides relevant information for conservation planning and the management of protected areas.

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Additional information

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that no conflict interests exist.

Ethical statement

No ethical statement is reported.

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Author contributions

Conceptualization: WZ-S, JA, LO-D. Data curation: WZ-S, LO-D. Formal analysis: WZ-S, JA, LO-D. Investigation: WZ-S, JA. Validation: LO-D. JA: Map preparation. WZ-S: Photo editing. Writing – original draft: WZ-S, JA. Writing – review and editing: WZ-S, JA, LO-D.

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Data availability

All data that support the findings of this study are available in the main text.

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