

RECORDS OF BROWN PELICAN *PELECANUS OCCIDENTALIS* INLAND IN NORTHERN BRAZIL: DISTRIBUTIONAL EXPANSION OR JUVENILE DISPERSAL?

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Received 22 August 2016, accepted 30 August 2016

The taxonomy of the Brown Pelican *Pelecanus occidentalis* was recently changed to distinguish it from *P. thagus*, because the Brown Pelican is smaller, has a shorter crest, the gular pouch has olivaceous color, the lower mandible has tints of red and there are some differences in the color of feathered areas. *P. thagus* are

commonly found on the west coast of South America. The five recognized subspecies of *P. occidentalis* occur in the Bahamas, Greater Antilles, the Caribbean coast of the West Indies, Colombia, Venezuela and Trinidad and Tobago (Elliot *et al.* 2016), occasionally reaching the northern coast of Brazil.

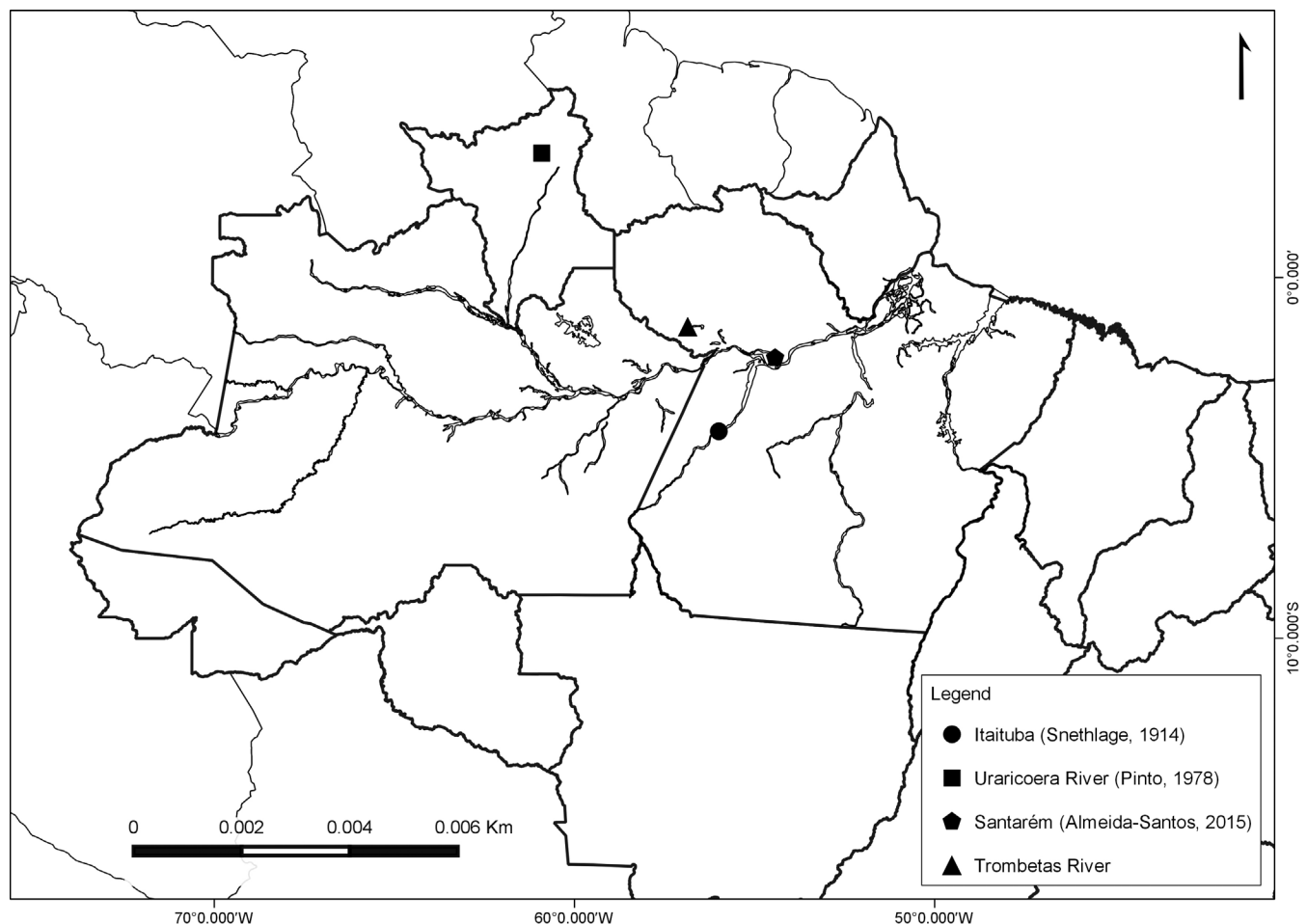


Fig. 1. Historical and recent records of Brown Pelican in the Amazon basin.

There are a few records of *P. occidentalis* from farther south or inland. The first record, by Mitchell (1957), was in Rio de Janeiro (cited as a probable zoo or captive escape). Other records followed: in 1960, Victor Wellisch (pers. comm. in Sick 1997) recorded a white pelican in Guanabara Bay, state of Rio de Janeiro, but he was unsure as to whether it was a *P. erythronotus* or an albino *P. occidentalis*; in 1982, Teixeira *et al.* (1993) reported an individual in “Todos os Santos Bay,” state of Bahia; and in 2005, Patrial *et al.* (2011) reported one individual over the sea at Ipióca Beach, Maceió, state of Alagoas.

However, there are also records from inland Brazil: Snethlage (1914) collected one individual (Collection number MPEG 00433 in Almeida-Santos *et al.*, 2015) in Itaituba, state of Pará, from the middle of the Tapajós River; Pinto (1978) reported one at the Uraricoera River, state of Roraima; Sick (1997) cited occurrences from the Brazilian coast to the Amazonas, Tapajós and Branco rivers (no detailed descriptions were provided); and, finally, one individual was reported by Almeida-Santos *et al.* (2015) near the mouth of the Tapajós River, in Santarém, state of Pará (Fig. 1). Of these records, the most difficult to explain is that from the Uraricoera River. Did the individual come from the coast of Guyana through the mouth of the Essequibo River, which is the shortest distance from the coast? Or did it come from the Amazonas and Branco rivers, which makes for a much longer distance? It is not likely that it had been a captive.

Herein, we report a young Brown Pelican found at the Trombetas River, a tributary of the Amazon River, probably the westernmost Amazonian record. From 25 to 30 January 2016, while conducting field work at Trombetas River Biological Reserve (56°51'07"W, 1°22'14"S), an ICMBio Station, we encountered a young Brown Pelican (Fig. 2) at “Tabuleiro” base, near the ICMBio Station. The individual mostly paddled about, feeding on fish viscera discarded in the water by fisherman. While in the area, the pelican displaced other common species found locally, such as Black Vultures *Coragyps atratus* and Neotropical Cormorants *Phalacrocorax brasilianus*. It did not interact with Large-billed Terns *Phaethusa simplex* or Yellow-billed Terns *Sternula superciliaris*. We did not observe the bird flying with any other species, diving or actively foraging. It was a very calm individual. During the last two days of observation, it perched on the roof of the station’s floating pier and received small fish offered by hand by fisherman.

In regard to the provenance of our sighting, one possibility is that this juvenile was the same one recorded earlier in Santarém by



Fig. 2. Young Brown Pelican recorded at Trombetas River Biological Reserve, Oriximiná, state of Pará, Brazil, 25 January 2016.

Almeida-Santos *et al.* (2015). After all, Santarém is not far away for a pelican (approximately 265 km linear flight or 310 km following the Amazonas waterway through the Trombetas River). However, based on the plumage description provided by Schreiber (1989), this subadult would be the same age as the individual seen in Santarém (Almeida-Santos *et al.* 2015), and in the intervening two years, it should have molted. Thus, it was probably not the same individual.

As this species is uncommon in Brazil, having two occurrences within a short period is unusual. The frequency of sightings of Brown Pelicans in Brazil seems to be increasing, and the two closely-spaced sightings could well indicate more frequent sightings in the future, perhaps related to climate change or to unknown factors that influence their dispersal (see Anderson *et al.* 1977).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank Guy M. Kirwan for assisting us with the references, Leandro M. Sousa for assisting with the terminology and Bianca P. Vieira and David Ainley, who assisted with the English text. We would also like to thank ICMBio for providing us with infrastructure and for supporting our field work at the Trombetas River Biological Reserve. FBRG is grateful to CAPES-PNPD-UFGA for a post-doctoral scholarship and VCDB is grateful to the Brazilian National Council for Research and Development (Conselho Nacional de Pesquisa e Desenvolvimento – CNPq) for its support through a doctoral scholarship.

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