1	Range Expansion and Breeding of White-cheeked Duck (Anas bahamensis)
2	in the High Andes
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17	Abstract.—We review the distribution of White-cheeked Duck Anas bahamensis
18	rubrirostris in mainland Ecuador and show that the species is expanding its range
19	significantly. Contrary to published records, A. b. rubrirostris has been present in mainland
20	Ecuador at least since the early 20 th century, although probably in low numbers. During the
21	20th century, the species increased its range along the entire coastlands of Ecuador and
22	nowadays, it has reached the coasts of Colombia. The species has also extended its presence
23	along the Andes, and we report the first breeding records of A. b. rubrirostris in the Andes at
24	altitudes between 2360–2440 m, the highest across the entire range of the species. We

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describe the transitioning plumage between duckling–juveniles, which has not been portrayedin detail before.

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Keywords.—Anatidae, Anseriformes, distribution, Ecuador, nesting, plumage, urban
water reservoirs.

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32 White-cheeked Duck (Anas bahamensis) is widespread but spottily distributed across the 33 Caribbean and South America, where it mainly inhabits brackish waters, mangrove swamps, 34 tidal creeks, estuaries, coastal lagoons, and inland freshwater wetlands, including reservoirs 35 and sewage ponds (Kear 2005, Erize et al. 2006, Johnsgard 2010, Carboneras and Kirwan 36 2020). Until the 20th century, highland regular records of A. bahamensis were only known at 37 Lake Alalay, Bolivia (2550 m), and accidental reports at 3700 m at Lake Poopó, Bolivia, and 38 at 4080 m in Junín, Peru (Bond and Meyer de Schauensee 1943; Fjeldså 1985; Fjeldså and Krabbe 1990). Since the late 20th century, the species has started to disperse into the Andean 39 40 highlands of Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru (Schulenberg et al. 2007; Freile et al. 2013; 41 Astudillo et al. 2015; Freile et al. 2019a; Rodriguez-Villamil and Álvarez-Moya 2020). 42 43 Three subspecies of Anas bahamensis are currently recognized: A. b. bahamensis 44 inhabiting the Caribbean and northern Atlantic coasts of South America, south to Brazil; A. b. 45 galapagensis, endemic to the Galapagos Archipelago; and A. b. rubrirostris from the Pacific 46 coasts and Southern Cone of South America (Kear 2005; Johnsgard 2010; Carboneras and 47 Kirwan 2020). Most information on the breeding biology of A. bahamensis is based on data 48 from A. b. bahamensis (Sorenson 1992; Sorenson et al. 1992; Kear 2005; Johnsgard 2010; 49 Davis et al. 2017). Accounts about the southern Anas b. rubrirostris report that nesting occurs

50	from April–September along the coasts of Ecuador (Marchant 1958, 1960; RSOLAB7 2020),
51	October-November in Argentina (Kear 2005), and November-February in Chile (Saratscheff
52	et al. 1991; Tala and Gabella 1991; Vilina 1995; Rubio C. 1998).
53	
54	Knowledge on the distribution and breeding of many Ecuadorian waterbird species is
55	scarce, and breeding data has usually been inferred from studies from other areas. Herein, we
56	review the distribution range of Anas bahamensis rubrirostris in Ecuador and report the first
57	breeding records in the high Andes of South America.
58	
59	METHODS
60	We made field observations during citizen science activities run by AvesQuito, a citizen
61	collective that promotes bird watching and urban bird ecology studies, and research projects
62	of Universidad San Francisco de Quito USFQ. We have periodically birdwatched since 2010
63	at the Cumbayá Reservoir, Quito Metropolitan District, province of Pichincha, Ecuador (-
64	0.19483°, -78.42912°, 2360 m) and since 2014 at the Guangopolo Reservoir, Quito
65	Metropolitan District, province of Pichincha, Ecuador (-0.26927° -78.45366°, 2440 m),
66	especially for Quito's Christmas Bird Count (Cisneros-Heredia et al. 2015). Intensive bird
67	censuses were carried out every two weeks between April and September 2015 at the
68	Cumbayá Reservoir and between 2019 and 2020 at the Guangopolo Reservoir.
69	
70	We obtained occurrence data from mainland Ecuador from different sources. Published
71	records were synthesized based on a literature review, not limited by study type, study
72	design, or language, conducted in Google Scholar TM scholarly text search
73	(https://scholar.google.com) by online searches. We gathered relevant references using the
74	search terms 'Anas bahamensis'. Open metadata for all occurrences from mainland Ecuador

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75	were downloaded from eBird (<u>https://ebird.org</u>) by Cornell Lab of Ornithology (eBird 2020)
76	and iNaturalist (https://www.inaturalist.org) by California Academy of Science and National
77	Geographic (GBIF 2021). Data search and extraction from all sources were conducted in
78	March 2020 and updated in April 2021. For each occurrence point, we compiled geographic
79	data and all other associated information. Protocol for data curation and mining included
80	validation of localities and duplicate detection. All localities were reviewed and validated
81	individually, and coordinates were amended when incorrectly georeferenced in the source.
82	Geographic records of Anas bahamensis from mainland Ecuador used for this paper are
83	available in the Supplementary Material.
84	
85	RESULTS
86	Marchant (1958, 1960) recorded several Anas bahamensis (rubrirostris) between 1954-
87	1957 in the Santa Elena Peninsula, south-western Ecuador, the first published record in the
88	country (Ridgely and Greenfield 2001). However, an adult male A. b. rubrirostris collected at
89	the Santa Elena Peninsula on 22 December 1933 (by Philip Hershkovitz and deposited at the
90	bird collection of Museum of Zoology, University of Michigan; UMMZ 91899, GBIF 2021)
91	provides evidence that the species has been present on the coast of Ecuador at least since the
92	early 20 th century—though probably rare based on the lack of collections by expeditions
93	visiting the area during the late 19 th century (Chapman 1926). Interestingly, A. bahamensis
94	was the most abundant duck at La Carolina, a late Pleistocene site in the Santa Elena
95	Peninsula (Campbell, Jr. 1976), suggesting that the species' abundance has fluctuated in the
96	region, most probably due to environmental changes.
97	
98	During the 20 th century, A. bahamensis rubrirostris increased its range along the Pacific

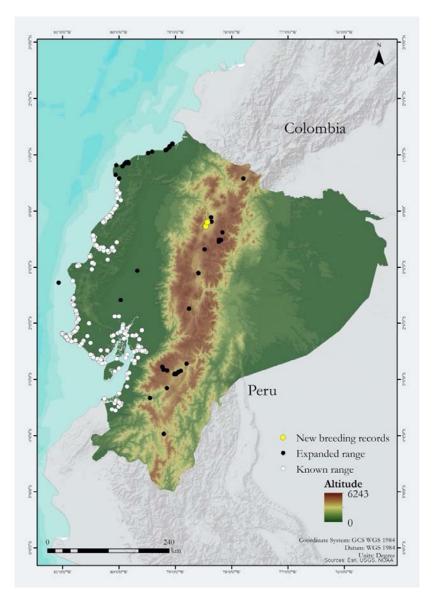
99 coastlands of Ecuador, becoming locally common below 50 m and evaluated as a non-

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100	threatened subspecies in the country (Ridgely and Greenfield 2001, Santander et al. 2013,
101	Freile and Restall 2018, Freile et al. 2019b, eBird 2020, GBIF 2021). There are few inland
102	records on the western lowlands of Ecuador, mainly on the floodplains and rice paddies
103	between Quevedo and Guayaquil (Fig 1) (eBird 2020, GBIF 2021). Ridgely and Greenfield
104	(2001) reported the northernmost Ecuadorian locality of the species in Atacames, province of
105	Esmeraldas, where it has been observed since the 1990s. Solano-Ugalde et al. (2009)
106	evidenced that the species kept advancing north, observing it just 40 km S from the
107	Colombian border (Fig. 1). Anas bahamensis was unknown from the Pacific coasts of
108	Colombia until 2013, when Calderón et al. (2013) reported it from the Mar Agrícola farm, in
109	the department of Nariño, ca. 27 km from the Ecuadorian border. Subsequently, there are
110	records of the species up to Buenaventura, department of Valle del Cauca, Colombia, since
111	2015 (eBird 2020).
112	
113	The first high altitude reports of A. bahamensis in Ecuador was at La Mica Lagoon (3900
114	m) in 2002 (Lock et al. 2003), where it was recorded again in 2005 and 2006 (eBird 2020,
115	GBIF 2021). Subsequently, it has been recorded at several highland wetlands, including (only
116	first record cited): Cumbaya reservoir (2360 m elevation) in 2009 (Freile et al. 2013);
117	
	Llaviucu lagoon, Cajas National Park (3160 m) in 2009 (Astudillo et al. 2015); El Paraiso
118	Llaviucu lagoon, Cajas National Park (3160 m) in 2009 (Astudillo et al. 2015); El Paraiso park (2490 m) in 2009 and Ucubamba reservoir (2415 m) in 2012 (Astudillo Webster and
118 119	
	park (2490 m) in 2009 and Ucubamba reservoir (2415 m) in 2012 (Astudillo Webster and
119	park (2490 m) in 2009 and Ucubamba reservoir (2415 m) in 2012 (Astudillo Webster and Siddons 2013); Quito Airport pond (2350 m) in 2015 (Boyla and Sanchez 2015); Guangopolo
119 120	park (2490 m) in 2009 and Ucubamba reservoir (2415 m) in 2012 (Astudillo Webster and Siddons 2013); Quito Airport pond (2350 m) in 2015 (Boyla and Sanchez 2015); Guangopolo reservoir (2440m) in 2017 (Bedoya 2017); Colta lagoon (3310) in 2017 (Morocho 2017); El

124 Andean highlands of Ecuador are becoming more recurrent. The species is present year-

- 125 round in low numbers at the Cumbaya, Guangopolo and Ucubamba reservoirs and the
- 126 artificial ponds of El Paraíso Park and Museo Pumapungo (pers. obs.; eBird 2020, GBIF
- 127 2021).





129 Figure 1. Map of Ecuador showing the distribution range of White-cheeked Duck Anas

130 bahamensis rubrirostris. White dots: Records until the late 1990s. Black dots: Records since

- 131 the early 2000's, showing the range expansion towards the northern coast, inland western
- 132 lowlands, and Andean highlands. Yellow dots: New highest breeding records.

133	On 26 June 2015, a female A. bahamensis was observed with eight ducklings swimming in
134	the southern pool of the Cumbaya reservoir (Fig. 2). Ducklings were still covered by down
135	but transitioning to juvenile plumage: face grayish-cream, superciliary band grayish-cream
136	and faint, dark line from eye to nape diffuse, foreneck dark gray, cheeks whitish, lines on
137	sides of back whitish and soft, ventral surfaces whitish with faint lateral stripes, bill bluish
138	gray with light pink wash at the base, eyes brown (Fig. 2). The female and her offspring were
139	either preening or swimming between the northern and southern pools until 06 August 2015.
140	During mid-August, the northern pools were cleaned for sediment removal, and the juveniles
141	were not seen subsequently, but three adults were observed regularly.
142	
143	Between 13–16 November 2019, a female A. bahamensis with two ducklings were
144	swimming in a narrow channel, part of the Guangopolo reservoir. On 17 November 2019,
145	two adults were sitting on the channel wall, but there was no trace of the ducklings, and they
146	were not seen subsequently. On 15 July 2020, an adult female with eight ducklings covered
147	by down were swimming in the same channel of the Guangopolo reservoir as in November
148	2019 (Fig. 3). Duckling plumage is overall the same as described by Carboneras and Kirwan
149	(2020) and Kear (2005). However, lines on the back were yellow, not whitish, especially in
150	the younger ducklings, and there was a brown spot under the eye line, also more visible in the
151	younger ducklings. By 30 July 2020, ducklings were transitioning to juvenile plumage, but
152	the face, cheeks and neck were still yellow, although drabber than in ducklings (Fig. 3). On
153	04 August 2020, the reservoir was cleaned for sediment removal, and the ducklings were not
154	seen anywhere. On 23 August 2020, the reservoir's water level was average again, and nine
155	A. bahamensis were observed. All ducks had adult size, but bill and plumage were not as
156	bright as in adults suggesting they were juveniles. Their head was smaller and less round,
157	head plumage looked a bit fluffy or downy, and the base of the bill was narrow and ended

- 158 wider, whereas, in adults, the width of the bill seemed more constant. On 04 September 2020,
- 159 two juveniles (bill and plumage less bright than adult) were swimming next to each other in
- 160 the channel. In October 2020, two or three adults and up to five juveniles were in the
- 161 reservoir (Fig. 3). Subsequently, 8–15 A. bahamensis were regular at the Guangopolo
- 162 reservoir until December 2020, suggesting that the juveniles stayed.





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- 165 **Figure 2.** Adult female and eight ducklings of White-cheeked Duck *Anas bahamensis*
- 166 *rubrirostris* at the Cumbaya reservoir, Quito Metropolitan District, province of Pichincha,
- 167 Ecuador, on 26 June 2015.
- 168



- 170
- 171 Figure 3. Adult female and eight ducklings of White-cheeked Duck Anas bahamensis
- 172 rubrirostris at the Guangopolo reservoir, Quito Metropolitan District, province of Pichincha,
- Ecuador, 15 July 2020 (upper) and 30 July 2020 (lower). 173

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175	Figure 4. Juvenile of White-cheeked Duck Anas bahamensis rubrirostris at the Guangopolo
176	reservoir, Quito Metropolitan District, province of Pichincha, Ecuador, 01 October 2020.
177	
178	DISCUSSION
179	These are the highest breeding records of A. bahamensis across its distribution and
180	evidence that the species may be starting to establish self-sustaining populations in the
181	Andean highlands. Reproductive biology was within the reported ranges for brood size,
182	parental care, and fledging time (Kear 2005; Carboneras and Kirwan 2020). Breeding
183	seasonality in the Andes of Ecuador mostly coincides with that reported along the coastlands
184	(April-September), although we also recorded a breeding event in November. All breeding
185	records or long-standing populations in the Andes are in human-made wetlands, probably due
186	to lower impacts by human disturbances, lower predation by domestic and feral dogs and cats
187	(since access to all reservoirs and artificial ponds is controlled), and relatively constant water
188	levels.
189	
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207	Zoología and Laboratorio de Zoología Terrestre.
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