

# First record of *Aramus guarauna* (Linnaeus, 1766) (Aves: Aramidae) in Chile

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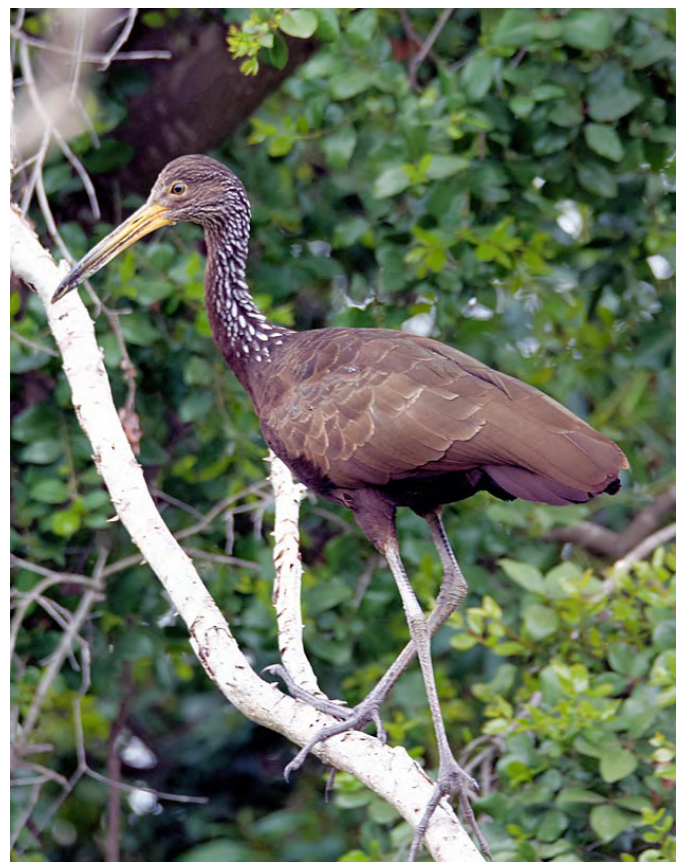
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**Abstract.** *Aramus guarauna* (Linnaeus, 1766) (Aves, Aramidae), is a heron that lives in Neotropical America and mainly inhabits swamps and freshwater wetlands from the southeastern United States to central Argentina. However, there have also been a small number of records of the bird in the southern part of Argentina. Here, we report the first documented record of *A. guarauna* in Chile, on the edge of the Ramsar site, Las Salinas de Huentelauquén (Canela, Región de Coquimbo). The presence of *Aramus* in this zone could be due to its great ability to colonize new environments.

**Key words.** Huentelauquén; limpkin new record; distribution range; foraging.

The Limpkin, *Aramus guarauna* (Linnaeus, 1766) (Aves, Aramidae), is a monotypic species that ranges from the USA to southern South America (REILLY 1968). It occurs as a resident species from southwestern California through the southern United States and the larger Caribbean islands, such as the Bahamas, Cuba, Jamaica and Hispaniola (DUNN & ALDERFER 2011). It is also found as a resident species on the edge of the Caribbean from the state of Veracruz, Mexico and Belize to southern Central America. Its range extends to the Pacific coast south of Oaxaca and Chiapas, Mexico, and Guatemala, El Salvador, and the Caribbean side of Honduras (HOWELL & WEBB 1995). It is also common in much of Nicaragua and Costa Rica including the central valley, and can be found living at elevations of up to 1500 m in this area (GARRIGUES & DEAN 2007). It can be found in some areas of Panama but is uncommon in Bocas del Toro, the Ngäbe-Buglé channel areas, and Darién (ANGEHR & DEAN 2010). In South America, *Aramus guarauna* has been documented from Colombia and Venezuela to Uruguay and central Argentina (OLROG 1968). It even has a few records in Patagonia near Chimpay (39°16'60" S, 065°40'00" W), Department of Avellaneda, in the Province of Río Negro (PÉREZ et al. 2006), but it has never been documented in Chile.

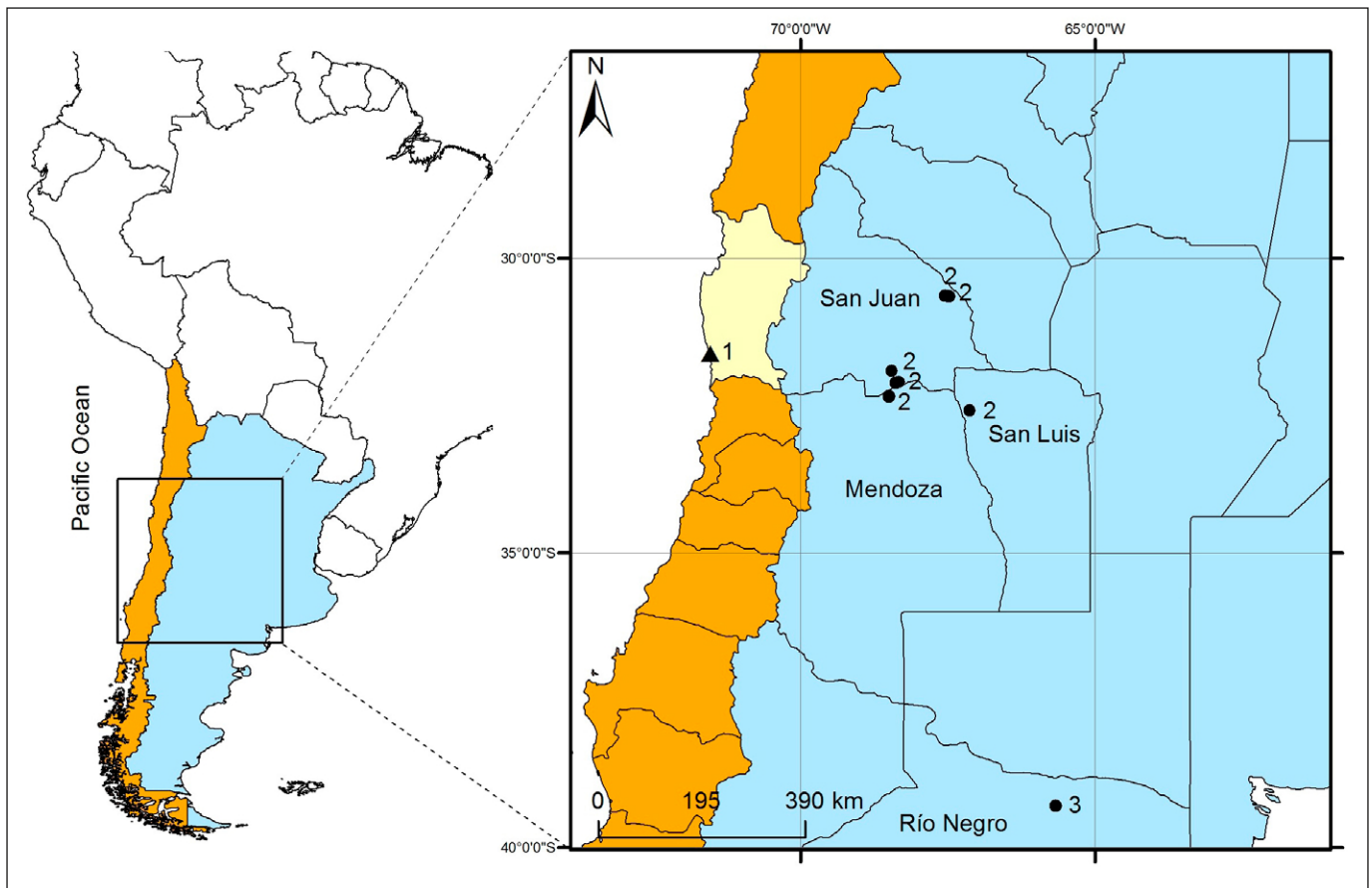
In September 2016, a group of students from the Carlos Vial Espantoso School observed one individual of this species (Fig. 1) on the property of Hacienda Huentelauquén, a farm that shares the region's name (31°36'24.06" S, 071°31'37.84" W)



**Figure 1.** Adult specimen of *Aramus guarauna* (Linnaeus, 1766), recorded in September 2016, at the private gardens of the farm of Huentelauquén, Chile. Photograph by CZ.

adjacent to the southern edge of the Ramsar site, Las Salinas de Huentelauquén, in the county of Canela, Choapa Province, in the region of Coquimbo. This Mediterranean-type zone has high floristic diversity and is included in the list of the 25 areas with the greatest amount of floristic diversity worldwide (MYERS et al. 2000). The vegetation is mainly composed of low-rise woody scrub and patches of sclerophyllous forest (GAJARDO 1994) that persist in some coastal areas and are sustained by streams and coastal fog (FUENTES et al. 1984).

This record was made during the development of a primary



**Figure 2.** First record of *Aramus guarauna* in the Coquimbo Region (yellow polygon), Chile (orange) and the known occurrence near Chile. 1 = present record in Huentelauquén, Coquimbo Region; 2 = records in Argentina (white blue) San Juan, San Luis and Mendoza (EBIRD 2016); 3 = Río Negro (PÉREZ et al. 2006).

school science club which aimed to encourage students to record the birds and learn more about the biological heritage of the area. In the days following the sighting, our team moved to the area to document and confirm the finding.

The bird was an adult that was in a bushy area of high coverage and frequently would move to the papaya plantations and avocado farms (Fig. 1). The species identification was not difficult because it is monotypic in the Aramididae family, whose most similar species in Chile is the White-face Ibis, *Plegadis chihi* (Vieillot, 1817). However, the latter differs from *A. guarauna* in that it has dense, white spots of the back of the neck (OLROG 1968; DUNN & ALDERFER 2011) and its bill is less curved (GARRIGUES & DEAN 2007).

This is the first documented record in Chile. Prior to this, the closest record of this species was in the Department of Sarmiento, in the Province of San Juan, Argentina (EBIRD 2016) which is at least 293 km from the location in Chile (Fig. 2, Table 1). According to literature (NAROSKY & YZURIETA 1993; JARAMILLO 2005; BARROS et al. 2014) this species has never been seen in Chile.

The people of Huentelauquén claim that they have seen only one adult *Aramus guarauna* in the last 3 yr, and they have seen it feed on snails and worms in the gardens and plantations of the farm. Part of the diet of this species when it is away from water consists of small reptiles, land snails and annelids (RODRIGUEZ 2006). Its occurrence in this place

**Table 1.** Geographical coordinates of the records of *Aramus guarauna* in Argentina near the observation of the species in Chile.

Country	Province/region	Latitude (S)	Longitude (W)
Chile	Coquimbo	31°36'24.06"	071°31'37.84"
Argentina	San Juan	31°53'51.61"	068°27'09.00"
Argentina	San Juan	30°37'42.46"	067°33'00.40"
Argentina	San Juan	32°05'28.98"	068°20'14.78"
Argentina	San Juan	32°06'39.09"	068°23'14.15"
Argentina	San Juan	32°06'27.56"	068°23'13.00"
Argentina	San Juan	30°38'12.71"	067°28'45.92"
Argentina	San Juan	30°37'59.98"	067°29'00.17"
Argentina	Mendoza	32°20'05.73"	068°30'10.38"
Argentina	Mendoza	32°20'03.05"	068°30'07.76"
Argentina	San Luis	32°34'27.08"	067°07'34.47"

seems to be related to the presence of the garden snail *Cornu aspersum* (Müller, 1774), which occurs in high abundance (77 individuals/m<sup>2</sup>, unpublished data) in the herbaceous layer of *doca*, *Carpobrotus chilensis* (Molina, 1928), a succulent which is abundant in the garden.

The record in Huentelauquén is likely due to a decrease in food resources in its range in Argentina and a need to search for new foraging sites (LIFF & LOVITCH 2007). Although considered a resident throughout most of its range, it is believed that some individuals migrate between Florida and Cuba (BRYAN 2002). A similar migration is probably occurring between Chile and Argentina. This discovery is thanks to the great increase that our country has had in bird watching as a recreational activity and environmental education programs that some schools have developed.

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**Authors' contributions.** VB wrote the manuscript and made the map. CZ reviewed the text and took the photographs, and CP collected the data in the field.

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