

New records of the migratory subspecies of Wilson's Plover *Anarhynchus wilsonia wilsonia* on the Caribbean Coast of Colombia

The nominate subspecies of Wilson's Plover *Anarhynchus wilsonia wilsonia* is a migratory shorebird that breeds along the Atlantic, Gulf and Caribbean coasts of North and Central America, extending south to Belize, the Bahamas, the Greater Antilles and the Leeward Islands⁶. In contrast, the subspecies *A. wilsonia cinnamominus* is resident in the southern Caribbean, including in northeastern Colombia, on the islands off Venezuela and on the southern Lesser Antilles⁶.

On Colombia's Caribbean coast, both of these subspecies of *A. wilsonia* have been recorded³. The nominate subspecies was first documented in Colombia by Naranjo², based on two specimens collected in Galerazamba, dpto. Bolívar, and one at Via Parque Isla de Salamanca, dpto. Magdalena. Since then there have been no further records, likely due to limited knowledge of, and low research interest in, these subspecies within the country.

Here, we report new records of *A. w. wilsonia* at multiple sites along the Colombian Caribbean coast (Fig. 1), including a banded individual originally

marked in North America, confirming the ongoing presence of this migratory subspecies in the region. Our observations were obtained through opportunistic field surveys conducted from 2015–2023 at coastal wetlands and sandy beaches along the Colombian Caribbean coast. Subspecies identification was based on plumage characteristics described in the literature^{1,6} and supported by photographic documentation. To differentiate the subspecies, we considered that although *A. w. cinnamominus* closely resembles the nominate form: resident females exhibit a crown and breast-band that are redder, cinnamon-brown or warm brown; and the black areas in males often include rufous tones⁶.

On 20 October 2015 (Fig. 2), CRG observed and photographed a single *A. w. wilsonia* on a mudflat in Playa Honda (9°25'36.11"N 75°50'34.22"W), in the Bajo Sinú Important Bird and Biodiversity Area (IBA), dpto. Córdoba. On 7 November 2018 (Fig. 3), CRG observed and photographed a flock of 10 individuals roosting on a sandbar known as Bajo de San Pablo (10°00'41.34"N 75°34'32.36"W) at the Santuario de Flora y Fauna El Corchal, dpto. Sucre. On 9 September 2021 (Fig. 4) and 4 November 2022, CRG observed single individuals at Laguna Navío



Figure 1. Locations and dates of records of the migratory subspecies of Wilson's Plover *Anarhynchus wilsonia wilsonia* along the Caribbean coast of Colombia. The square indicates the location of sites in Bajo Sinú Important Bird and Biodiversity Area, Córdoba (records in 2015, 2023 and 2024). The triangle indicates the location of the Santuario de Flora y Fauna El Corchal, Sucre (records in 2018). The circle indicates the location of Santuario de Flora y Fauna Los Flamencos, La Guajira (records in 2021 and 2022). The map was created by Juan David Palencia using ArcGis Pro version 3.6.



Figure 2. Wilson's Plover *Anarhynchus w. wilsonia*, Playa Honda, Bajo Sinú Important Bird and Biodiversity Area (IBA), Córdoba, Colombia, 20 October 2015 (Carlos Ruiz-Guerra).



Figure 3. Wilson's Plover *Anarhynchus w. wilsonia*, Bajo de San Pablo, Santuario de Flora y Fauna El Corchal, Sucre, Colombia, 7 November 2018 (Carlos Ruiz-Guerra).



Figure 4. Wilson's Plover *Anarhynchus w. wilsonia*, Laguna Navío Quebrado, Santuario de Flora y Fauna Los Flamencos, La Guajira, Colombia, 3 September 2021 (Carlos Ruiz-Guerra).



Figure 5. Wilson's Plover *Anarhynchus w. wilsonia*, Playa Mestizo, Bajo Sinú IBA, Córdoba, Colombia, 29 September 2023 (Erika Ortiz-Gómez).

Quebrado (11°25'42''N 73°05'30''W) within the Santuario de Flora y Fauna Los Flamencos, dpto. La Guajira. On 29 September 2023 (Fig. 5), 1 February 2024 (Fig. 6) and 4 May 2024, EOG and MFP observed and photographed a single bird at Playa Mestizo (9°25'29.47''N 75°49'24.15''W), also within the Bajo Sinú IBA; we cannot judge whether more than one individual was involved. On 3 September 2024, EOG and MFP photographed a colour-banded individual at Playa Mestizo (Fig. 7). This bird had been caught and marked as a 35-day-old juvenile on 24 June 2024 at Saint George Island State Park, Florida, USA (R. Pruner pers. comm.). Interestingly, at all sites where *A. w. wilsonia* was recorded, there is also documented evidence of breeding by the resident subspecies *A. w. cinnamominus*^{3,4}; by way of comparison, Fig. 8 features two *A. w. cinnamominus* at Playa Mestizo, dpto. Córdoba.

These recent records confirm that *A. w. wilsonia* is regularly present along the Colombian Caribbean coast from at least early September to early May. These findings highlight the importance of



Figure 6. Wilson's Plover *Anarhynchus w. wilsonia*, Playa Mestizo, Bajo Sinú IBA, Córdoba, Colombia, 1 February 2024 (Erika Ortiz-Gómez).

recognising the occurrence of both subspecies in the region, as *A. w. wilsonia* may be more widespread than previously thought. The Colombian Caribbean coast lies within the 'northern South America' focal

region of the Atlantic Flyway Shorebird Initiative⁵, yet critical information, such as the status and trends of populations and major migration routes, remains absent for several ‘focal’ shorebird species, including *A. wilsonia*. Conducting further research on *A. wilsonia* and *A. w. cinnamominus*—and increasing submissions and sharing records documented through photographs or sound-recordings through online databases and community science platforms—may reduce uncertainty regarding their distribution along the Colombian Caribbean coast and help fill knowledge gaps.



Figure 7. Wilson's Plover *Anarhynchus w. wilsonia*: a banded (ringed) individual, Playa Mestizo, Bajo Sinú IBA, Córdoba, Colombia, 3 September 2024 (María Fernanda Pereira).



Figure 8. By way of comparison with Fig. 2, a pair of Wilson's Plover *Anarhynchus wilsonia cinnamominus* (the resident subspecies), Playa Mestizo, Bajo Sinú IBA, Córdoba, Colombia, 1 February 2024 (Erika Ortiz-Gómez).

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