

New bird species discovered in 'cloud forest' of Peru

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The Sira Barbet, *Capito fitzpatricki*, has been discovered and named by Cornell University graduates following an expedition to the remote Peruvian Andes. Credit: Cornell University

A colorful, fruit-eating bird with a black mask, pale belly and scarlet breast - never before described by science - has been discovered and named by Cornell University graduates following an expedition to the remote Peruvian Andes.

The Sira Barbet, *Capito fitzpatricki*, is described in a paper published in the July 2012 issue of *The Auk*, the official publication of the American Ornithologists' Union.

The new [species](#) was discovered during a 2008 expedition led by

Michael G. Harvey, Glenn Seeholzer and Ben Winger, young ornithologists who had recently graduated from Cornell at the time. They were accompanied by co-author Daniel Cáceres, a graduate of the Universidad Nacional de San Agustín in Arequipa, Peru, and local Ashéninka guides. The team discovered the barbet on a ridge of montane cloud forest in the Cerros del Sira range in the eastern Andes. Steep ridges and deep river gorges in the Andes produce many isolated habitats and microclimates that give rise to uniquely evolved species.

Though clearly a sister species of the Scarlet-banded Barbet, the Sira Barbet is readily distinguished by differences in color on the bird's flanks, lower back and thighs, and a wider, darker scarlet breast band. By comparing mitochondrial DNA sequences of the new barbet to DNA sequences of its close relatives in the genus *Capito*, the team secured genetic evidence that this is a new species in the barbet family. The genetic work was done by co-author Jason Weckstein at The Field Museum in Chicago.

The team chose the scientific name of the new species *Capito fitzpatricki* in honor of Cornell Lab of Ornithology executive director John W. Fitzpatrick, who discovered and named seven new bird species in Peru during the 1970s and '80s.

"Fitz has inspired generations of young ornithologists in scientific discovery and conservation," said Winger. "He was behind us all the way when we presented our plan for this expedition."

More information: A copy of the July 2012 Auk paper outlining the find can be downloaded from: bit.ly/OL0SkW

Provided by Cornell University

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