

## Farmland birds in the Zona da Mata of Minas Gerais, eastern Brazil

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Bird populations trends are more prone to be unveiled when they are large, have wide geographical distribution, and can be easily identified and counted, as is the case for many farmland birds. Slow but steady population declines or even the rapid collapse of populations of some bird species across farmlands in Europe and North America, often due to increased agriculture synchrony and heavy pesticide use have been reported in the last decades. Despite this, very little attention has been given to these species and environments in tropical countries, and Brazil is not an exception. I present data from 50 point transects carried out along dirty roads crossing Coimbra, Paula Cândido and Viçosa municipalities, eastern Minas Gerais, a region originally covered by Submontane Semidecidual Atlantic Forest. The data were collected between October 2010 and May 2011 and I recorded 1650 individuals of 125 species. Most of them were generalist species, and species from the Cerrado biome which have invaded the region along the two last centuries. Among the 15 most abundant species seven are gregarious (*Molothrus bonariensis*, *Patagioenas picazuro*, *Sicalis flaveola*, *Aratinga leucophthalma*, *Pseudoleistes guirahuro*, *Primolius maracana*, *Columbina talpacoti*), two joins small familiar groups with helpers (*Vanellus chilensis*, *Phacellodomus rufifrons*), and the other are more typical territorialist species (*Funarius rufus*, *Pitangus sulphuratus*, *Troglodytes musculus*, *Elaenia flavogaster*, *Thraupis sayaca*, *Zonotrichia capensis*, and *Coereba flaveola*). Twenty five species had only one individual counted. Forest species were often detected but most of them were just crossing open areas, using isolated trees or fencerows as stepping-stones from one fragment to another. *Patagioenas picazuro* and *Aratinga leucophthalma* are currently regarded as pests by some farmers. Conducting such counts in different regions Brazil is necessary for the detection of population trends associated to different land uses or due to changes in natural ecological processes. The number of birds recorded per point in open areas was much higher than that found in forest environments in the region. Because of this, before carrying out point counts in similar environments, ornithologists must be warned about the need of intense training in species identification and bird counting in order to increase their accuracy and precision.

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