

Notes on the vocalizations of Plain Softtail (*Thripophaga fusciceps*)

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In the following we briefly analyze and compare voice of the different races of Plain Softtail (*Thripophaga fusciceps*). We also try to quantify the extent of any vocal differences using the criteria proposed by Tobias *et al.* (2010), as a support for taxonomic review.

We have made use of sound recordings available on-line from Xeno Canto (XC) and Macaulay Library (ML).

Song of all 3 races is a long chatter (in which often 2 or more birds participate).

By ear, it is obvious that *dimorpha* (both from Ecuador and SE Peru) sounds much higher-pitched than *fusciceps* (with *obidensis* closer to *dimorpha*).

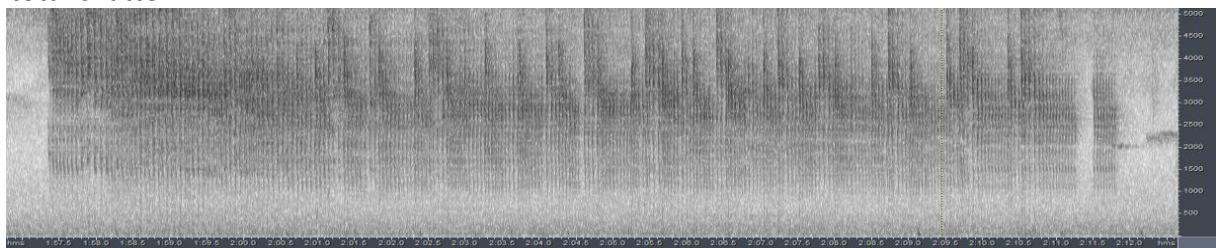
A closer inspection of sonograms of the song reveals the following:

dimorpha

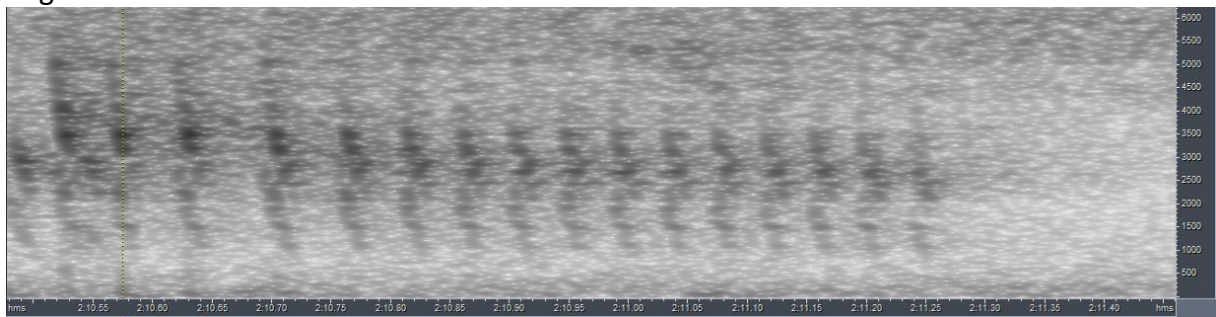
A rising and falling fairly harsh rattle gradually shifting into more stuttering rattling salvo's.

The salvo's consisting of 1-3 higher-pitched notes followed by a faster series of lower-pitched notes at even pitch.

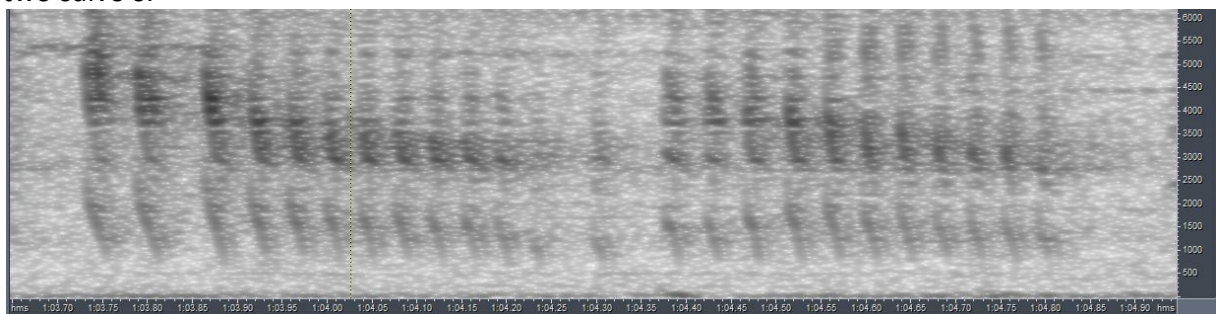
total chatter:



single salvo:



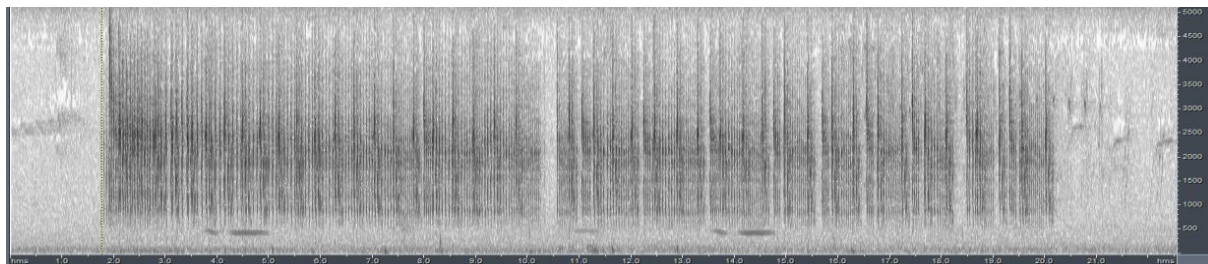
two salvo's:



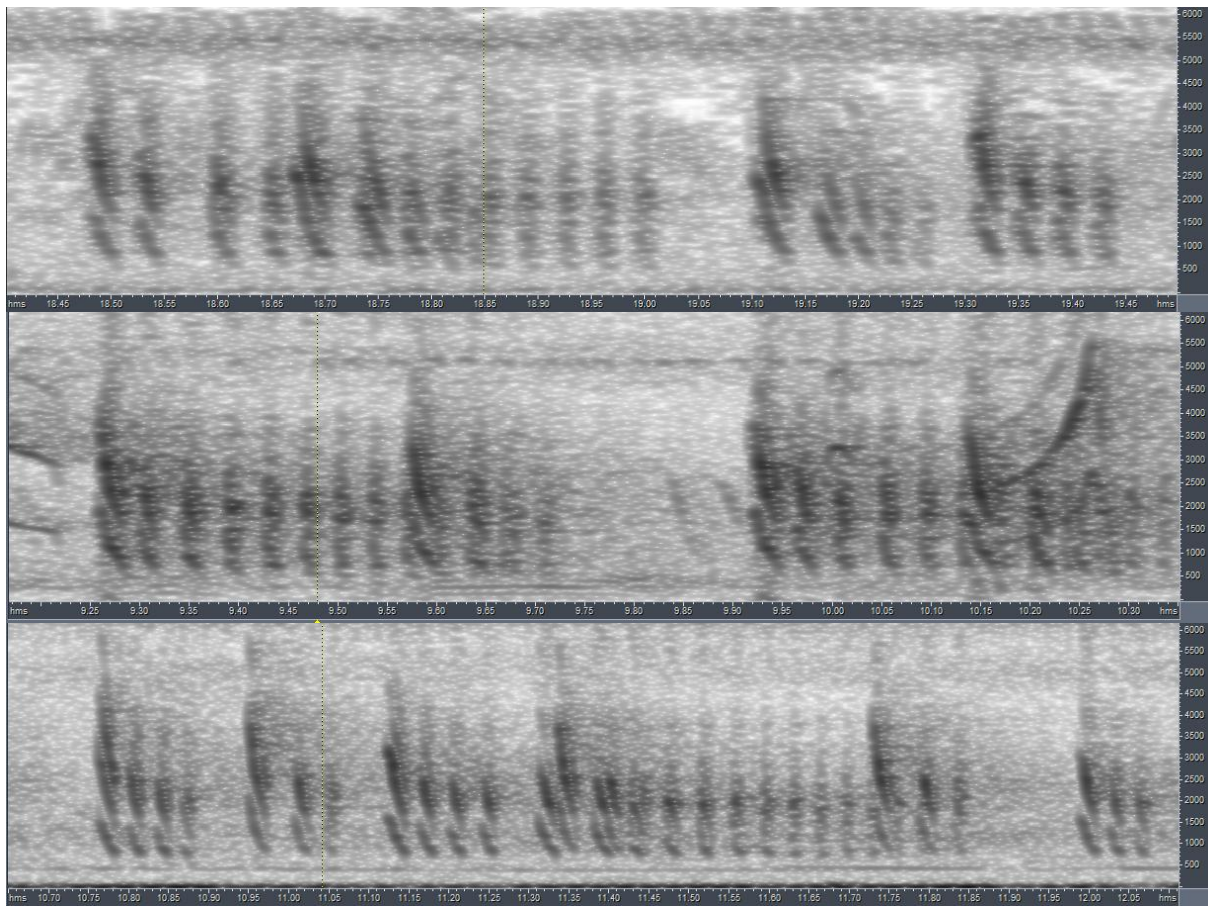
fusciceps

As in *dimorpha*, starting with a harsh rattle and followed by stuttering rattling salvo's, which seem to have fewer notes compared to previous.

total chatter:

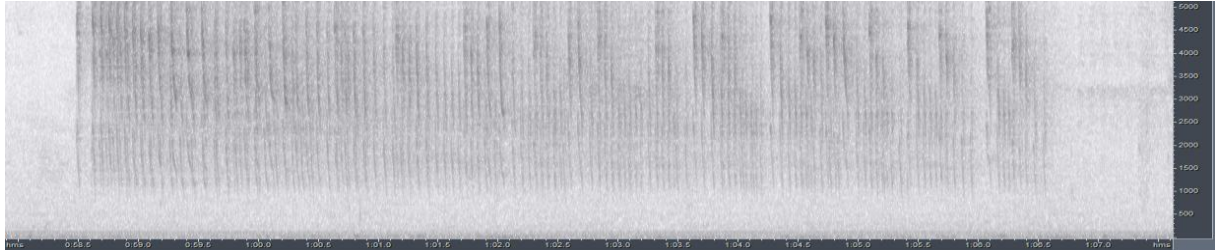


a few salvo's:

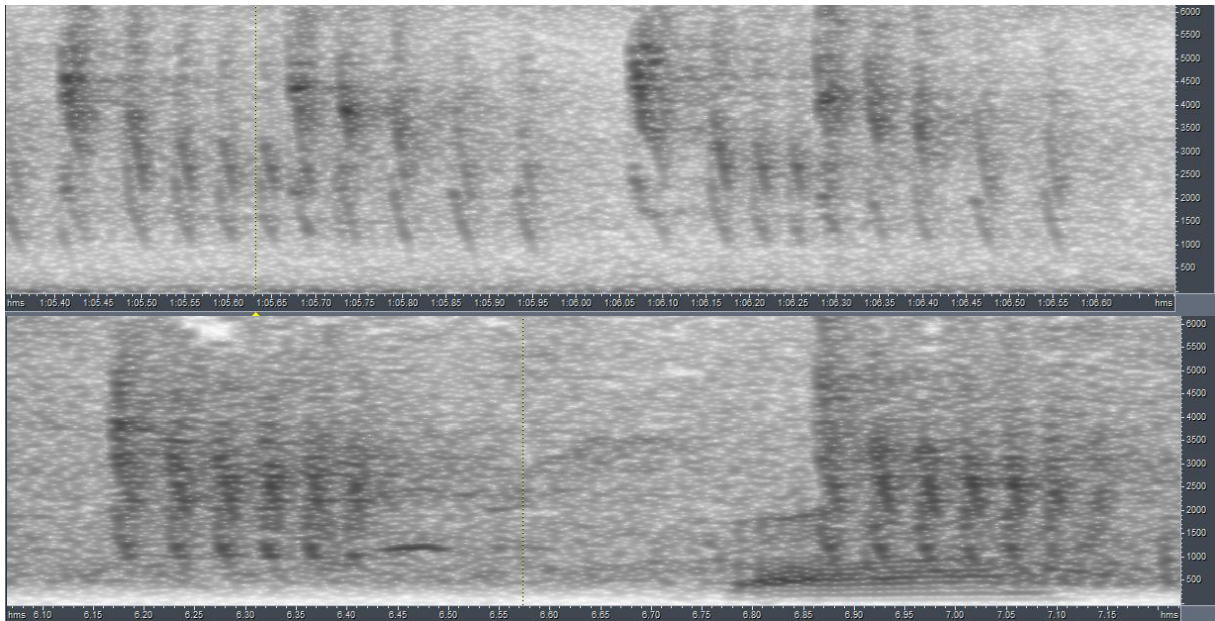


obidensis

total chatter:



a few salvo's:



Differences are quite subtle:

dimorpha (n=8)

min. freq. 800-1000Hz, min. note space 0.038-0.048s

salvo's have on average larger number of notes

This race has the most pronounced rising - falling start of chatter (often absent in other races)

fusciceps (n=7):

min. freq. 500 - 600Hz, min note space 0.037 - 0.044s

has on average the shortest chatters with fewest notes

obidensis (n=3):

min. freq. 750 - 950Hz, min. note space 0.048 - 0.058s

fusciceps vs *dimorpha*

fusciceps has lowest freq. (score 2-3), generally lacks the rising/falling start of *dimorpha* (score 1) and on average shortest chatters with fewest notes (score 1). This would lead to a total vocal score of 3-4 when applying Tobias criteria.

fusciceps vs. *obidensis*

fusciceps has lowest freq. (score 2-3) and on average shortest chatters with fewest notes (score 0-1). Total score about 3.

dimorpha vs. *obidensis*

dimorpha has slightly faster chatter pace (score 1-2), generally has a rising-falling start (score 1) and on average slightly longer chatters with more notes (score 0-1). Total score 2-3.

In summary, *fusciceps* is vocally most distinct.

Vocal difference between *dimorpha* and *obidensis* is quite small (hardly discernable by ear, the apparent lack of rising/falling pitch in *obidensis* being the best distinguishing feature (but caution needed, n=3 !)).

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References

Tobias, J.A., Seddon, N., Spottiswoode, C.N., Pilgrim, J.D., Fishpool, L.D.C. & Collar, N.J. (2010). Quantitative criteria for species delimitation. *Ibis* 152(4): 724–746.

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