

Morphometric Distinctiveness, Taxonomic Status, and Conservation of *Pteronotus parnellii* on the Península de Paraguaná in Northwestern Venezuela

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In Venezuela, three subspecies of *Pteronotus parnellii* are recognized (*P. p. paraguayensis*, *P. p. fuscus*, and *P. p. rubiginosus*). We used Principal Components to extract the size and shape constituents of 7 appendicular (limb) and 27 cranial measurements of 267 Venezuelan specimens of the three subspecies aforementioned, and Cluster Analyses to classify the specimens according to their shape. The most important results are: (1) the endemic subspecies of the Península de Paraguaná (*P. p. paraguayensis*, n = 25) differs greatly from the other subspecies in being smaller and in having different shape, in both appendicular and cranial features; (2) *P. p. fuscus* (n = 117), which occurs in the mainland to the north of the Llanos, and *P. p. rubiginosus* (n = 125), which occurs south of the Río Orinoco, also differ notably in appendicular and cranial size and shape, although to a lesser degree than either of them with respect to the highly distinctive *P. p. paraguayensis*. Therefore, we propose that *P. p. paraguayensis* be promoted to species rank, and we emphasize that special measures are required for its conservation. Based on their differences in size and shape, *P. p. fuscus* and *P. p. rubiginosus* may also represent full species, but studies using other techniques and samples from their entire distributional ranges and that of the nominotypical subspecies, *P. p. parnellii* (Jamaica), are required to determine their taxonomic status. The differentiation of *P. p. fuscus* and *P. p. rubiginosus* may be the result of the tight forest dependence of these bats, which keeps them isolated by the savanna corridor of the Venezuelan and Colombian Llanos.

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