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NOTES ON SOME VERACRUZ BIRDS

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During the identification of a collection of birds that my wife and I made in central Veracruz during the summer of 1948, points of general interest were brought out concerning the species of birds listed below. The collection as a whole included 160 species of birds, but the great majority of these are well known from Veracruz, and require no comment.

The localities at which collections were made were:

OJOCHICO.—A small village about 10 miles east-northeast of Cordoba, at an elevation of about 1,700 feet. It is situated on the edge of a level plain (which from here slopes gradually down to the Gulf of Mexico) at the base of the forested foothills, which are about 500 feet high where they run into the plain and continue to rise from there up to the heights of Orizaba. The plain is intensively cultivated, with sugar cane and corn the principal crops. The hills for the most part are covered by the original forest, but in many places the undergrowth has been cleared and coffee is grown in the shade of the forest trees. The birds are predominantly tropical. Collecting at Ojochico was made possible through the kindness of Mr. Dyfrig McH. Forbes, manager of the Engenio Potrero, who delights in acting as a fairy godfather to all visiting scientists. Collecting was carried on from July 26 to August 14.

TEZUITLAN.—A small city on the border between Veracruz and Puebla, about 40 miles northwest of Jalapa. Collections were made between altitudes of 4,500 and 5,500 feet on the road from Tezuitlan to Nautla (a small town on the gulf), on the eastern slope of the plateau. For the most part the vegetation was the original forest, since the terrain is too precipitous for extensive lumbering or agriculture. Here were found many forest-inhabiting species that were ap-

parently common at Jalapa, at the same elevation, in the last century, but which recent collectors have failed to find there because extensive agriculture has resulted in the clearing of the forests. Collecting was carried on at Tezuitlan from August 18 to September 1.

PEROTE.—The last station was in the pine forests on the slopes of the Cofre de Perote at an altitude of 8,500 feet and about three miles from the city itself. This was a comparatively dry locality, since the mountains somewhat sheltered it from the prevailing easterly winds and rains. The forests here were continuous stands of open pine with very little deciduous growth, while fifteen miles to the east at Las Vigas, at the same elevation, there was considerable mixed growth and the climate was much more humid. Collecting was carried on here from September 2 to September 8.

Leptotila verreauxi subsp.

Three specimens from Ojochico, compared with topotypes from Yucatan, are typical examples of *fulviventris* Lawrence of the lowlands of southern Mexico, while two from Tezuitlan at 4,500 feet altitude are equally good examples of *angelica* Bangs and Penard from northern Mexico. There is no sign of intergradation in any of these specimens, although the localities are only 75 miles apart. Further collecting may show that these two forms are altitudinal rather than geographical representatives in northern Veracruz.

Glaucidium minutissimum gnoma Wagler

A single female from the Cofre de Perote at 8,500 feet altitude. Although Griscom (1931, p. 43) suggests the mountains of Veracruz as type locality of *gnoma*, the present bird is, as far as I can determine, the first record for the species from Veracruz. The next nearest record is an immature from Tochimilco, Puebla, which Nelson and Palmer called *fisheri* (1894, p. 41). The Perote bird agrees closely with specimens in comparable plumage from Tancítaro, Michoacan.

Caprimulgus carolinensis Gmelin

A single immature male, collected August 22 at Tezuitlan, altitude 5,000 feet, is the fifth record for this species for Mexico. This specimen is extremely dark, darker than any specimen in the Chicago Museum collection, and only approached by a single juvenal female, taken August 30, 1928, at Winslow, Arkansas. The Tezuitlan

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specimen was shown to Dr. Alexander Wetmore, who was kind enough to check the extensive series in the National Museum for similar specimens. He informs me (in litt.) that there are three similar birds in that collection, all early fall birds and all apparently females, although one was marked "male" on dissection although it exhibits the female type of tail feathers. It appears from the uniformity of the dates of these blackish specimens that there is in the first winter plumage a dark phase in which the juvenal wing and tail feathers are retained. This is not the juvenal plumage as given by Ridgway (1914, p. 506), which is lighter than the adult. Although August 22 is an early date for a migrant bird to reach southern Mexico, it is not prohibitively so, and there is no evidence for a breeding population south of the United States. This bird was collected at dusk from the top of a dead tree from which it was making short flights after insects, an action at variance with its usual habits in the states.

Amazilia candida candida Bourcier and Mulsant

In 1938 Meise (1938, p. 2) named from El Asterilla, Veracruz, a race *genini*, which was characterized by its larger wing. When a series of six adults from Ojochico, however, were compared with series from Oaxaca, Yucatan, Campeche, and Izabal, Guatemala, no difference in wing lengths was found. The averages at all localities fell between 52 and 53 mm. The range of the nominate race, therefore, should include the Caribbean tropics of Middle America from Veracruz to Nicaragua, and *genini* becomes a synonym of *candida*.

Amazilia yucatanensis cerviniventris Gould

Two birds from Ojochico are topotypes of *cerviniventris*. When these two specimens, and two other representatives of this race from Jacala, Hidalgo, are compared with a long series of topotypes of *chalconota* Oberholser from Brownsville, Texas, a complete overlap in color is apparent. Oberholser (1898, p. 32) separated *chalconota* on the paler under parts, but this distinction is not evident, even on an average, in the specimens before me. Even if larger series should show an average difference, the race cannot be upheld when not one out of four specimens of *cerviniventris* is distinct from *chalconota*; and *chalconota* must become a synonym of *cerviniventris*.

Momotus momota lessonii Lesson

Four specimens collected at Ojochico are intermediate between *caeruliceps* Gould and *lessonii* but are nearer the latter. Two of

them have the whole cap blue as in *caeruliceps* and the other two have the center of the cap black as in *lessonii*; all four, however, lack the greenish wash on the forehead characteristic of *caeruliceps* and are greener, less tawny above. It was undoubtedly an intermediate series such as this that led Ridgway to list both forms from Cordoba. These specimens from Ojochico are from within thirty miles of Motzorongo, the type locality of *goldmani* Nelson. However, I agree with Wetmore (1943, p. 267) in not considering *goldmani* a valid subspecies.

Parus sclateri Kleinschmidt

Five specimens from Perote are virtually topotypes of *sclateri*, type locality Mount Orizaba. When compared with a topotypical series of *eidos* Peters from the Chiricahua Mountains of Arizona they are not separable, and it does not appear that the race *eidos* can be upheld. There is a great deal of individual variation in both series, particularly in the amount of white below, and, although the Veracruz specimens average less white than those from Arizona, all are within the extremes of the latter series. There is also a single bird from Veracruz that shows as much white as any from Arizona. In cases such as this, where populations exhibit the same range of variation, small average differences between them do not warrant subspecific recognition, and *eidos* must be placed in the synonymy of *sclateri*.

Henicorhina leucosticta prosthaleuca Sclater

Comparison of a series of nine topotypes of *prosthaleuca* from Ojochico with birds from Solola and Izabal, Guatemala, shows that the latter definitely belong to the race *tropaea* Bangs and Peters of Costa Rica. Besides the color differences between the two forms, *tropaea* may be distinguished from *prosthaleuca* by its much heavier bill, a difference that is readily apparent when the birds are compared but difficult to show by measurements. Birds from Chiapas and Oaxaca also have heavier bills, but in color they agree with typical *prosthaleuca*. Ridgway (1904, p. 610) did not have a juvenal specimen of this species for description. The following description is taken from juvenals, one of each sex, from Ojochico: Below gray, paler on throat, the gray merging into the brown flanks and belly as in the adult. Above, pileum almost black in the male, dark brown in the female; back reddish brown, less rufous, however, than in the adult; white superciliary and white spotting on head

less distinct than in the adult; mandible yellow, tipped black. Juvenals of *prosthaleuca* are very similar to juvenals of the allied species *H. leucophrys mexicana* of the subtropical zone.

Nannorchilus leucogaster leucogaster Gould

An adult male from Ojochico was collected under peculiar circumstances. It was first flushed from the nest, which was on the tip of a branch about twenty-five feet above the ground. A few minutes later it returned directly to the nest, although my Indian hunter and I were standing in plain sight directly beneath it. The bird was collected at this point, but when shot it dropped into the nest so that we had to cut down the branch to secure it. The nest was empty except for the dead bird, which on dissection proved to be an adult male with inactive testes. Considering the physiological state of the bird and the fact that the date, August 11, is late in the breeding season, this was presumably a dormitory nest, but why the bird should show such persistence in returning to it in the middle of the morning is hard to say. The nest was pendent and domed, with an entrance in the side, and was built of fine rootlets and plant fibers. It measured about six inches in length by four in diameter. The nesting chamber was so deep and the entrance so small that the nest had to be torn apart to retrieve the bird.

Catharus mexicanus mexicanus Bonaparte

When describing the juvenal plumage of this species, Ridgway (1907, p. 23) had available for description only a bird with a few juvenal feathers remaining. The description given below, taken from a juvenal male from Tezuitlan, altitude 4,500 feet, supplements his: Above, dark olive brown with buffy shaft streaks on the pileum, the shaft streaks becoming broader on the scapulars and interscapulars and indistinct on the lower back and rump; the wing coverts tipped with triangular spots of buffy, the rectrices and remiges as in the adult; below, pale buffy, the feathers of the breast heavily margined with dark olive brown, the dark edgings becoming indistinct on lower breast and disappearing on belly; whole bill black, legs dusky yellow, not clear yellow as in the adult.

Tanagra lauta lauta Bangs and Penard

While comparing three males from Ojochico with specimens from other parts of the range of this species, it became evident that birds from the Yucatan Peninsula average considerably smaller

than those from southern Mexico and Guatemala. The comparative measurements were:

Five adult males, Yucatan Peninsula: wing 58-60 (59); tail 32-36.5 (34.2).

Ten adult males, southern Mexico to Nicaragua: wing 61-65 (63.5); tail 34.5-42 (37.5).

Although there is no overlap in the wing measurements, the averages are so close that separation of a Yucatan race does not seem warranted unless supported by larger series. No females were available from Yucatan.

Pipilo ocai × **macronyx**

A male and female from Tezuitlan, altitude 5,500 feet, present more problems in the confused relationship between *ocai* Lawrence (the *torquatus* of most authors; see van Rossem, 1940, p. 173) and *macronyx* Swainson. Ridgway (1886, p. 332) described *P. complexus* from Tezuitlan and stated that it differed from *P. macronyx* in having the sides paler rufous and in possessing a white throat patch and rufous nuchal patch. Recent authors have considered this bird a hybrid between *torquatus* (= *ocai*) and *macronyx*. The present male from Tezuitlan, however, shows the same characters as Ridgway's *complexus* and possesses in addition white superciliaries and a white median streak on the forehead. The female is closer to *macronyx*, having the white throat patch and rufous nuchal patch much reduced. The collection of specimens similar to *complexus* in exactly the same locality after a lapse of sixty years raises the question of whether a population of mixed or hybrid origin has not succeeded in establishing itself as a stable population distinct from both *ocai* and *macronyx*. It is a problem similar to that of the race *nigrescens* Salvin and Godman of Michoacan, which Blake and Hanson (1942, p. 548) have shown to be a stable, well-characterized race at present, however it may have originated. The possibility that the situation of *complexus* is the same is strengthened by the present distribution of *macronyx*, which has not, apparently, been recorded from Veracruz. The earliest specimen exhibiting this type of plumage is the type specimen of *torquatus* du Bus, which van Rossem (loc. cit.) described minutely, and which differs only in slight details from Tezuitlan birds. If, indeed, further collecting shows that this population of towhees is worthy of recognition, it will have to bear du Bus' name, which has many years' priority over Ridgway's.

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