

AMERICAN MUSEUM NOVITATES

Number 414

Published by
THE AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY
New York City

March 24, 1930

59.82 (728.1)

STUDIES FROM THE DWIGHT COLLECTION OF GUATEMALA BIRDS. II

BY LUDLOW GRISCOM

This is the second¹ preliminary paper, containing descriptions of new forms in the Dwight Collection, or revisions of Central American birds, based almost entirely on material in The American Museum of Natural History. As usual, all measurements are in millimeters, and technical color-terms follow Ridgway's nomenclature. The writer would appreciate prompt criticism from his colleagues, for inclusion in the final report.

Cerchneis sparveria tropicalis, new subspecies

SUBSPECIFIC CHARACTERS.—Similar to typical *Cerchneis sparveria* (Linnæus) of "Carolina," but much smaller and strikingly darker colored above in all ages and both sexes; adult male apparently without rufous crown-patch and only a faint tinge of fawn color on the chest; striping of female below a darker, more blackish brown; wing of males, 162–171, of females, 173–182; in size nearest *peninsularis* Mearns of southern Lower California, which, however, is even paler than *phalæna* of the southwestern United States.

TYPE.—No. 57811, Dwight Collection; breeding male; Antigua, Guatemala; May 20, 1924; A. W. Anthony.

MATERIAL EXAMINED

Cerchneis sparveria sparveria.—Several hundred specimens from most of North America, eastern Mexico and Central America, including type of *C. s. guatemalensis* Swann from Capetillo, Guatemala.

Cerchneis sparveria phalæna.—Over one hundred specimens from the southwestern United States and western Mexico south to Durango.

Cerchneis sparveria tropicalis.—Guatemala: Antigua, 2 ♂ ad., 1 ♂ imm., 2 ♀ ad., 1 ♀ fledgeling.

Also ample series of *paula* and every proposed West Indian form.

Some years ago, in determining Central American migrant sparrow hawks, Miller and I had occasion to examine the entire series of several hundred specimens in The American Museum of Natural History. At that time, we came to the conclusion that *phalæna* was a very poor race, and to prove tenable at all, would have to be restricted to the south-

¹For the first paper, see Amer. Mus. Novit., No. 379, 1929.

western United States and northwestern Mexico, where it is almost entirely non-migratory. It averages slightly paler, the wing-coverts perhaps average less spotted, and a higher percentage of individuals would seem to have more extensive crown-patches, although both extremes occur in both races. There is nothing of racial value in size, spotting of males below, or in the shade of color of the chest. Older males tend to be more richly colored and less spotted below in both races. It follows that typical *sparveria* is found in the greater part of North America, and is the only form occurring in winter in Central America.

At about the same time, Swann published a revision of this species in his 'Synopsis of the Accipitres,' making free use of characters of no subspecific value. Among other things, he described *guatemalensis* from Capetillo, remarking that he regarded "the birds with heavily marked underparts, little or no color on the chest, and little or no red in the crown, as quite distinct and forming the resident race in Central America," in spite of the evidence that there was no such thing. His description was an excellent characterization of the immature male eastern sparrow hawk. His collection was acquired by the Museum of Comparative Zoölogy, his type is before me, and it is nothing but an immature male *sparveria*, thus making *guatemalensis* an absolute synonym of *sparveria*. I have not seen the subsequently designated so-called cotype in the British Museum. While it is probably another immature male *sparveria* (? a June straggler), its proper subspecific allocation cannot affect the nomenclature of the case.

To Mr. Anthony goes the credit of really discovering a breeding sparrow hawk in Guatemala, where it would appear to be confined to the arid portion of the Rio Motagua Valley. As might be expected, it is so different from the North American form as to need no further comment.

***Morococcyx erythropygus macrourus*, new subspecies**

SUBSPECIFIC CHARACTERS.—Similar to typical *Morococcyx erythropygus* (Lesson) of the Pacific lowlands of Central America from Oaxaca to northwestern Costa Rica, but as large as the largest individuals of that form, with the tail proportionately very much longer.

TYPE.—No. 58583, Dwight Collection; ♂ ad.; Progreso, Guatemala; Sept. 20, 1924; A. W. Anthony.

RANGE.—Isolated in the arid portion of the Rio Motagua Valley from Progreso to Gualan.

SPECIMENS EXAMINED

Morococcyx e. erythropygus.—Costa Rica: Guanacaste region, 3 ♂, 3 ♀ (M. C. Z.). Nicaragua: various localities in the northwestern Pacific lowlands, 3 ♂, 3 ♀

(A. M. N. H.). Guatemala (Pacific slope): Ocos, 1 ♂; Hacienda California, 1 ♀ (Dwight Coll.). Mexico: Oaxaca, Tehuantepec, 1 ♂, 1 ♀; Tapanatepec, 2 ♂, approaching *mexicanus* (M. C. Z.).

Morococcyx e. macrourus.—Guatemala: Progreso, 1 ♂, 1 ♀ (Dwight Coll.); Gualan, 1 ♂, 2 ♀ (Field Museum).

Lack of properly sexed specimens probably induced Ridgway to regard this cuckoo as a remarkably variable bird, with both sexes alike. As a matter of fact, females are paler, less richly colored below. The northern race, *mexicanus*, is a paler bird especially below, the males being about the same color as females of the typical form. It also averages larger. Specimens from Tehuantepec and Tapanatepec, Oaxaca, are intermediate, nearer *erythropygus* in color, but averaging larger. Three specimens, not listed above, from the arid highlands of north central Nicaragua near Matagalpa, show a distinct approach in size to *macrourus*.

MEASUREMENTS

	Wing	Tail
♂ Pacific lowlands (Guatemala-Costa Rica)	90-99 (93)	121-130 (125)
♂ Northern interior Nicaragua	96-99 (97.5)	121-134 (132.5)
♂ Guatemala interior	96-99 (97.5)	140-141 (140.5)
♀ Pacific lowlands	92-96 (94)	120-126 (123.5)
♀ Northern interior Nicaragua	96	134 (134)
♀ Guatemala interior	92-95	138-140 (139)

Synallaxis erythrothorax pacifica, new subspecies

SUBSPECIFIC CHARACTERS.—Similar to typical *Synallaxis erythrothorax* Selater of Vera Paz, Guatemala, but paler throughout, the flanks less washed with olive, and almost specifically distinct in that the throat is gray, not black.

TYPE.—No. 56259, Dwight Collection; ♂ ad.; San Felipe, Retalhuleu, Pacific slope of Guatemala; Dec. 11, 1919; Austin Paul Smith.

MATERIAL EXAMINED

Synallaxis erythrothorax erythrothorax.—Vera Paz, Guatemala, 24 specimens (Dwight Collection); about 50 others in the Mus. Comp. Zool., from Guatemala, British Honduras, and Honduras.

Synallaxis erythrothorax pacifica.—Pacific slope of Guatemala, 35 specimens from six localities (Dwight Collection).

This very distinct form is one of the real surprises in Mr. Anthony's collection. The species occurs in a very limited area on the Pacific slope of Central America, and this colony is completely isolated by the Cordilleras from the Caribbean slope race.

Megarhynchus pitangua deserticola, new subspecies

SUBSPECIFIC CHARACTERS.—Similar to *Megarhynchus pitangua mexicanus* (Lafresnaye) of eastern Mexico to Panama, but upperparts averaging browner, less olive-green; underparts pale lemon yellow, instead of bright lemon, canary, or gamboge.

TYPE.—Dwight Collection; ♂ ad.; Sacapulas, 25 miles east of Nebaj, in the arid Rio Negro Valley, Guatemala; Feb. 6, 1928; A. W. Anthony, original number 6536.

MATERIAL EXAMINED

Megarhynchus pitangua mexicanus.—The type and 56 specimens from the entire range.

Megarhynchus pitangua deserticola.—Sacapulas, Guatemala, 5 ♂, 3 ♀.

The pale-yellow underparts of the new form are strikingly distinct in series. The greatest care has been used to base the diagnosis on comparable material, as the specimens of the new form are all more or less worn, early spring birds. As is usual in tyrant flycatchers, fresh fall birds of this species are greener above and deeper yellow below. This new flycatcher is another of the rapidly lengthening list of birds which are isolated in the desert areas of the two river valleys in central Guatemala.

Pitangus sulphuratus pallidus, new subspecies

SUBSPECIFIC CHARACTERS.—Nearest *Pitangus sulphuratus derbianus* (Kaup) of Texas and northern Mexico, but smaller, grayer brown above, paler rufous edgings to the primaries, and much paler yellow underparts; resembling *P. sulphuratus guatemalensis* (Lafr.) of adjoining tropical areas of Guatemala in size, but coloration differing as in *derbianus*, but in even greater degree as regards the yellow of the underparts.

TYPE.—Dwight Collection; ♂ ad.; Sacapulas, 25 miles east of Nebaj, in the arid Rio Negro Valley, Guatemala; Feb. 26, 1929; A. W. Anthony, original No. 6650.

MATERIAL EXAMINED

Pitangus sulphuratus derbianus.—Texas and northern Mexico, 20.

Pitangus sulphuratus guatemalensis.—Over 50 specimens from Guatemala to western Panama.

Pitangus sulphuratus pallidus.—Guatemala: Sacapulas; the type.

The single specimen is so different from *derbianus* and *guatemalensis*, reflecting in its pale coloration the arid conditions of its restricted environment, that I have no hesitation in describing it as new. Care has been taken to use comparably worn material.

THE GENUS *Polioptila* IN CENTRAL AMERICA

Lack of material has caused this group to remain in great confusion, ever since the interesting critique of Salvin and Godman ('Biol. Cent. Amer.,' I, 1879, pp. 52–55), who gave a masterly résumé of the anomalies

in the situation and the impossibility of devising a nomenclature to fit the facts as they knew them. Mr. Ridgway ('Birds N. and Mid. Amer.,' part 3, 1904, pp. 710-731), in his treatment, made minor changes only. His material was no more adequate than that of Salvin and, in discussing the problem, he admitted that five times as many specimens were necessary for an adequate solution.

A brief review of the facts follows.

1. Bonaparte (1850) describes *Polioptila bilineata* (Cartagena, Colombia). Broad white superciliary confluent with white loreal region. Later recorded from Santa Marta, western Ecuador, and northwestern Peru.

2. Sclater and Salvin (1860) describe *P. albiloris* from the Motagua Valley, Guatemala. No superciliary, but lores white. Later recorded by them from Oaxaca and western Nicaragua.

3. Lawrence (1861) describes *P. superciliaris* (Lion Hill, Canal Zone). Regarded by Salvin and Godman as a synonym of *P. bilineata*, which (in 1879) they recorded from scattered localities in Central America north to Guatemala, including western Panama, western Costa Rica and Salvador. Ridgway (1904) regards *superciliaris* as a smaller and darker Central American relative of *bilineata*, which he knew definitely only from Santa Marta and Veraguas, western Panama (Pacific slope). He describes *P. superciliaris magna* as a larger and even darker form from the highlands of Costa Rica, later synonymized by Carriker (1910).

4. Baird (1864) describes *P. nigriceps* from Mazatlan, Sinaloa, Mexico. No superciliary; lores black. Recorded by Salvin and Godman from Oaxaca and Salvador. Extra-Mexican records questioned by Ridgway (1904).

5. Lawrence (1885) describes *P. albiventris* from Yucatan. Like *P. nigriceps* but paler, whiter below, smaller, with more white on outer tail-feathers. Ridgway (1904) records a female with a narrow superciliary, and notes males with a faint indication of a superciliary.

6. Ridgway (1903) describes *P. bairdi* from western Nicaragua. No superciliary; lores partly black, a black line from rictus to eye. In 1904 he gives range as western Nicaragua and northwestern Costa Rica, and assumes that all older records of *P. albiloris* from this region belong here. This assumption proves to be incorrect. He points out that *P. bairdi* is smaller than *P. albiloris*, *nigriceps* and *albiventris*, with an even shorter tail.

It will thus be seen that six "species" are involved with relatively minute differences between any two of them, but of a character which enables any specimen to be named at a glance, excepting *superciliaris* as compared with *bilineata*.

We will now turn to the large series available in The American Museum of Natural History, supplemented by the Dwight Collection and the collections of the Museum of Comparative Zoölogy, and examine the local variations in detail.

1. *Polioptila bilineata*, 59 specimens from Santa Marta (4), western Ecuador, western Peru, and eastern Panama. It is quite impossible to distinguish two races

in spite of geographic isolation, both series showing dark and light, larger and smaller specimens.

2. *P. superciliaris* Lawrence. The name is currently applied to the type and all specimens with white superciliaries, northward.

MATERIAL EXAMINED

Caribbean slope of Central America.—Western Panama and Canal Zone: the type and 12; eastern Costa Rica, 12; eastern Nicaragua, 5; eastern Guatemala, 12; British Honduras, 1; Quintana Roo, 1. Pacific slope.—Veraguas, 2; Chiriqui, 1; southwest Costa Rica, 34; northwest Costa Rica, 23. Total 104.

This great series makes it impossible to separate Central American from South American material either by color or size. At one time I thought that it might be possible to regard *superciliaris* as a slightly darker and smaller subspecies restricted to the Caribbean slope of Central America, regarding Pacific coast birds as *bilineata*, but additional material examined in the last five years makes this disposition of the case untenable. It so happens that 3 males from the Canal Zone are particularly small. Birds from eastern Costa Rica and Guatemala are larger, like western Ecuador series; eastern Nicaragua birds are smaller, resembling southwestern Costa Rican series, while northwestern Costa Rican specimens average larger. Ridgway's comparative measurements were based on only 3 males of *bilineata*, one of which came from Veraguas. The type of *superciliaris* is a particularly gray bird below, but grayer and whiter birds occur in all the series listed above. The specimens from eastern Guatemala average minutely darker than any other series, but not sufficiently so for separation. It is conceivable, of course, that a series of 30–40 from Santa Marta might show a slightly paler local race, reflecting a drier environment, but until such evidence is produced, *superciliaris* is an absolute synonym of *bilineata*.

3. *P. bairdi* Ridgway. I have examined 8 from northwest Costa Rica and 15 from western Nicaragua, the supposed range of this form. In Costa Rica, 1 only is *bairdi* as to characters, 1 is *albiloris*, 2 are *albiloris* with traces of a superciliary, and 4 are *nigriceps*. In west Nicaraguan males, 2 are *bairdi* as to characters, 1 is *albiloris*, and the balance *nigriceps*.

4. Twenty-one specimens from western Mexico show a similar state of affairs. Of 5 males from Tehuantepec, 1 is *albiloris* with traces of a superciliary, 1 is *albiloris*, 2 are *bairdi*, and 1 is *nigriceps*. Four males from Chivela, Oaxaca, are *nigriceps* with a white feather or two in the loreal region, and 1 male from southern Sinaloa is similar. All others are *nigriceps*.

5. *P. albiloris*. A series of 17 from Progreso, in the Rio Motagua Valley, central Guatemala, are topotypes. Only ONE of these birds is *albiloris* as to characters, 2 have white feathers on ONE SIDE ONLY, and all others are *nigriceps*.

6. Yucatan specimens, including the type, are constantly different from all other Mexican and Central American series in being slightly paler above and nearly pure white below. The majority are *nigriceps* as to head characters, but some show traces of white in the lores or superciliaries.

There would seem to be only one reasonable conclusion to draw from this series of facts. All the supposed "species" boil down to one—*bilineata*. This bird was of South American origin and pushed northward into Central America. The character of the white superciliary tends to

break down, wherever it encounters a dry or arid climate, and disappears almost completely in western and northwestern Mexico. In northwestern Costa Rica the great majority of individuals have white lores and superciliaries. At the northern limit, the great majority of individuals are all black. In an intermediate area (Nicaragua to Oaxaca) intermediate birds variously black and white appear sporadically, but never constantly in any one region. The Central American *Poliophtila* are as follows:

1. *Poliophtila bilineata bilineata* (Bonaparte). West Ecuador and Colombia north to Guatemala and Quintana Roo (Caribbean slope) and northwestern Costa Rica (Pacific). Lores and superciliaries wholly white. Includes *P. superciliaris* and *P. superciliaris magna*.

2. *Poliophtila bilineata albiloris* Selater and Salvin. Pacific slope of Central America from northwest Costa Rica to Sonora and the arid interior of Guatemala (Rio Motagua Valley from Progreso to Gualan). Lores and superciliary wholly black, or mixed with white, the number of individuals showing white increasing proportionately southward. Includes *P. nigriceps*, *P. nigriceps restricta* Brewster and *P. bairdi*. It is most unfortunate that the inappropriate name *albiloris* has priority over the appropriate *nigriceps*, especially as topotypes are chiefly "*nigriceps*" as to characters. Measurement of additional Mexican material shows that southern specimens do not have shorter tails in proportions sufficient for subspecific separation.

3. *Poliophtila bilineata albiventris* Lawrence. Outer third of Yucatan Peninsula. Paler; superciliary variable, but chiefly black.

***Heleodytes capistratus xerophilus*, new subspecies**

SUBSPECIFIC CHARACTERS.—Connecting the species *capistratus* Lesson with *rufinucha* Lafresnaye of Vera Cruz; differing radically from *capistratus* in having the upperparts conspicuously variegated with black and white in a herring-bone pattern with central shaft streaks narrower, the tail mostly black as in *capistratus*, the nuchal collar twice as broad, and the underparts with at most a few spots only on the flanks. Closest to *H. capistratus nicaraguae* Miller and Griscom of the arid interior of northern Nicaragua, but upperparts much less variegated with a black and white "herring-bone" pattern.

TYPE.—No. 58781, Dwight Coll.; Progreso, Guatemala; Oct. 30, 1924; A. W. Anthony.

MATERIAL EXAMINED

Heleodytes capistratus capistratus.—Large series from Nicaragua and northwestern Costa Rica.

Heleodytes capistratus nigricaudatus.—Large series from Pacific coast of Guatemala.

Heleodytes capistratus xerophilus.—Large series from Progreso in the arid interior of Guatemala.

Heleodytes capistratus nicaraguae.—Nine specimens from northern central Nicaragua.

Heleodytes capistratus rufinucha.—The type and 5 others from Vera Cruz.

Heleodytes capistratus humilis.—Large series from Oaxaca.

Heleodytes capistratus castaneus.—Several from eastern Honduras.

When Miller and I described *Heleodytes rufinucha nicaraguæ* (Amer. Mus. Novit., No. 159, 1925, p. 8) we did not have topotypes of *rufinucha*, and were forced to assume that a small series from Progreso, Guatemala, represented this "species." Since then the material of most of the forms involved has more than doubled. Direct comparison of 30 specimens from Progreso with the type and others from Vera Cruz shows the existence of a very distinct form connecting the two supposed species. The Guatemalan material of *nigricaudatus* shows that it is partially connected with *xerophilus* by individual variation. Occasional specimens have a little concealed barring on the back, others have slightly spotted under tail-coverts. A single bird from Lake Amatitlan, a geographically intermediate locality, has as heavily spotted under tail-coverts as any specimen of *xerophilus*, and is a genuine intergrade. Intermediates between *capistratus* of the Pacific coast of Nicaragua and *nicaraguæ* of the interior were collected at Tipitapa.

As is well known, these cactus wrens become terrifically worn. Wear has interesting results in the appearance of *xerophilus*. Fresh specimens have the barring of the basal two-thirds of the back feathers partly concealed by the uniform reddish tips. Such specimens appear to be closest to *capistratus*. Very worn breeding birds completely lose these reddish tips, and consequently appear more closely related to *rufinucha*.

In this whole group, "speciation" has been greatly overdone. Farther north in Mexico, *gularis*, *jocosus*, and *narinusus* are obviously representative forms. *H. megalopterus* and *H. nelsoni* are certainly conspecific, and it is doubtful if they are specifically separable from the *zonatus* group.