

BIRDS OF THE BROWNSVILLE REGION, SOUTHERN TEXAS.

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IN recent years interest in the bird-life of southern Texas has greatly increased, and more and more people are visiting a region which is a veritable paradise for the ornithologist. There is no satisfactory, up-to-date account for visitors, and the little that has been published is widely scattered in various periodicals. Several of the articles, like that of Dresser, for instance, cover an enormous territory, and the generalized statements cannot apply to a particular section, in the light of present knowledge. It took us nearly a month to find out what species had been definitely recorded in winter and what might reasonably be expected. The chief excuse for the present article, however, is the existence of two collections which have never been reported upon. The first is the Sennett Collection now in the American Museum of Natural History, consisting of some 3,500 skins, prepared by Frazar, Armstrong and Field, chiefly between 1878 and 1891. The second was made by Austin Paul Smith between 1908 and 1912. It consists of about 1,800 skins now in the Dwight Collection. Many records of rarities and extensions of ranges are based on these collections. The published literature has been combed for information supplementary to these collections, and it is hoped that comparatively little has been overlooked.

Our second reason for venturing to publish the results of work voluntarily undertaken, is the hope that it will serve to stimulate further investigation. The veriest tyro reading the list beyond will see that many species which are undoubtedly regular transients or visitants are omitted for lack of a definite record. Other wintering or transient species have been recorded from Corpus Christi, or from northeastern Mexico, which should be detected in our area. We know of at least two ornithologists who have never published the results of visits to this region. Further, Armstrong

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collected extensively for Salvin and Godman, but little besides the water-birds is listed in the later volumes of the 'Catalogue of Birds of the British Museum.' The status of many species is still in doubt, and discoveries of interest are certain to await the experienced student, even in a brief visit, no matter at what time of the year. A great mass of information undoubtedly exists in the collections of the Bureau of Biological Survey, and everyone interested in this region hopes to see Dr. Oberholser's great work on the birds of Texas published as soon as possible.

The area included has been restricted to the section south of the sand hills which run east and west a little north of Norias, the southern section of the great King Ranch, and perhaps seventy miles north of Brownsville. The Gulf of Mexico is, of course, the eastern boundary. Westward our region includes Lomita and Hidalgo up the Rio Grande, but further north stops at the open plains devoid of chaparral, which begin five or ten miles west of the railroad. It should be carefully noted that this area *excludes* the region about Corpus Christi, the northern half of the King Ranch, the northern half of Padre Island and the upper half of the Laguna Madre which contains some important bird islands. The region we discuss is, therefore, less than half that included in most of the papers on the birds of southern Texas, for which there are two main reasons, namely: the collections examined were made principally in the area selected; and the sand hills, already mentioned, form a natural boundary for the great majority of the tropical species.

The strategic position faunally of Brownsville is largely responsible for a list of 333 species and subspecies in an area where relatively so little observation has been carried on. Perhaps the most interesting element in the avifauna is the list of tropical species, most of which here reach their northern limit. The summer and permanent residents are chiefly Lower Austral, but there is a pronounced western or Sonoran element, which is equally apparent with transients and winter visitants. As a winter resort Brownsville is equally fortunate, one group of species barely extending so far north, another not found wintering further south. This accounts for the fact that the list of winter visitants is the largest of the seasonal groups. Finally the region is unexcelled

as a migratory highway, the routes of eastern, western and prairie species converging here with the narrowing of the continent, while a coast-line, running due north and south, and a great river valley probably serve as valuable land-marks. In no other way can we account for the number of western species occurring so far to the southeast, here recorded for the first time.

I. LIST OF ESSENTIALLY TROPICAL SPECIES.

Mexican Grebe	Couch's Kingbird
Mexican Cormorant	Derby Flycatcher
Masked Duck	Mexican Crested Flycatcher
Black-bellied Tree Duck	Beardless Flycatcher
Limpkin (acc.)	Green Jay
Mexican Jacana	Red-eyed Cowbird
Chachalaca	Sennett's Oriole
Red-billed Pigeon	Botteri's Sparrow
White-fronted Dove	Texas Sparrow
Sennett's White-tailed Hawk	Varied Bunting
Aplomado Falcon	Sharpe's Seed-eater
Ferruginous Pygmy Owl	Gray-breasted Martin
Groove-billed Ani	Lesser Cliff Swallow
Texas Kingfisher	Yellow-green Vireo (acc.)
Merrill's Parauque	Small White-eyed Vireo
Rieffer's Hummingbird (acc.)	Sennett's Warbler
Buff-breasted Hummingbird	Rio Grande Yellow-throat

II. LIST OF ESSENTIALLY WESTERN SPECIES OR RACES ATTAINING APPROXIMATELY EASTERNMOST LIMITS IN THIS REGION.

Cinnamon Teal	Texas Nighthawk
Treganza's Heron (casual)	Arkansas Kingbird (cas.)
Western Solitary Sandpiper	Ash-throated Flycatcher
Chestnut-bellied Scaled Quail	Say's Phoebe
Western Mourning Dove	Western Wood Pewee
Inca Dove	Vermilion Flycatcher
Western Redtail	Bullock's Oriole
Swainson's Hawk	Brewer's Blackbird
Ferruginous Rough-leg	Arkansas Goldfinch
Desert Sparrow Hawk (cas.)	Western Vesper Sparrow
Western Horned Owl	Western Savannah Sparrow
Elf Owl	Western Grasshopper Sparrow
Road-runner	Western Lark Sparrow
Texas Woodpecker	Gambel's Sparrow
Golden-fronted Woodpecker	Western Tree Sparrow (acc.)

Western Chipping Sparrow	Alaska Yellow Warbler (cas.)
Western Field Sparrow	Audubon's Warbler
Black-throated Sparrow	Western Yellow-throat
Cassin's Sparrow	Pileolated Warbler
Green-tailed Towhee	Sage Thrasher
Texas Pyrrhuloxia	Curve-billed Thrasher
Western Tanager (cas.)	Cactus Wren
Cooper's Tanager (cas.)	Verdin
Calaveras Warbler	Sierra Hermit Thrush
Sonora Yellow Warbler (cas.)	

The following is a tentative summary of the seasonal variation in bird-life.

I. PERMANENT RESIDENTS. This group includes all species which can be found regularly throughout the year. Many are, however, in maximum numbers at one season of the year only.

Pied-billed Grebe	Killdeer
Laughing Gull	Texas Bob-white
Gull-billed Tern	Chestnut-bellied Scaled Quail
Caspian Tern	Rio Grande Wild Turkey
Forster's Tern	Chachalaca
Least Tern	Western Mourning Dove
Water-Turkey	White-fronted Dove
Mexican Cormorant	Mexican Ground Dove
White Pelican (W)	Inca Dove
Brown Pelican	Turkey Vulture
Mottled Duck	Black Vulture
White Ibis	Cooper's Hawk
White-faced Glossy Ibis	Harris' Hawk
Least Bittern	Western Red-tail
Ward's Heron	Zone-tailed Hawk
Egret	Sennett's White-tailed Hawk
Snowy Egret	Aplomado Falcon
Reddish Egret	Audubon's Caracara
Louisiana Heron	Barn Owl
Little Blue Heron	Texas Barred Owl
Green Heron	Texas Screech Owl
Black-crowned Night Heron	Western Horned Owl
Yellow-crowned Night Heron	Elf Owl
Florida Gallinule	Road-runner
Coot	Belted Kingfisher
Black-necked Stilt	Texas Kingfisher
Willet	Texas Woodpecker
Long-billed Curlew	Golden-fronted Woodpecker

Merrill's Parauque	Black-throated Sparrow
Couch's Kingbird	Texas Sparrow
Derby Flycatcher	Gray-tailed Cardinal
Mexican Crested Flycatcher	Texas Pyrrhuloxia
Vermilion Flycatcher	Sharpe's Seed-eater
Beardless Flycatcher	White-rumped Shrike
Texas Horned Lark	Small White-eyed Vireo
Green Jay	Western Mockingbird
White-necked Raven	Sennett's Thrasher
Red-eyed Cowbird	Curve-billed Thrasher
Vera Cruz Red-wing	Cactus Wren
Rio Grande Meadowlark	Lomita Wren
Western Meadowlark	Texas Wren
Audubon's Oriole	Black-crested Titmouse
Great-tailed Grackle	Verdin
House Sparrow	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher
Western Lark Sparrow	Bluebird

II. SUMMER RESIDENTS. This group includes a few species for which there are winter records, but which are not known to occur regularly at this season. It is possible that in time they will be transferred to the class of permanent residents. Others have never been found definitely nesting, but it is to be expected that they do so.

Mexican Grebe (W)	Ash-throated Flycatcher
Royal Tern (P. R.?)	Wood Pewee
Cabot's Tern	Dwarf Cowbird
Black Skimmer (P. R.?)	Sennett's Oriole
Black-bellied Tree Duck	Orchard Oriole
Fulvous Tree Duck (P. R.?)	Bullock's Oriole
? Roseate Spoonbill (breeds?)	Botteri's Sparrow
Purple Gallinule	Cassin's Sparrow
Wilson's Plover	Blue Grosbeak
? Mexican Jacana	Varied Bunting
Red-billed Pigeon	Painted Bunting
White-winged Dove	Dickeissel
Ferruginous Pygmy Owl	Summer Tanager
Groove-billed Ani	Purple Martin
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	Lesser Cliff Swallow
Western Nighthawk	Sennett's Warbler
Texas Nighthawk	Rio Grande Yellow-throat
Buff-bellied Hummingbird	Yellow-breasted Chat
Scissor-tailed Flycatcher	

III. WINTER VISITANTS. This list does not include species whose occurrence at this season is believed to be purely casual, but does include others which undoubtedly belong in this group, in spite of the absence of a specimen taken in mid-winter. Many are very irregular in occurrence and are affected by the presence or absence of rain or "northers."

Herring Gull	Greater Yellowlegs
Ring-billed Gull	Lesser Yellowlegs
Hooded Merganser	Western Willet
Mallard	Spotted Sandpiper
Gadwall	Black-bellied Plover
Baldpate	Semipalmated Plover
Green-winged Teal	Piping Plover (no winter record)
Blue-winged Teal	Mountain Plover
Cinnamon Teal	Ruddy Turnstone
Shoveller	White-tailed Kite
Pintail	Marsh Hawk
Redhead	Sharp-shinned Hawk
Canvasback	Red-tailed Hawk
Scaup	Krider's Hawk
Lesser Scaup	Texas Red-shouldered Hawk
Ring-necked Duck	Ferruginous Rough-leg
Bufflehead	Duck Hawk
Ruddy Duck	Pigeon Hawk
Snow Goose	Richardson's Pigeon Hawk
Blue Goose	Sparrow Hawk
White-fronted Goose	Long-eared Owl
Canada Goose	Short-eared Owl
Hutchins' Goose	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker
Whistling Swan	Northern Flicker
Bittern (no winter record)	Red-shafted Flicker
Great Blue Heron (no winter record)	Phoebe
Whooping Crane	Say's Phoebe
Sandhill Crane	Cowbird
King Rail	Yellow-headed Blackbird
Sora	Brewer's Blackbird
Wilson's Snipe	Goldfinch
Long-billed Dowitcher	Chestnut-collared Longspur
Red-backed Sandpiper (no winter record)	Western Vesper Sparrow
Semipalmated Sandpiper	Savannah Sparrow
Western Sandpiper	Western Savannah Sparrow
Least Sandpiper	Western Grasshopper Sparrow
Sanderling	White-crowned Sparrow
	Gambel's Sparrow

White-throated Sparrow	Orange-crowned Warbler
Western Chipping Sparrow (no winter record)	Myrtle Warbler
Field Sparrow	Audubon's Warbler
Western Field Sparrow	Sycamore Warbler
Song Sparrow	Pine Warbler
Lincoln's Sparrow	Maryland Yellow-throat
Swamp Sparrow	Western Yellow-throat
Green-tailed Towhee	Pipit
Lark Bunting	Sprague's Pipit
Tree Swallow	Sage Thrasher
Cedar Waxwing	Catbird
Migrant Shrike	House Wren
Solitary Vireo	Western House Wren
White-eyed Vireo	Prairie Marsh Wren
Black and White Warbler	Ruby-crowned Kinglet
Nashville Warbler	Hermit Thrush
Calaveras Warbler	Sierra Hermit Thrush
	Robin

IV. TRANSIENT VISITANTS. This group contains those species which are not known either to winter or breed regularly.

Franklin's Gull	Sennett's Nighthawk
Black Tern	Chimney Swift
Wilson's Phalarope	Ruby-throated Hummingbird
Stilt Sandpiper	Kingbird
Pectoral Sandpiper	Crested Flycatcher
White-rumped Sandpiper	Olive-sided Flycatcher
Baird's Sandpiper	Western Wood Pewee
Hudsonian Godwit	Yellow-bellied Flycatcher
Marbled Godwit	Acadian Flycatcher
Solitary Sandpiper	Traill's Flycatcher
Upland Plover	Alder Flycatcher
Buff-breasted Sandpiper	Least Flycatcher
Hudsonian Curlew	Baltimore Oriole
Eskimo Curlew	Clay-colored Sparrow
Golden Plover	Rose-breasted Grosbeak
Swallow-tailed Kite	Indigo Bunting
Mississippi Kite	Barn Swallow
Swainson's Hawk	Bank Swallow
Broad-winged Hawk	Rough-winged Swallow
Fish Hawk	Red-eyed Vireo
Chuck-will's-widow	Warbling Vireo
Whippoorwill	Bell's Vireo
Nighthawk	Prothonotary Warbler
Florida Nighthawk	Blue-winged Warbler

Golden-winged Warbler	Northern Water-Thrush
Tennessee Warbler	Grinnell's Water-Thrush
Northern Parula Warbler	Louisiana Water-Thrush
Yellow Warbler	Mourning Warbler
Magnolia Warbler	Hooded Warbler
Cerulean Warbler	Wilson's Warbler
Chestnut-sided Warbler	Canada Warbler
Bay-breasted Warbler	Redstart
Blackburnian Warbler	Veery
Black-throated Green Warbler	Gray-cheeked Thrush

V. CASUAL OR ACCIDENTAL VISITANTS. Species here included have occurred on a very few occasions or only once, and would seem to be considerably out of their normal range or migration route. Some, however, may prove in the future to occur with greater regularity.

Old-squaw	Arkansas Kingbird
Masked Duck	Arkansas Goldfinch
Treganza's Heron	Western Tree Sparrow
Little Brown Crane	Western Tanager
Limpkin	Cooper's Tanager
Western Solitary Sandpiper	Yellow-green Vireo
Golden Eagle	Sonora Yellow Warbler
Desert Sparrow Hawk	Alaska Yellow Warbler
Red-bellied Woodpecker	Pileolated Warbler
Rieffer's Hummingbird	

VI. OCCASIONAL VISITANTS. The two species given below have occurred at all seasons, but are not as yet known to be characteristic of any one of them.

Man-o'-war Bird	Wood Ibis
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VII. OF UNCERTAIN STATUS. Most of the species in this group have been observed so seldom in this region, that their status cannot be determined without further research. There is no good reason for believing that any of them are accidental.

Common Tern	Burrowing Owl
Avocet	Texas Seaside Sparrow
Snowy Plover	Lark Sparrow
Mexican Goshawk	Gray-breasted Martin

The treatment and nomenclature used in this paper follow the 1910 'A. O. U. Check List,' but we have included subspecies which have been admitted in recent supplements. In certain cases we have ventured to comment on proposed subspecies, not yet acted upon by the Committee, when the material available for examination seemed sufficient to warrant the formulation of an opinion. It is a pleasure to acknowledge our great indebtedness to Dr. Jonathan Dwight for his kindness in permitting us to use the collections made by Smith. In addition we have greatly benefited by his determinations of this material. The Sennett Collection was checked by Waldron De Witt Miller, when it was received by the American Museum, and Dr. Harry C. Oberholser has examined some of the critical subspecies from time to time. In a region where so much original work remains to be done, we have thought it best to adopt an extremely conservative standard. No species is included on the basis of sight records or reports, and the status of no species is guessed at. While it may seem foolish to put a bird so easily identified as the Scarlet Tanager in the hypothetical list, we have the strongest reasons for excluding sight records of species which are even more striking in appearance, and have been equally drastic with our own field work. On the same principle we have not called a species a summer resident, no matter how strong the probability, unless we knew of a definite breeding record, adequately endorsed. It is our hope that this conservatism will aid future research, by calling attention to what are still open questions, and the personal element is thereby eliminated from criticism. Too little is known as yet about the avifauna of the Brownsville region for sight records and general statements to supplant the definite records based on judicious collecting, and we confidently expect that further investigation will alter many of the statements made beyond, even if the basis on which we made them cannot be seriously impugned.

(*To be continued.*)