

## BIRDS OF THE ISLAND OF ANGUILLA, WEST INDIES.

BY JAMES L. PETERS.

THE island of Anguilla is the northern-most of the so-called Leeward Islands group of the Lesser Antilles. It is a British possession, included in the presidency of St. Kitts. The local affairs are presided over by a magistrate. Among zoölogists Anguilla is well known as the place where that strange fossil mammal *Amblyrhiza inundata* was discovered. It has, however, been very little visited by ornithologists. In fact, the only accounts of the birds that I have found are:—a nominal list by Cory, ('Auk', 8, 1891, p. 46) of thirteen species taken by Cyrus S. Winch during the spring of 1890, and an annotated list by P. L. Sclater of sixteen species collected by W. R. Elliott in March 1892 (P. Z. S., London, 14 June, 1892, pp. 498–500).

I spent two weeks (from February 1 to 13, 1922) on Anguilla in the interests of the Museum of Comparative Zoölogy. The voyage was made by sailing vessel from St. Kitts. Leaving there in the sloop *Ismay* on January 30, light winds prolonged the usual length of the passage, and it was not until eight o'clock on the morning of February 1 that we dropped anchor in Road Harbor. Since the only accommodations for strangers on Anguilla are at Crocus Bay, four miles further west, I landed there with my equipment after a short beat from Road Harbor, and thanks to the activity of Dr. Jones, the local magistrate, I was installed in a house and ready to begin work that same afternoon.

## PHYSICAL FEATURES.

Anguilla is approximately twelve miles long and from two to four miles wide; its long axis running from north-east to south-west. On the north it rises sharply from the sea, the cliffs attaining a maximum elevation of about 200 feet, thence the island slopes off to the southward. Its outline is extremely irregular. The coast line on the north alternates rocky headlands with sandy beaches; on the south low stretches of coralline rock are in turn relieved by sand. The surface is entirely of aeolian limestone with here and there "pockets" of red earth where the inhabitants grow their staple crops of "Pigeon Pea" and Sea Island Cotton.

The rest of the surface of the island is covered with a growth of thorny shrubs, mainly *Acacias*; a species of *Croton*, a variety of cacti including *Cereus*, *Opuntia* and *Melocactus*; *Agaves* (*Fourcroya*) are very numerous. Sandy ridges back of the beaches are covered over with beach grape (*Coccoloba*) and in sheltered situations back of the beach are small stands of manchineel (*Hippomane*). Along portions of the low-lying south shore are small muddy ponds fringed with a dense growth of mangroves; while in the centre of the island lies Caul's Pond, a large shallow lagoon frequented by large numbers of migrant shorebirds.

1. **Podilymbus podiceps** (Linné). PIED-BILLED GREBE.—Recorded by Cory, but not found during my stay.

2. **Phaëthon aethereus** Linné. RED-BILLED TROPIC-BIRD.—Two males taken at Crocus Bay, February 9. This species occurred commonly about the sea-cliffs on the north side of the island.

3. **Pelecanus occidentalis occidentalis** Linné. WEST INDIAN BROWN PELICAN.—Rather common on the north side of the island, where they perch on stubs or jutting rocks well above the level of the water, to watch for small fry. Several were seen at Little Harbor, a small sheltered bay on the south side of the island. Pelicans are said to nest on Pelican Key, near the island of St. Martins.

4. **Fregata magnificens rothschildi** Mathews. MAN-O-WAR BIRD.—Seen occasionally, particularly during the early part of February, following a few days of unusually strong wind.

5. **Butorides virescens maculatus** (Boddaert). WEST INDIAN GREEN HERON.—This bird was found in a variety of locations: two or more frequented a cotton field at Crocus Bay and were seen or heard there daily during the entire period of my stay; another was flushed from dense acacia shrub; another from among the mangroves bordering a small pond on the south side of the island. On February 6 a female was taken in a dense thicket just behind a sandy beach on the north side.

6. **Nyctanassa violacea violacea** (Linné.) YELLOW-CROWNED NIGHT HERON.—A boy brought me a live example of this species. I am unable to distinguish West Indian examples of *Nyctanassa violacea* from those taken in North America; the characters ascribed to the southern form by Messrs. Bangs and Penard (Bull. M. C. Z. 52, no. 2, 1918, p. 31) appear to be entirely individual.

7. **Paecilnitta bahamensis bahamensis** (Linné). BAHAMA PINTAIL.—Five of these ducks were found in a mangrove-fringed pond near Little Harbor on February 11. They were very wary and jumped out of gunshot.

8. **Falco peregrinus anatum** Bonaparte. DUCK HAWK.—A hawk's primary, found at the entrance of a wide mouthed, shallow cave in the sea-cliffs, proves upon comparison to belong to this species.

9. **Falco columbarius columbarius** Linné. PIGEON HAWK.—I took an adult male near Little Harbor on February 11.

10. **Falco sparverius caribearum** Gmelin. LESSER ANTILLEAN SPARROW HAWK.—Fairly common throughout the island. During early February the birds were paired but not ready to breed. This species was also collected by Winch and Elliott.

11. **Gallinula chloropus cachinnans** Bangs. FLORIDA GALLINULE.—Three Gallinules were taken in some low scrubby mangroves fringing the northern shore of Caul's Pond. A male shot on February 12 was without fat and with the spring moult hardly begun; a female killed at the same time was quite fat and at the height of the moult. Winch and Elliott both secured Gallinules on Anguilla. I cannot see how the specimens differ from Florida birds, each of the three finds its counterpart in North American examples. *G. c. portoricensis* Danforth (Auk, 42, 1925, p. 560) is based on characters that vary with age and season and in my opinion must be synonymized with *G. c. cachinnans*.

12. **Fulica caribaea** Ridgway.—Cory records this species as having been taken by Winch. I did not meet with it.

13. **Himantopus mexicanus** (Müller). BLACK-NECKED STILT.—A species taken by Winch, not met with by Elliott or myself.

14. **Numenius hudsonicus** Latham. HUDSONIAN CURLEW.—About a dozen Hudsonian Curlew frequented Caul's Pond; they were very active and noisy, also rather wary. As a rule they kept by themselves, mingling occasionally with the Yellow-legs. A female collected on February 7 was in good condition despite the advanced state of the spring moult.

15. **Actitis macularia** (Linné). SPOTTED SANDPIPER.—Not a very common winter visitant. I found it in small numbers in the vicinity of ponds and mud-holes, and sparingly along the beaches.

16. **Totanus flavipes** (Gmelin) YELLOW-LEGS.—Several flocks and scattered single birds, aggregating over 250 individuals were found at Caul's Pond.

17. **Totanus melanoleucus** (Gmelin) GREATER YELLOW-LEGS.—Much less common than the preceding species.

18. **Catoptrophorus semipalmatus semipalmatus** (Gmelin). WILLET.—Uncommon winter visitant. I saw one with a flock of Yellow-legs at Caul's Pond on February 7, and on the 11th three more at the same place. None were secured, but the probabilities are that only *C. s. semipalmatus* occurs in the Lesser Antilles.

19. **Pisobia minutilla** (Vieillot). LEAST SANDPIPER.—Probably an uncommon winter resident.

One was taken at Caul's Pond on February 12. It was in company with a large flock of small Sandpipers, that appeared to consist almost entirely of the following species.

20. **Ereunetes pusillus** (Linné.) SEMIPALMATED SANDPIPER.—The great majority of "Peeps" that I identified at Caul's Pond belonged to

this species. No close estimate of their number was obtainable, but there were probably at least 300 present. One was shot on February 12 for positive identification and record.

21. *Charadrius semipalmatus* Bonaparte. SEMIPALMATED PLOVER.—Several large flocks frequented the muddy shores of Caul's Pond. Their numbers aggregated between 300 and 400 birds.

22. *Ochodromus wilsonius rufinuchus* Ridgway. RUFIOUS-NAPE PLOVER.—Not uncommon resident. On February 2 I came upon a flock of 25 or more on a narrow beach at the southerly side of the island; a strong wind was blowing and they were loath to fly, preferring to stand head-on to the wind and when approached, to attempt concealment by squatting. A flock of 12-15 was seen at Caul's Pond on the 7th.

I have reverted to the familiar generic name of *Ochodromus* Reichenbach which in recent years has been replaced by *Pagolla* Mathews due to the misapprehension that the former name was preoccupied by *Ochthodromus* LeConte. Furthermore, for reasons stated long since (Peters Bull. M. C. Z., 51, 1917, p. 405) I continue to recognize *rufinuchus* as a separable race. Additional West Indian material but strengthens my belief in the validity of the form.

23. *Oxyechus vociferus rubidus* Riley. ANTILLEAN KILLDEER.—Uncommon. On February 7 a flock of eleven was counted in a dry open field. The birds took wing before I could get within gun shot.

24. *Pluvialis dominicus dominicus* (Müller). GOLDEN PLOVER.—A solitary bird appeared at Caul's Pond, February 12. It stood in a wide expanse of shoal water at the western end of the pond where it was impossible to stalk, and finally escaped. The bird was satisfactorily identified however, both in flight and at rest and gave its characteristic call several times.

25. *Squatarola squatarola* (Linné). BLACK-BREADED PLOVER.—A flock of about fifty "Beetleheads" was present at Caul's Pond, on February 5, and again two days later. On the 12th only a half dozen remained; the rest having sought other feeding grounds.

26. *Arenaria interpres morinella* (Linné). RUDDY TURNSTONE.—A little band of twenty Turnstones frequented Caul's Pond.

27. *Chaemepelia passerina trochila* Bonaparte. MARTINIQUE GROUND DOVE.—Two males of this common resident were taken. It occurs in small flocks all over the island, particularly in bushy situations.

28. *Zenaida aurita aurita* (Temminck and Knip). MARTINIQUE DOVE.—This species was found less commonly than the ubiquitous Ground Dove. The usual haunts were the small clumps of manchineel near the shore, though a few birds were found in the bushy interior.

While *aurita* is commonly regarded as a distinct species from *zenaida*, I cannot find any trenchant characters upon which to continue this view, the birds from the Greater Antilles intergrading with those from the Lesser Antilles by individual variation, in fact the specimen taken on Anguilla February 4 is such an example.

The forms of *Zenaida aurita* worthy of recognition are:—

*Zenaida aurita aurita* (Temm. and Knip).

*Zenaida aurita zenaida* (Bonap).

*Zenaida aurita yucatanensis* Salvadori.

*Zenaida z. lucida* Noble, and *Z. spadicea* Cory must be synonymized with *Z. a. zenaida*.

29. **Megaceryle alcyon alcyon** (Linné). KINGFISHER.—A few Kingfishers winter on Anguilla. I saw one on the southerly side of the island February 2 and on the 9th one about the cliffs at Crocus Bay. This is one of the species taken by Winch in the spring of 1890.

30. **Orthorhynchus exilis exilis** (Gmelin). GILT-CRESTED HUMMER.—A common resident. For the most part, I found it about the settlements, particularly in the plantings of "Pigeon Pea." It also occurred in sheltered spots near the southerly side of the island. Five males and a female were taken.

31. **Sericotes holosericeus holosericeus** (Linné). GREEN CARIB.—Resident, less common than the preceding species. This large Hummer was not found in close association with its small relatives, but was generally to be found in the vicinity of the agaves and the blossoms of the opuntia.

Two males secured were both undergoing a moult of the body feathers.

32. **Tyrannus curvirostris vorax** Vieillot. LARGE-BILLED KINGBIRD.—I found this species common throughout the areas of cultivation and about houses. Examples of *T. curvirostris* from Anguilla have been referred to the typical form by both Cory (Auk, 8, 1891, p. 46) and Ridgway (Bds. No. and Mid. Am., 4, 1907, p. 708). In identifying a male and a female from Anguilla I carefully compared and measured a series of *T. curvirostris* from nearly every West Indian island, well over 100 skins in all, and find that the characters separating the two forms are not nearly as well marked or constant as has been generally supposed. Extremes of either race are readily recognizable at a glance, but between these limits there is a wide range of individual variation forming a perfect chain of intergradation.

The range of *T. c. curvirostris* in the West Indies includes the Bahamas, Cuba, and Isle of Pines, Caymans, Jamaica, Haiti, Porto Rico and the Virgin Islands. The characters are: Paler gray above, grayish breast band paler and less well defined; bill averaging 25.5 to 33.75 (measured from base of forehead) width at frontal antiae, 13–16 mm. *T. c. vorax*, darker gray above, grayish breast band darker and more clearly defined; bill averaging larger, 31–35; width at frontal antiae 15–18; Anguilla to Grenada.

Specimens from the Leeward Islands (Anguilla, St. Kitts, Nevis) are intermediate, but are best placed with *vorax*. In any event such an intermediate race is too poorly marked to merit recognition.

33. **Elaenia martinica riisii** Sclater. ST. THOMAS ELAENIA.—Not uncommon in the brushy tracts throughout the island. Eight specimens

were secured, which undoubtedly should be referred to *riisii* rather than to *martinica*.

34. **Margarops fuscatus fuscatus** (Vieillot). PEARLY-EYED THRASHER.—Uncommon, an inhabitant of the dense thickets. Two males were collected, neither of which showed any sign of breeding. Both birds are quite typical of *M. f. fuscatus*.

35. **Dumetella carolinensis** (Linné). CATBIRD.—Winch secured a Catbird on Anguilla. The bird was doubtless a mere straggler since the species does not ordinarily occur in the West Indies on migration outside of the Bahamas, Cuba, and the Caymans.

36. **Setophaga ruticilla** (Linné). REDSTART.—Two males and a female were observed during my two weeks stay.

37. **Seiurus noveboracensis** subsp.? WATER THRUSH.—I heard a Water Thrush near Kettle Harbor on February 11, and succeeded in "squeaking" the bird up to within a few feet, so close that I missed him completely in trying to shoot him with the "edge of the load." Since both *S. n. noveboracensis* and *S. n. notabilis* occur in the West Indies during the winter, positive subspecific identification cannot be made in the absence of specimens.

38. **Seiurus aurocapillus** (Linné). OVENBIRD.—Uncommon winter visitant. I met with it first on February 6, when I shot a female. One was also seen on February 11.

39. **Dendroica discolor** (Vieillot). PRAIRIE WARBLER.—This Warbler appears to be a fairly common wintering species. I found it in nearly all situations in numbers varying from 2 to 6 each day. A male was collected on February 2 for positive identification.

40. **Dendroica petechia bartholemica** Sundevall. ST. BART'S GOLDEN WARBLER.—Common resident, occurring in practically all situations on the island, appearing equally at home among the mangroves or bushy thickets. On February 8, and again on the 13th I shot a pair of these Warblers, apparently mated, but showing no signs of breeding.

41. **Compothlypis americana pusilla** (Wilson). NORTHERN PARULA WARBLER.—Two or three were seen near Little Harbor on February 11, and a male secured for positive identification.

42. **Coereba bartolemica bartolemica** (Sparmann). ST. BART'S BANANAQUIT.—A very common resident. I found these honey creepers particularly numerous just back of the beaches on the southern shore. There they fed on the ripe fruit of the common *Opuntia* in which they had pecked holes to extract the soft pulp. In consequence they were stained about the head, and the intestines and abdominal walls were likewise discolored by the juice.

43. **Pyrhulagra noctis ridgwayi** Cory. ANTIGUA BULLFINCH.—Common resident. The Red-breasted Sparrow, as this bird is locally known, is a confiding species, common about buildings and gardens and sometimes coming in through the open doors and windows to pick up crumbs from the floor or table.

Six adult males agree in coloration with an adult male of *P. n. ridgwayi* from Antigua which I have examined through the courtesy of Dr. C. W. Richmond of the U. S. National Museum.

In the absence of adults from Barbuda I am unable to determine whether *Loxigilla chazaliei* Oustalet (Bull. Soc. Zool. de France 20, 1895, p. 184, Barbuda) is identical with examples from Antigua. Should *Pyrrhulagra* from Antigua and Barbuda prove to be identical, Oustalet's name will stand, having three years priority over Ridgway's, and the birds from Antigua, Barbuda and Anguilla will become *Pyrrhulagra noctis chazaliei* (Oustalet).

On geographical grounds one would expect the representative of *P. noctis* found on Anguilla to be *P. n. coryi* Ridgway (Auk, 15, 1898, p. 323, St. Eustatius), but comparison with a nice series of topotypes proves that this is not the case.

44. **Tiaris bicolor omissa** (Jardine). CARIB GRASSQUIT.—A common resident, found in small flocks during my stay, both in bushy situations and in the cultivated sections. All specimens taken were undergoing the prenuptial moult.

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