

## A NEW SCREECH OWL FROM NUEVO LEON

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ON February 2 (for a few hours) and again from February 9 to 14 (inclusive), 1938, John B. Semple and the authors collected birds on the Mesa del Chipinque, a shelf on the north slope of a bold spur of the Sierra Madre just south of Monterrey, Nuevo Leon, Mexico. Among the specimens secured was a gray Screech Owl, obviously an *Otus asio*, so strikingly dark-crowned that it could not be identified with any known race. Reluctant though the authors are to describe a new form from a single specimen, they nevertheless feel that the *Otus asio* inhabiting the Nuevo Leon mountains must be different from that inhabiting the 'low' country about Monterrey, and, finding this bird to be different from other known races also, they have decided to name it

***Otus asio semplei* subsp. nov.**

*Type*.—Adult female, G. M. S. field catalogue No. 7998; Mesa del Chipinque, elevation 5000 feet, about six miles south of Monterrey, Nuevo Leon, Mexico; February 13, 1938; John Bonner Semple.

*Subspecific characters*.—In general appearance and size close to *Otus asio mcallii* Cassin, but differs from that and other races of *Otus asio* in being strikingly dark-crowned, the top of the head appearing solid blackish brown at a distance of four or five feet, this more or less triangular dark patch contrasting sharply with the light gray or whitish superciliary streaks that include the inner margins of the ear tufts. Dark streaking of the back and scapulars also heavy. Toes scantily feathered. Under parts about as in *mcallii*.

*Measurements*.—Wing (primaries pressed flat), 165 mm.; tail, 83 (measurements of culmen and tarsus omitted because considered too difficult to take with certainty).

*Range*.—So far as is known, the mountains of Nuevo Leon, presumably the pine and oak belt of higher elevations (5000 feet and upwards).

*Remarks*.—*Otus asio semplei* is much like *O. a. mcallii*, to be sure; but in a large and strictly comparable series of male and female *mcallii* (forty-one specimens, all in fresh winter plumage) not one even approaches *semplei* insofar as darkness of crown is concerned. That *semplei* is not merely an abnormally melanistic individual is evident from the general appearance of the under parts which are no darker than in average *mcallii*.

It is the authors' belief that the cloud-hung pine and oak forests of the Nuevo Leon mountains (and of contiguous ranges) provide a habitat very different from that of the live-oak groves and *huizache* thickets of the 'low' country. The fact that Couch's Jay, *Aphelocoma seiberii couchi* (Baird), is abundant in the former habitat and never seen in the latter, while the Green Jay, *Xanthoura luxuosa luxuosa* (Lesson), is common in the 'low' country but never encountered in the 'high,' furnishes ample proof that the

range of *O. a. semplei* is widely different, *ecologically speaking*, from that of *O. a. mccallii*.

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