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NOTES ON MEXICAN BIRDS

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THESE notes relate chiefly to some of the birds collected by the senior author between August 8 and September 12, 1946, while he was a member of a party led by Mr. Charles M. Bogert and including Drs. A. P. Blair and John M. Moore and Señor Rodolfo Ruibal y Cuevas, all of whom were of valued assistance in the field.

The localities mentioned are as follows:

LAS DELICIAS, COAHUILA (about 26° 20' N. Lat., 103° W. Long.).—This desert hamlet lies in a valley almost entirely surrounded by rather barren mountains. It is about 35 miles northeast of San Pedro, Coahuila. Conspicuous plants are prickly pear and cholla cactus (*Opuntia*), *Yucca*, mesquite (*Prosopis*) and, in the canyons, desert willow (*Chilopsis*). Permanent springs in two of the canyons supply water for a pond, small irrigated fields and a few fig and mulberry trees at the village, which attract many birds. There are no cottonwoods. Flickers (*Colaptes*) and Golden-fronted Woodpeckers (*Centurus aurifrons*) were absent.

SALTILLO, COAHUILA.—A little work was done near this city in country similar to that about Las Delicias but somewhat better watered and with larger yuccas and mesquite. *Colaptes* and *Centurus* were common.

RÍO NAZAS, DURANGO.—We worked along this river at a point about 15 miles southwest of Lerdo (about 25° 20' N. Lat., 104° W. Long.). The river is lined with large cottonwoods and willows inhabited by Golden-fronted Woodpeckers, though no flickers were seen. The barren hills near by were not worked; mesquite and creosote bush (*Covillea*) were present there.

ZIMAPAN, HIDALGO.—This town on the International Highway also lies on the arid plateau but in a relatively well-watered region with large yuccas and prickly pear and candelabra cacti. Flickers and Golden-fronted Woodpeckers were common.

JACALA, HIDALGO.—This town is also on the International Highway but in a region of rugged mountains which are covered with a rather sparse forest of pine, oak and some cedar.

The mixture of late nesting with early migration records in the following observations is believed to be of interest. We have used subspecific names only when based on direct comparison of our specimens. The curators of the National Museum kindly permitted the junior author to compare some of our specimens with material in their collections. Wing measurements are of the chord.

Cathartes aura.—On the evening of August 25, while in camp on the Río Nazas, a heavy storm approached from the mountains to the eastward. As the wind preceding this storm picked up, a great concentration of Turkey Vultures, numbering over five hundred and probably nearer to one thousand, appeared. All were sailing on set wings at varying elevations but without deviation up the river valley towards the mountains farther west. Some Black Vultures (*Coragyps atratus*) were said by other observers to be mixed with the vanguard. It took about ten minutes for this great flock of vultures to stream over. They were evidently moving many miles to escape the heavy rains which fell farther east. Near camp where the rain was light the Turkey Vultures evidently did not join this movement, as just at dark about thirty were circling low over the cottonwoods in a confused fashion, the only time such behavior was noted.

A specimen from Las Delicias has wing, 490; tail, 242 mm.; and one from the Río Nazas: wing, 495; and tail, 250. These measurements are typical for the small Mexican race (*aura*) which is perhaps here near its northern limit on the plateau. Along the coasts it has been recorded north to 28 degrees N. Latitude in Sonora by van Rossem (1946) and from Brownsville, Texas, by Brandt (1936).

Callipepla squamata.—A Scaled Quail from Las Delicias taken August 18 was only two-thirds grown, though well able to fly. An adult from nineteen miles west of Saltillo was typical *squamata*.

Porzana carolina.—A Sora appeared about the pond at Las Delicias on August 15 and was killed by a Mexican. It was an adult male with testes still somewhat enlarged. An immature bird was taken August 25 along the Río Nazas.

Larus atricilla.—On August 21 we saw a young Laughing Gull along the Río Nazas. It seemed rather sluggish and when collected on the 24th proved to be in poor flesh. Its occurrence on the plateau must be casual.

Zenaida asiatica mearnsi.—An adult male Western White-winged Dove collected at Las Delicias on August 14 has the wing 166 mm., so belongs to the western race.

Columbigallina passerina.—A Ground Dove taken on the Río Nazas on August 24 was apparently still in breeding condition (testes about 8 x 3 mm.), although the wing was in molt and the rectrices were new.

Bubo virginianus mayensis.—A Yucatan Horned Owl from Las Delicias (probably a male of the year) has the wing 325 mm., so presumably belongs to this small race.

Centurus aurifrons.—An immature male Golden-fronted Woodpecker from Zimapan, Hidalgo, taken September 1, has the blackish streaks on the breast much broader and more pronounced than in any other specimen in this plumage we have examined. The flanks and under tail-coverts are also more heavily marked with dusky than usual and the forehead and crown more blackish. The breast is quite grayish, not buffy. Unfortunately we lack other material from this far south for comparison.

Empidonax wrightii (*oberholseri* auct.).—A Wright's Flycatcher was collected at Las Delicias on August 15, an early migration date.

Empidonax minimus.—Two Least Flycatchers were taken at Las Delicias on August 12.

Empidonax traillii adastus.—An example of the Great Basin race of Alder Flycatcher was taken at Las Delicias on August 11.

Contopus richardsonii.—A Western Wood Pewee taken at Las Delicias on August 18 is of the nominate race. One from the Río Nazas, August 23, is *sordidulus*.

Nuttallornis borealis.—The Olive-sided Flycatcher was first noted at Las Delicias on August 16, when one was collected.

Pyrocephalus rubinus.—A male Vermilion Flycatcher was seen feeding a fledgling near the Río Nazas as late as August 25.

Stelgidopteryx ruficollis psammochrous.—An adult Sonora Rough-winged Swallow, mostly in fresh plumage but with the wing in heavy molt, was taken from a group of half a dozen over the Río Nazas on August 24.

Auriparus flaviceps.—The unmistakable nest of a Verdin containing young only a few days old was found in a mesquite at Las Delicias on August 12. The species was seen near by, though not observed to visit the nest.

Mimus polyglottos.—A young Mockingbird out of the nest was observed begging for food from an adult on August 18 at Las Delicias. The species was quite common there but surprisingly shy, as Burleigh and Lowery (1942: 199) noticed elsewhere in Coahuila. At Las Delicias this could scarcely be the result of persecution for cage birds (the explanation suggested by Burleigh and Lowery).

Toxostoma curvirostre.—A female Curve-billed Thrasher taken twenty miles west of Saltillo had the ovary enlarged and a brood patch still somewhat evident on August 27. The plumage was very worn.

Vireo belli medius.—Dr. Blair found the nest of a Texas Vireo near the Río Nazas on August 25. It was about four feet high in willow sprouts beneath tall trees. The two young were in the pin-feather stage. One parent, collected while it was feeding the young, proved to be the male.

Dendroica petechia sonorana.—Sonora Yellow Warblers were common and singing freely along the Río Nazas. Unfortunately the only adult secured (August 22) was too badly shot for examination of the gonads to be satisfactory.

Dendroica townsendi.—A Townsend's Warbler was secured from a mixed flock of gnatcatchers and other species in mesquite about twenty miles west of Saltillo on August 28. This warbler rarely migrates on the desert in fall.

Geothlypis trichas.—Yellow-throats were common in beds of weeds near the Río Nazas. They were still singing freely. A male taken August 24 had the testes much enlarged. Its plumage was excessively worn.

Icteria virens.—A chat taken along the Río Nazas on August 24 seems nearest *auricollis* but is small: wing, 72; tail, 79. The ear-coverts are not blackish as they are said to be in the small race *tropicalis* from southern Sonora.

Wilsonia pusilla.—A Wilson's or Pileolated Warbler was seen at Las Delicias on August 17.

Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus.—Two adult male Yellow-headed Blackbirds were taken at Las Delicias (August 11, 15). They were the only members of this species observed.

Icterus parisorum.—Scott's Oriole was not uncommon in the arroyos near Las Delicias. On August 15, a bird barely out of the nest and able to fly only a few feet was taken as the female flew about near by. Another taken August 18 had the wing and tail not quite fully grown and represents a brood brought off a little earlier. A grown juvenile was taken August 13. This is later than the species is known to nest further north.

* *Icterus spurius ?affinis*.—Orchard Orioles were common in the desert about Las Delicias throughout our stay. All the specimens taken were very fat with minute gonads and apparently were migrants. As compared with average specimens of *spurius*, an adult male from Las Delicias appears rather dark. Two in immature plumage (one female, one non-sexed) are dark and sooty above with reduced wing-bars and edgings. Below they are also rather dull and dark flanked. These three specimens are smaller and have shorter tails than most *spurius* and seem to be like the population of the Brownsville region of Texas that was named *affinis* by Lawrence. We have measured the type of *affinis* and the Las Delicias specimens. They are compared with additional measurements copied from Ridgway (1902: 276):

	Male		Female	
	Wing	Tail	Wing	Tail
Type of <i>affinis</i> (ad.)	74.5 mm.	63.5 mm.		
Las Delicias	77 +	66	73.5 mm.	64.5 mm.
southern Texas (series)	76.2	66.3	71.1	64.8
Atlantic coast (series)	79.2	68.8	75.9	67.3

The non-sexed immature from Las Delicias measures: wing, 73.3; tail, 66.

Although these differences are not striking, examination of adequate known breeding material from southern Texas may show that *affinis* is a valid race with differences in size and color.

Cassidix mexicanus prosopidicola.—Mesquite Grackles abounded around the Mexican village at Las Delicias. A worn adult female seems nearest *prosopidicola*. A fledged young was noticed begging for food from an adult on August 18.

Molothrus ater.—A flock of cowbirds was noted about the village at Las Delicias on our arrival. Of four specimens taken, two (August 15, male ad., female juv.) are of the race *ater* and two (August 15, male juv.; August 17, male ad.), *artemisiae*. Since *obscurus* must be the breeding race here, these records are early.

Piranga ludoviciana.—An adult male Western Tanager was taken at Las Delicias on August 12.

Pyrrhuloxia s. sinuata.—An immature Pyrrhuloxia taken at Las Delicias on August 10 has the wing, 91; tail, 103.5 mm. It evidently belongs to the race *sinuata* which we consider to differ from *texana* by larger size (particularly longer tail). Van Rossem (1934: 355) found that the type of *sinuata* (type locality "western parts of México," later restricted to Zacatecas) and other specimens from that part of México do not differ in color from *texana* (type locality Corpus Christi, Texas). He considered *texana*

a synonym of *sinuata* but did not discuss size variation. Van Rossem kindly informs us that the type of *sinuata* measures: wing, 94; tail, 101 mm. This is slightly less than the measurements listed below of five males of *sinuata* but a larger series would doubtless show overlap. Furthermore, the type may not be a fully adult male. It is an old specimen, probably once mounted, so its wings and tail may be somewhat blunted by prolonged abrasion and handling. Hence it seems justifiable to retain Zacatecas as the type locality of *sinuata* even though the exact source of the type is unknown.

Pyrrhuloxia sinuata beckhami Ridgway is a synonym of *P. s. sinuata*. Although Ridgway stated that the type is from El Paso, Texas, the specimen which he actually selected as the type is a specimen which, even in Baird's day, had lost its label and its designation as type was most unfortunate. It appears, however, to be of the western Texas and New Mexico race, measuring: wing, 95.8; tail, 105.7 mm. It is a male in late winter plumage, and it seems possible that it was the male (U. S. National Museum 4028) taken by Couch in "Tamaulipas," March, 1853; Baird's notes on the latter give it as from Nuevo León and say: "not here." Perhaps, therefore, No. 4028 had lost its label.

Curiously, the type of *texana* appears even longer-tailed than the type of *beckhami*, but this proves on closer examination to be due to its tail having been shot. The feathers appear to have come out and to have been glued in. The wing measures 91.7 mm. Unfortunately the type of *sinuata* is another bird of unknown locality and van Rossem (1934: 355-357) gives no measurements. It is possible, therefore, that *sinuata* is the proper name for the race here called *beckhami*.

Specimens	Wing	Tail
8 ad. male <i>texana</i>	88-94.7 (91.6)	93- 102.7 (98)
15 ad. female <i>texana</i>	85-94 (88.9)	91.2-100 (95.5)
5 ad. male <i>sinuata</i>	95-99 (96.3)	102.4-110 (106.4)
5 ad. female <i>sinuata</i>	89-95 (92.1)	100- 107 (103.5)

Specimens with very worn tails (for the season) average decidedly shorter-winged and are doubtless immature. Tail measurements are about the same, however, in most cases, but occasionally immature *sinuata* are as small as adult *texana*. The figures given above for *texana* are probably correct, but the small series of *sinuata* may include some immatures.

Pheucticus m. melanocephalus.—An immature male Rocky Mountain Grosbeak taken near Jacala, Hidalgo, on September 9 is definitely big-billed and a migrant of this subspecies which was also recorded by Sutton and Burleigh (1940: 183).

Guiraca caerulea eurhyncha.—An adult male Blue Grosbeak from Las Delicias (August 12) and a pair from the Río Nazas (August 23, 24) are large-billed and belong to the race *eurhyncha*, which is perhaps here near its northern limit. Specimens from Sabinas, Coahuila and Rancho Baillón, northwestern Durango are *interfusa*. In the limited material examined we cannot find characters to separate *deltarhyncha* van Rossem from *eurhyncha*.

The Las Delicias male seemed well past breeding condition but the pair from the Río Nazas had the gonads considerably enlarged and the male was warbling softly. Others were seen that appeared to be concerned about fledged young, although the latter were not positively identified.

Passerina ciris pallidior.—Two immature Western Buntings, apparently migrants, were taken at Las Delicias on August 10 and 11.

Chondestes grammacus.—Lark Sparrows appeared about Las Delicias on August 18 (or possibly earlier) when one was taken. Thereafter they were common.

Amphispiza bilineata.—On August 8 and again on the 28th, Desert Sparrows were seen feeding fledged young near Saltillo.

Spizella passerina arizonae.—Two Western Chipping Sparrows were taken from a flock of four or five that were found near Las Delicias on August 17.

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THE RACES OF THE GRAY-HEADED FLYCATCHER
[*CULICICAPA CEYLONENSIS* (SWAINSON)]¹

BY H. G. DEIGNAN

It is likely that no Oriental bird has been the subject of so many revisions, with so little agreement among the authors, as this little flycatcher. An instructive résumé of the conflicting results is given by Kuroda ('Birds of the Island of Java,' 1: 226-227, 1933).

Through the courtesy of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia and the American Museum of Natural History, I have added to the long series of the species in the U. S. National Museum to make a total of 262 adult specimens from virtually every part of its range; among them are six types of forms named by Oberholser and topotypes of most of those named by others.

It is my opinion, after careful and prolonged study of this material,

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