

Mayr (1938, 1944) comments, a thorough revision of this species must await the assembling of more and better material than is now available.

I am indebted to Dr. Ernst Mayr for much help and advice, and for the use of his notes on certain *Turnix* specimens in the British Museum. Mr. J. D. Macdonald of the latter institution kindly arranged to lend me one of the few known specimens of *T. m. saturata*. I also wish to thank Mr. Dean Amadon, Dr. James P. Chapin, and Capt. Jean Delacour for their many suggestions.

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The status of the spotted rail, *Pardirallus maculatus*, of Chiapas.¹—In the *Auk* (64: 460, 1947) I recorded that Señor Miguel Alvarez del Toro had informed me of the capture alive near Tuxtla, Gutierrez, Chiapas, of a spotted rail, a bird new to the Mexican avifauna. He supplied a photograph of the bird which clearly confirmed his identification. As the bird was then living in captivity and was in very worn plumage, I suggested that it would be useless for comparison and that it would be better to wait until it had grown fresh plumage before preserving it as a specimen. This has now transpired, and some time ago, I was pleased to receive the skin for examination. Inasmuch as the nearest locality from which the species had been recorded previously was the Ycacos Lagoon, British Honduras, whence only one specimen has been taken, the type of *insolitus*, it was imperative to compare the two birds.

I am indebted to Mr. J. L. Peters of the Museum of Comparative Zoology for the trouble he has taken in comparing the Chiapas specimen with the type of *insolitus*, and in writing me of his observations. He notes that the Chiapas specimen has more white in its plumage, partly but not wholly, due to the freshness of its feathering, as the type of *insolitus* is somewhat abraded and the pale edges of its feathers are partly gone. However, the white bars (not subject to abrasion) on the feathers of the abdomen, flanks and crissum are about twice as wide in the Chiapas specimen as in the Ycacos bird, and the black bars are correspondingly reduced in the former. Also, the white spots on the tertials are more linear, less rounded in the type of *insolitus* than in the Chiapas example.

Among a small series of specimens of the nominate form examined, I have seen two from the Paraguayan Chaco, one of which has the white ventral bars very much broader than the black ones and the other has the black ones wider than the white ones. I hesitate, therefore, to attach too much value to this character in differentiating the Chiapas bird from the one from British Honduras.

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When Bangs and Peck described *insolitus* they remarked on the fact that the brown portions of the plumage (wings, back, rump) were much darker than in South American *maculatus*,—Seal brown instead of Mummy brown. The Chiapas bird is extremely nigrescent; the back and rump feathers are black, edged with Natal brown, the remiges are clipped, but the primaries, insofar as they can be judged, are deep clove brown, the scapulars and upper wing coverts are black, tipped and basally edged with Natal brown, and with white marginal markings; the feathers of the upperback, interscapulars, and hind neck are black with white spots. It is conceivable that with wear and fading, all these black areas might turn to dark Seal brown, as in the somewhat worn type of *insolitus*, but it is also not improbable that the Chiapas bird may represent a new form comprising the dark extreme of the species. What is needed is additional material from both southern Mexico and British Honduras. For the present it seems that the two specimens should be considered as of the same race. The known range of *insolitus* is thereby extended from Yacos Lagoon, British Honduras, northwestward to Tuxtla Gutierrez, Chiapas, Mexico.

In response to my suggestion that he keep detailed notes on the bird while it was still alive, as nothing is known of its habits, Señor del Toro has supplied me with the following observations.

In captivity the bird ate dried insects and cooked rice with apparent relish, it also seemed to like fresh insects, dragonflies, and larvae and pupae of wasps, and also chopped meat. The bird would pick up the food in its bill and then take it to its water pan where it would eat it.

Almost all day the rail remained hidden among some plants, especially fairly high up in the branches of a shrub in the large cage in which it was kept; from this perch it descended now and then, chiefly in the early morning and late afternoon, to eat and to bathe in the shallow water pan. After splashing about in the shallow water, it usually preened its plumage, sunned itself for a while, and then climbed up to its favorite perch among the branches. In climbing to the perch it always ran upward on the branches or the wire mesh, helping itself along with its wings, but in descending it merely flew down.

The bird became tame very soon after its capture, almost taking food from the hand. The only notes it was heard to utter were high pitched cries.—HERBERT FRIEDMANN, *United States National Museum, Washington, D. C.*

The Pacific flyway of the golden plover.—Almost all recent discussions of bird migration include a comment of astonishment at the feat of the Pacific golden plover (*Pluvialis dominica fulva*), in passing each year from the Aleutians to Hawaii over 2400 miles of open ocean. The astonishment is not so much at the great length of the trip, as at the featurelessness of the terrain, "without even an island or a rock to serve as a landmark" (MacDonald, *Birds of Brewery Creek*. (Oxford Univ. Press), p. 13, 1947); or again, "The Golden Plover performs *with no landmarks* over the broad expanses of the Pacific Ocean" (Yeagley, *Journ. Appl. Physics*, 18: 1035-1063, 1947), or still again, "Since *there are no 'sign posts' of any kind* (italics mine) over the ocean wastes, the flights (of the albatross) must involve true navigation until the island home comes into view" (Yeagley, *loc. cit.*).

The purpose of the present note is to point out that the Pacific is not one vast, featureless expanse, merely because solid land is scarce. Some of the most spectacular "sign posts" of the planet lie over the oceans.

Thus, off the coast of California is a "landmark" which must, to a dweller on Mars or the moon, appear to be one of the most brilliant features of our planet. In July,