

The food of these hawks was largely mice and other small rodents, but not entirely so. I sometimes found Meadowlark feathers around the nest, and once the wing, foot and breast-bone of a young Sharp-tailed Grouse. I often found well-picked bones of various small animals in the nest, and believe that the young usually picked the meat from the bones rather than swallow the animals whole, as the young Short-eared Owls did. They also apparently did not swallow fur, feathers and bones so frequently as the owls did. I found a few ejected pellets around the nest when the young were pretty well grown, but they were much smaller than those about the owls' nest, and there were very few of them.

THE WILD TURKEYS OF COLORADO

By WELLS W. COOKE

WITH MAP

THE turkey was first formally included in the list of Colorado birds by Ridgway in 1873 (*Bull. Essex Inst.*, p. 179) under the name of *Meleagris gallopavo* which at that time meant a turkey similar to the Kansas bird. To this was added by Morrison (*Orn. & Ool.*, 1888, p. 70) *Meleagris gallopavo mexicana*, from La Plata County, to represent the form of turkey found in southwestern Colorado. These two forms remained unquestioned in the Colorado list until 1900 when the Rocky Mountain turkey was separated by Nelson as *merriami* (*Auk*, 1900, p. 120). An examination showed that every specimen of a turkey in all the Colorado collections belonged to the new form, even one taken near Canyon City, where the eastern bird had been supposed to occur.

In referring to this matter in THE CONDOR for July, 1912, I said: "The only claim the form (i. e., the eastern turkey) has, rests on the assumption that the birds of southeastern Colorado (where the species was very common a hundred years ago) must have been the same as the birds a little to the eastward in Kansas and Oklahoma. As the species is now supposed to be extinct in that part of Colorado, it is probable that the matter never can be settled."

During the last few days I have had occasion to go over the whole matter again and have become convinced that the assumption of a continuous range of turkeys from Kansas and Oklahoma to Colorado is erroneous. Lieut. Pike in 1806 found turkeys enormously abundant along the Arkansas from the foothills to the site of the present town of Pueblo. In 1820 Maj. Long finds them common at the junction of the Las Animas and Arkansas rivers. There his party divided, and Say's division which followed down the Arkansas does not report seeing turkeys until they had passed far into Kansas to about where Wichita is now. Maj. Long's party went south into New Mexico and crossed the north-eastern part of that State to the valley of the Canadian River; he does not record turkeys until after he reached the Canadian River in Texas some twenty miles west of the present town of Tascosa, that is, he saw no turkeys during the whole time he was in New Mexico. As his party was living on stale horse meat, and had hunters out all the time, it is safe to assume that they would have found turkeys had there been any present.

In 1846 Lieut. Abert spent a summer in this same region. He speaks of the

abundance of turkeys in eastern Kansas, and mentions meeting them west to the Little Arkansas River near the present town of Wichita; then he does not record them again until he reaches Bent's Fort, Colorado, near the present town of Las Animas, though he notes from day to day the more interesting birds seen. The previous year, 1845, he made an expedition into New Mexico, starting from this same Bent's Fort, and records turkeys all the way from the Arkansas up the Las Animas to Raton Pass. Thence he passed to the headwaters of the Canadian River and down this stream to its mouth in Oklahoma. He does not mention seeing turkeys in all the country from the east side of Raton Pass for the next hundred miles until he is far out on the plains and almost to the New Mexico-Texas line.

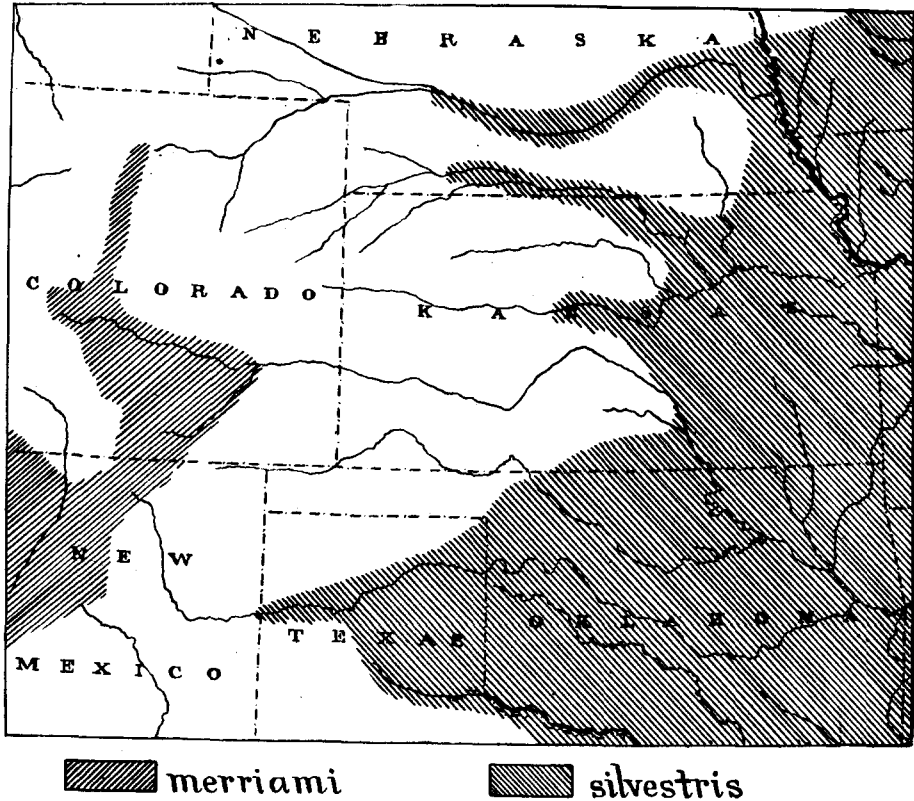


Fig. 32. A PART OF THE RANGES OF THE WILD TURKEY (*Meleagris gallopavo silvestris*) AND THE MERRIAM TURKEY (*Meleagris gallopavo merriami*)

It thus seems that Long, Say, and Abert each found a wide space separating the turkeys of Kansas and Texas from those of Colorado and New Mexico. Nor has any subsequent traveler reported the presence of the birds in this intervening space. The turkeys of Kansas and of northwestern Texas are *silvestris* and those of the upper Arkansas in Colorado and of the region around Raton Pass are *merriami*. It seems then logical to suppose that *merriami* ranged down the Arkansas and Las Animas rivers to their junction and that the turkeys of Bent's Fort and vicinity belonged to this form. If the above reasoning is correct the eastern form of the wild turkey has never occurred in Colorado and must be omitted from the Colorado bird-list.