

THE STATUS OF *APHELOCOMA CYANOTIS* AND ITS ALLIES

By HARRY C. OBERHOLSER

THE BLUE-EARED JAY, *Aphelocoma cyanotis*, was described by Ridgway¹ from a specimen collected by John Taylor at an unknown locality in Mexico. It was later discovered in the state of San Luis Potosi², and has since been found also in the states of Mexico, Hidalgo, Coahuila, and Durango; and it was reported from Sutton County, Texas, in 1902³. The Texas jay was first described by Ridgway as *Aphelocoma texana*⁴, from a specimen taken in Edwards County, Texas, near the head of the Nueces River. Both this and *Aphelocoma cyanotis* have since been regarded as distinct species. The material hitherto available from Texas has not been satisfactory, and identification of specimens of these two birds from that region has, therefore, in many cases been difficult. Recently, however, a large series of good plumaged birds was collected by F. B. Armstrong in Kerr, Sutton, and Edwards counties, and is now in the collection of John E. Thayer, to whom the writer is indebted for the privilege of examination. Study of this fine series and of the other specimens available, altogether sixty-seven examples, shows clearly that *Aphelocoma cyanotis* does not occur anywhere in Texas, since all individuals from the state so identified turn out to be *Aphelocoma texana* in very fresh plumage. This discovery readily accounts for the difficulty hitherto experienced in identifying specimens of these two jays from Texas. The Texas bird (*Aphelocoma texana*) is, however, separable from *Aphelocoma cyanotis* by reason of its smaller size and rather lighter breast, the latter character most appreciable in worn plumage. From these facts it follows that *Aphelocoma cyanotis* must be eliminated from the list of North American birds, as well as from that of Texas.

The examination of the above large series of *Aphelocoma cyanotis* and *Aphelocoma texana*, and of other related jays of the same genus, brings up some interesting points in addition to those already stated, and proves conclusively that several changes are necessary in the current status of these and allied forms. In the first place, *Aphelocoma texana* intergrades with *Aphelocoma woodhouseii* (Baird), as intermediate specimens from the Davis Mountains, Texas, show. The differences between *Aphelocoma texana* and *Aphelocoma cyanotis* are entirely bridged over by numerous intermediate specimens, and the two must be regarded as only subspecifically different. The latter intergrades geographically through the state of Puebla, Mexico, with *Aphelocoma sumichrasti* Ridgway, of southern Mexico; and also, at least individually, with *Aphelocoma grisea* Nelson, of the states of Chihuahua and Durango, in Mexico. Furthermore, the individual variation in *Aphelocoma sumichrasti* covers the difference between this form and *Aphelocoma californica californica* and *Aphelocoma californica hypoleuca*. Consequently there is no logical course open except to regard all the above-mentioned jays, hitherto all considered distinct species, as subspecies of a single specific type. It is, therefore, necessary to call them all subspecies of *Aphelocoma californica*, since this is the oldest name applied to any form of the group.

The bird described by Joseph Grinnell⁵ as *Aphelocoma californica immanis*, from Scio in the Willamette Valley, Oregon, has commonly been considered a

¹Manual North Amer. Birds, 1887, p. 357.²Jour. Proc. U. S. Nat. Mus., XVI, 1893, p. 781.³American Ornithologists' Union Committee, Auk, XIX, July, 1902, p. 321.⁴Auk, XIX, January, 1902, p. 70.⁵Auk, XVIII, April, 1901, p. 188.

synonym of *Aphelocoma californica californica*. A recent examination of specimens, however, shows that it is a recognizable race, differing from *Aphelocoma californica californica* in its larger size, particularly of wing and tail, and in its somewhat paler, and in fresh plumage, slightly more grayish, blue of upper parts. It occupies the western part of Oregon and the northern part of California; and we have examined specimens from the following localities:

Oregon: Klamath Falls.

California: Goose Lake; Dana; Ice Caves, six miles southwest of Tule Lake; Picard; Lake City; and Lassen Peak.

The Florida jay, *Aphelocoma cyanea* (Vieillot) (= *Aphelocoma floridana* [Bonaparte]) seems, however, to be a species distinct from any of the above, since it differs constantly in its pale forehead and pale sides of the pileum; also *Aphelocoma insularis*, by reason of its very large size and much darker coloration, appears to be trenchantly different from any of its allies, and thus specifically distinct.

With the changes indicated above, the forms of what might conveniently be called the *Aphelocoma californica* group will stand as follows:

- Aphelocoma cyanea* (Vieillot)
- Aphelocoma californica californica* (Vigors)
- Aphelocoma californica immanis* Grinnell
- Aphelocoma californica obscura* Anthony
- Aphelocoma californica hypoleuca* Ridgway
- Aphelocoma californica grisea* Nelson
- Aphelocoma californica cyanotis* Ridgway
- Aphelocoma californica sumichrasti* Ridgway
- Aphelocoma californica texana* Ridgway
- Aphelocoma californica woodhousei* (Baird)
- Aphelocoma insularis* Henshaw.

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BIRDS OF THE HUMID COAST

By FLORENCE MERRIAM BAILEY

WITH ONE ILLUSTRATION

(Concluded from page 54)

VI. IN THE BRACKEN

ONE of the choicest parts of this half cleared strip of land surrounded by forest was an acre of high bracken, the west coast form of the brake, adjoining the carpenter's garden and strawberry bed, solid fern threaded only by narrow trails leading down on one side to the New Englander's in the clearing and on the other to the fishing village by the Bay. Looking off over the fern field to the south there was a rich satisfying mountain view, the wide timbered V of Miami Notch, through which was seen, in the morning light, a sunlit forest; in the afternoon shadow, a rich purple mountain mass. On warm days the view through the notch was softly veiled, while the trees outlining the notch stood in idyllic haze. To the west, between framing conifers could be had glimpses of the Bay which at high tide was banded purple and pale green with brown