

THE STATUS OF THE FLORIDA GALLINULE OF WESTERN NORTH AMERICA

By DONALD R. DICKEY and A. J. VAN ROSSEM

OWING to the scarcity of western specimens, the systematic status of the colonies of the Florida Gallinule (*Gallinula chloropus cachinnans*) which occur in California and Lower California has been in doubt since Mr. W. W. Cooke* and Mr. Outram Bangs† first called attention to their isolation and to the consequent possibility of geographic variation in the west. In an effort to determine whether or not variation has actually occurred, we have recently assembled 24 adult birds of this species from California, and 13 from Cape San Lucas, Lower California. These birds have been carefully compared with a representative series of 12 skins from the southeastern United States, chiefly from Florida. The results of this comparison are detailed below, in the belief that such investigations are of equal interest to the systematic worker, regardless of whether they indicate the need of recognizing additional races, or not.

Color.—Four of the Florida birds are darker and redder than any bird that we have seen from the west in comparable plumage. On the other hand, the grayest example of the entire series of 49 birds chances also to be from Florida. The rest of the series is remarkably uniform when skins in equal stages of plumage-wear are compared. Apparently, there is no constant color difference between eastern and western birds.

Size.—The wing and tail measurements of western birds of both sexes slightly exceed those of eastern birds, but there is such excessive overlap in both of these measurements as seemingly to nullify their critical value. Little or no variation is discernible in the measurements of bill, tarsus, or middle toe, since the greater average length of these parts in the case of western females is entirely offset by the shorter comparative measurements in western males. Lower California birds agree so perfectly with California specimens that birds from these two adjacent areas have been grouped together in the following tabulation:

MEASUREMENTS					
Males from California (16), and Cape San Lucas (5).					
	Wing	Tail	Bill ¹	Tarsus	Toe
Max.	197.	82.5	29.0	60.7	70.0
Min.	173.	70.0	25.5	54.5	61.5
Av.	184.	76.7	27.2	56.8	65.0
Males from the Eastern United States (9)					
Max.	183.	78.5	31.0	61.7	72.0
Min.	167.	68.5	26.5	50.5	58.5
Av.	176.	73.6	28.1	56.6	66.2
Females from California (8), and Cape San Lucas (8).					
Max.	179.	77.0	27.4	56.3	65.5
Min.	161.	66.0	24.5	51.5	57.0
Av.	171.	70.9	26.2	54.1	60.9
Females from the Eastern United States (3).					
Max.	169.	68.5	26.5	54.5	61.7
Min.	163.	64.0	24.5	50.7	59.0
Av.	165.	66.8	25.5	52.3	60.2

¹ From anterior projection of feathers on upper mandible to tip of culmen.

In conclusion, we feel that the slight wing and tail difference between eastern and western birds is entirely insufficient to warrant the separation of a western race. Both the California and Lower California gallinules, in our opinion, should therefore continue to stand as a part of the wide-ranging race, *Gallinula chloropus cachinnans*.

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* Proc. New Eng. Zool. Club, 5, pp. 98-99.

† U. S. Dept. Agric., Bull., 128, p. 40.