

A NEW WOOD RAIL FROM EL SALVADOR<sup>1</sup>

WITH FRONTSPICE AND ONE OTHER ILLUSTRATION

By DONALD R. DICKEY

In describing an apparently unknown species of Wood Rail of the genus *Aramides* from El Salvador, Central America, I take profound pleasure in commemorating a personal friendship and close scientific association of eighteen years' standing, by naming it for Adriaan J. van Rossem.

*Aramides vanrossemi*, sp. nov. El Salvador Wood Rail.

*Type*.—Male adult, no. 18750, collection of Donald R. Dickey; Barra de Santiago, Ahuachapan, El Salvador; April 6, 1927; sea level; collected by A. J. van Rossem; original no. 11618.

*Specific characters*.—Very similar in plumage to *Aramides albiventris* Lawrence, of Yucatan and British Honduras, but coloration slightly paler throughout, terminal third of maxilla apple green instead of yellow, iris lake red (close to "rose red" of Ridgway, Color Standards and Color Nomenclature, 1912) instead of yellow; size larger, and bill proportionately very much stouter. For comparison with other forms, a tabulation of characters is given below.

*Range*.—Low, tropical forest and mangrove swamps in extreme western El Salvador, and probably northwest along the Pacific coast of Guatemala.

Although the Wood Rails have been revised by Bangs (American Naturalist, 41, March, 1907, pp. 177-187) and more recently by Miller and Griscom (American Museum Novitates, 25, December 9, 1921, pp. 9-11) the collected material does not yet suffice to establish fully the relationships of the Central American and Mexican forms. Nor does the discovery of the present bird assist materially in clarifying the situation. Briefly, Bangs treats both *plumbeicollis* and *mexicanus* as geographic races of *albiventris*, whereas Miller and Griscom, while admitting their undoubted common origin, feel that lack of known intergradation makes it preferable to continue to treat them as full species unless and until further evidence of intergradation is adduced. In support of this treatment they print (*sup. cit.*, p. 10) an extremely graphic table showing the various specific character combinations. For the sake of convenience the pertinent portions are here reproduced, with the characters of the new form incorporated.

COMPARATIVE TABLE

<i>A. albiventris</i>	<i>A. plumbeicollis</i>	<i>A. vanrossemi</i>	<i>A. mexicanus</i>
1. Broad patch of white feathers on abdomen.	Narrow patch of buffy feathers.	Broad patch of white feathers.	Narrow patch of buffy feathers.
2. Coloration paler.	Coloration darker.	Coloration paler.	Coloration darker.
3. Terminal third of maxilla yellow.	Terminal third apple green.	Terminal third apple green.	Terminal third apple green.
4. Iris yellow.	Iris orange-red.	Iris and eye-ring lake red.	Iris and eye-ring ?
5. Mantle faintly indicated.	Mantle conspicuous.	Mantle faintly indicated.	Mantle faintly indicated.
6. Culmen of males averaging about 61 mm.	Culmen of males averaging about 57 mm.	Culmen of males averaging about 72 mm.	Culmen of males averaging about 66 mm.

It will be seen from the above table that the exact relationship of *vanrossemi* is far from obvious, and to describe it as a subspecies without knowing the color of

<sup>1</sup> Contribution from the California Institute of Technology.

the iris and eye-ring of *mexicanus*, or the exact relation of that bird to *albiventris*, would therefore be premature to say the least, since it would be hypothecating an intergradation which in my opinion remains to be worked out. Meantime it is significant that the recently described race of *plumbeicollis* from Lake Nicaragua<sup>2</sup> shows no approach in characters to the bird immediately adjacent to it on the north-west in El Salvador and Guatemala.

One of the two specimens considered by Bangs to be intermediate between *albiventris* and *mexicanus* is no. 33668, U. S. National Museum, from Chiapam, Guatemala. In size and coloration it most certainly belongs with the El Salvador form. The coloration of the soft parts was not recorded by the collector and has of course now been lost in the specimen. In consequence its allocation to the El Salvador species must, to that degree, remain tentative.



Fig. 12. FRESH WATER JUNGLE STREAM, HAUNT OF WOOD RAILS AND LIMPKIN. BARRA DE SANTIAGO, AHUACHAPAN, EL SALVADOR, C. A.

In El Salvador this striking genus was encountered only at Barra de Santiago. There it frequents the maze of mangrove roots and marsh tangle where fresh and salt water meet. Its carriage in life is erect and almost more heron-like than ralline. In response to suspicion of danger this bird occasionally leaves its dense ground cover and voluntarily seeks vantage posts on high mangrove roots and stubs, the better to observe its surroundings. Traits more typical of the family crop out in the continuous tail-twitching of the birds, and in their raucous cackling.

One of the pleasures of working up this interesting Central American bird has been watching the effective effort of Major Allan Brooks in attaining faithful color reproduction (see frontispiece).

*Pasadena, California, December 10, 1928.*

<sup>2</sup> *Aramides plumbeicollis pacificus* Miller and Griscom, American Museum Novitates, 25, December 9, 1921, p. 11.