

adversely by limiting the extent of their appropriate habitats; the egrets are one group so affected. Plume-hunters decimated these birds before they were extended legal protection. Now, even under adverse environmental conditions, it would seem as though the larger egret is increasing somewhat.—TRACY I. STORER, *University of California, Davis, California, October 27, 1930.*

**Early Record of Birds in Arizona and New Mexico.**—In a translation<sup>1</sup> of an account of the Espejo expedition of 1582-1583, which has been brought to my attention by Mr. Neil M. Judd, there is mention (p. 106) of an occurrence of parrots that is of some interest to ornithologists. In May, 1583, the Espejo party was in the Flagstaff region in Arizona and on May 5 descended a rough ravine "to a fine large river which runs from northwest to southeast. At this place the river is surrounded by an abundance of grape-vines, many walnut and other trees. It is a warm land in which there are parrots." The translators suppose the stream was Sycamore Creek (though it seems possible also that it may have been Oak Creek).

Accepting the identification of "parrots" as correct, which is borne out by the fact that they seem to have been an unusual sight as there is no mention of them elsewhere in the narrative, then it seems reasonable to suppose that we may have here early reference to the Thick-billed Parrot (*Rhynchopsitta pachyrhyncha*) at a point much farther north than it has been known in more recent years.

There is interest also in the frequent mention of turkeys brought to the party by the Indians, note of this beginning February 1, 1582, on the Rio Grande in the general region of San Marcial and continuing through their travels to Acoma, Zuñi, the Flagstaff region, and back again into New Mexico. North of Albuquerque at the Pueblo of "Ziaquebos", said to be Sia, the journal speaks of blankets of turkey feathers worn by women. In April there is casual mention of women and children tending flocks in the mountains which the translators suppose to mean flocks of turkeys.—ALEXANDER WETMORE, *United States National Museum, Washington, D. C., September 11, 1930.*

**Concerning some Western Races of *Polioptila melanura*.**—In connection with recent work on Sonora birds it has been necessary to examine critically series of black-tailed gnatcatchers from practically all sections of the range of this species. The results of such examination have indicated the desirability of reconsidering the Lower California forms and of discriminating a western race as distinct from that occurring in the lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas and northeastern Mexico.

Dr. Joseph Grinnell has recently (Proc. Calif. Acad. Sci., 4th ser., 15, 1926, pp. 493-500) reviewed the gnatcatchers of the Californias. He has shown the necessity for reducing *Polioptila californica* Brewster to subspecific status because of the presence of a transitional form connecting *californica* with the race found in the Cape Region, which latter is clearly a subspecies of *Polioptila melanura*. While I agree absolutely with Dr. Grinnell in the number of races to be found in Lower California and in the characters which he gives for distinguishing them, I most emphatically do not agree on certain details of ranges. Unfortunately a change of names thereby becomes necessary. The situation focuses on the Magdalena Bay birds which Ridgway (Birds of North and Middle America, pt. 3, 1909, p. 733, footnote) named *Polioptila margaritae*. The two specimens on which the name was based were, as Grinnell has pointed out, skinned from alcohol and the colors thereby rendered unreliable for subspecific comparison. The measurements, of course, were not affected.

I have recently had the opportunity of collecting small but representative series of gnatcatchers at various points along both coasts of Lower California, including the all-important Margarita Island in Magdalena Bay. The six specimens secured at Margarita Island by myself and other members of the party I am unable to distinguish on any basis from specimens from Cape San Lucas, La Paz and Espiritu Santo Island, while all of them differ decidedly from the gnatcatchers of the middle

<sup>1</sup> Expedition into New Mexico made by Antonio de Espejo 1582-1583 as revealed in the Journal of Diego Pérez de Luxán, a member of the Party. Translated by George Peter Hammond and Agapito Rey, The Quivira Society, Los Angeles, 1929.

<sup>2</sup> Contribution from the California Institute of Technology, Pasadena.

peninsula, not only in color but in size. In other words Grinnell's *Polioptila melanura abbreviata* (*ibid.*, p. 497) described from Cape San Lucas appears to be a synonym of *Polioptila melanura margaritae*. The transitional form of the middle section of the peninsula must consequently be renamed, which I hereby do as *Polioptila melanura nelsoni*, with the type a breeding male adult, number 30127, collection of Donald R. Dickey; San Francisquito Bay, latitude 28° 26' N., Gulf coast of Lower California, Mexico, April 5, 1930; collected by A. J. van Rossem; original number 12841. Measurements of the type in millimeters are: wing, 46; tail, 50; exposed culmen, 10.5; tarsus, 16.5; middle toe minus claw, 8.7. In color and size *nelsoni* is intermediate between *margaritae* of the Cape Region and *californica* of southwestern California and northwestern Lower California. The Cape race, *margaritae*, is the shortest tailed of all the known forms of *Polioptila melanura* and measures in that particular about 46 mm. The agreement in size between Cape and Magdalena Bay specimens is well shown in Grinnell's review to which the reader is referred for a general treatment of the subject.

The distribution of black-tailed gnatcatchers is probably continuous down the peninsula, but determination of the meeting place of *margaritae* and *nelsoni* must await further field work. Specimens of *nelsoni* are at hand from San Francisquito Bay, Santa Teresa Bay, Santa Ana Bay, Santa Rosalia, San Lucas and San Bruno on the Gulf side, from San Ignacio in the interior and from Port San Bartolomé on the Pacific.

In naming the central Lower California race for Dr. E. W. Nelson I am prompted not only by appreciation of his Lower California work, but also by the fact that he previously and with different material had reached exactly the conclusion expressed above, and generously waived his prior rights in my favor.

The black-tailed gnatcatchers of the deserts of the southwestern United States and northwestern Mexico have been generally referred to *Polioptila melanura* Lawrence, the type locality of which is Rio Grande in southeastern Texas. Through the kindness of the American Museum of Natural History there is before me a series of 12 examples of *melanura* from the general vicinity of the type locality, in fact seven are actual topotypes. The relative color differences between this series and another of 46 specimens from southeastern California, northern and central Sonora, and southern Arizona are seen to parallel those shown by *Auriparus flaviceps*, *Toxostoma curvirostre* and *Amphispiza bilineata*, the distributions of which are more or less coextensive with that of *Polioptila melanura*. The characters of the western race are best developed in central Sonora, and therefore the type of the western form, here designated as *Polioptila melanura lucida*, is selected from that region. It is a breeding adult male, number 30390, collection of Donald R. Dickey; collected 10 miles north of Guaymas, Sonora, Mexico; May 9, 1930; by A. J. van Rossem; original number 13107. Compared with *Polioptila melanura melanura* of the Lower Rio Grande Valley, *lucida* is slightly smaller in all dimensions and the bill is notably smaller; in color it is decidedly paler below (often nearly white medially) and the flanks are very much paler and less extensively gray. Females and young males of *lucida* also lack much of the brown wash seen in the corresponding plumages of *melanura*. Measurements of the type in millimeters are: wing, 44; tail, 48; exposed culmen, 9.4; tarsus, 15.9; middle toe minus claw, 7.8.

Specimens from California and Arizona are, while not so extreme as the Sonora birds, nevertheless decidedly closer to *lucida* than to *melanura*, which latter appears to be confined to the Atlantic drainage.—A. J. VAN ROSSEM, Pasadena, California, October 31, 1930.

**Three Note-worthy Bird Records from Barrow, Alaska.**—During the past seven years the bird collection of the San Diego Society of Natural History has been augmented from time to time through the generosity of Charles D. Brower of Barrow, Alaska. Barrow is the most northerly inhabited point on the American continent, and it has received its share of ornithological attention. The most thorough report made in recent years on the birds of northwestern Alaska (including a trip to Barrow) is that of Alfred M. Bailey, published in the *Condor* during 1925 and 1926. Bailey includes the three following species on his list, but their capture at Barrow extends their known ranges and seems worthy of record. Unfortunately on some of the speci-