

BIRDS OF VALLES, SAN LUIS POTOSÍ, MEXICO

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In the course of the John B. Semple expedition of 1939 to eastern Mexico, several points in the low, comparatively flat southeastern part of San Luis Potosí were visited. Extensive collections were made in the vicinity of Tamazunchale and at Valles, towns situated 66 miles apart at between 200 and 300 feet elevation along the highway from Laredo to Mexico City.

Two four-day stops were made at Valles, the first from March 23 to 26, the second (Semple and Sutton only) from April 29 to May 2. Since the birds recorded at this point differ so considerably from those seen at Tamazunchale, we have decided to publish lists from the two regions separately.

The most thoroughly investigated section near Valles was the dry, wooded plateau, about 300 to 400 feet in elevation, extending from two to twelve miles north of town. Here there were grassy, prairielike openings among the trees, thick tangles crossed by cattle trails, and clumps of wild pineapple and palmetto. At the time of our visits most of the larger trees were leafless, and the countryside appeared somewhat desertlike.

The following list of eighty-seven forms includes most of the birds that breed on the uplands near Valles, some that characteristically winter there, and a few that are transients. Since no extensive work was done along any stream in the vicinity, the characteristic waterbirds (kingfishers, herons, ducks, and shorebirds) naturally are missing from our list.

Crypturellus cinnamomeus mexicanus. Mexican Tinamou. Common in the dense woodlands, especially in the *huipilla* (wild pineapple) thickets, but rarely seen. Though its mellow whistling was heard almost constantly during the daylight hours, we actually saw it but seven times. Once, by beating carefully, we drove a bird into the open, where it was obliged to take wing. We were so startled by the noise of its flight that we failed to collect it!

A nest found on May 2 (Sutton) was a shallow depression in a pile of leaves under a dry palmetto leaf in the middle of a thorny tangle. The male bird was at the nest. Almost trampled underfoot, he fluttered off noisily, scurrying about with wings spread and drooping, head lowered, and mouth slightly opened. The two eggs, which were fresh, were lustrous and of a pale tan shade, faintly purplish.

The female of this form is much more heavily marked than the male, our only female (March 25, Sutton) being noticeably barred with buff on the wings, rump, upper tail coverts, nape and ear coverts. The eyes of freshly-killed birds were light yellowish gray, with a narrow zone of pale bluish gray encircling the pupil.

Coragyps atratus. Black Vulture. Common, especially along the highway where, with the Turkey Vulture and Audubon Caracara, it feeds on pigs, dogs, snakes, and other animals that have been killed by passing automobiles.

Cathartes aura. Turkey Vulture. Common.

Accipiter striatus. Sharp-shinned Hawk. An immature bird was noted on two occasions, March 23 and 26.

Buteo magnirostris griseocauda. Gray-tailed Hawk. Fairly common in the more heavily wooded districts. A female taken March 24 and a male taken March 25 evidently were preparing to nest. Several pairs seen from April 29 to May 2 screamed loudly and circled above us, but we found no nest.

Micrastur semitorquatus naso. Lesson Micrastur. A male collected May 2 (Semple) was being mobbed by Brown Jays. The gonads of this specimen were much enlarged. The eyes were dark reddish brown.

Polyborus cheriway audubonii. Audubon Caracara. Fairly common, especially along the highways and in more open country. A female taken May 1 (Sutton) was not incubating.

Falco sparverius. Sparrow Hawk. Noted daily along the highway. Not common, however.

Ortalis vetula vetula. Chachalaca. Fairly common. A male taken April 30 (Sutton) was in breeding condition.

Carpodacus virginianus maculatus. Spotted-breasted Bob-white. Fairly common. A male (testes slightly enlarged) was taken from a flock March 24 (Sutton).

Columba flavivestris. Red-billed Pigeon. Noted infrequently at Valles, but seen repeatedly to the south near Pujal and at Las Armas.

Zenaidura macroura marginella. Western Mourning Dove. Not common. Two were seen March 24, and a male (with somewhat enlarged testes) of the present race was taken four miles south of town March 25 (wing, 148 mm.; tail, 153).

Zenaida asiatica. White-winged Dove. Rare at Valles, but abundant along the highway to the south, where great flocks were seen near Pujal and south of Las Armas on April 29.

Scardafella inca. Inca Dove. Fairly common, especially about town, where it nests.

Columbigallina passerina. Ground Dove. Not common. Two seen on March 25; five on May 1.

Leptotila verreauxi angelica. White-fronted Dove. Fairly common in the woods from eight to twelve miles north of Valles, females of the present race being collected there March 25 and May 1. Ovaries in these specimens not greatly enlarged.

Aratinga holochlora. Green Parakeet. Several small flocks seen on March 24.

Amazona viridigenalis. Red-crowned Parrot. Not common, but noted daily. Female (ovary not enlarged) taken March 25 (Semple).

Otus asio. Screech Owl. Screech Owls were heard or seen after dark on several occasions, notably on April 29 (a mild, moist evening), but none was collected.

Glaucidium brasilianum. Pigmy Owl. One was heard on the evening of April 20.

Nyctidromus albicollis merrilli. Merrill Pauraque. Fairly common. A female (wing, 167 mm.; tail, 159), with ovary somewhat enlarged, was collected April 29 (Semple).

Antrostomus salvini. Salvin Whip-poor-will. Common in the dry woodland from two to ten miles north of Valles, where its rapidly repeated *chip-willow* call was heard in the evenings from April 29 to May 2. The gonads of male and female specimens collected were much enlarged.

Chordeiles minor. Nighthawk. Several seen and heard April 20 to May 1.

Nephoecetes niger. Black Swift. Several large flocks, thought to be on their way north, noted March 23. Smaller flocks seen at the same place the following day.

Trogonurus ambiguus. Coppery-tailed Trogon. Not common. Single male noted March 24 and 25. A few seen April 29 to May 2, ten miles north of town.

Colaptes cafer. Red-shafted Flicker. Noted infrequently during both visits.

Ceophloeus lineatus. Lineated Woodpecker. Noted but twice: a male, March 25, and a mated pair, May 2.

Centurus aurifrons. Golden-fronted Woodpecker. Fairly common.

Dryobates scalaris symplectus. Texas Ladder-backed Woodpecker. According to Cory (Catalogue of Birds of the Americas, part 2, 1918, p. 495) and Ridgway (Birds of North and Middle America, part 6, 1914, p. 258) the Ladder-backed Woodpecker of the Valles district is *D. s. bairdii* (Malherbe), but in our only specimen (a male in fresh plumage, March 23, Burleigh), the white bars on the back are far too wide for *bairdii* and we are obliged to call the bird *symplectus*. Further material in unworn plumage should be collected. The species is fairly common in the district.

Xiphorhynchus flavigaster flavigaster. Ivory-billed Woodbewer. Not common, but one or two birds seen or heard daily. Male collected March 25 (Burleigh). The song strongly reminded us of that of a Canyon Wren, save that it had no high, accented note at the end.

Thamnophilus doloiatus mexicanus. Mexican Ant Shrike. Noted at Valles proper only on May 2, when a mated pair was seen. Commoner farther south, notably in the vicinity of Las Armas, where in the dense, thorny bamboo brakes, its softly-hooted song was heard repeatedly. A mated pair collected there March 26 (Sutton) we have identified as *mexicanus*, the tail in both specimens being long, that of the male measuring 71 mm., 2 mm. longer than the longest-tailed bird in the series of twenty-nine specimens examined by Ridgway.

According to our observations, Valles is at about the northern limit of the range of this species. We did not record it in the vicinity of Gomez Farias, Tamaulipas, in the spring of 1938.

Megarhynchus pitangua mexicanus. Mexican Boat-billed Flycatcher. Fairly common. Male (testes slightly enlarged) collected March 23.

Myiozetetes similis texensis. Giraud Flycatcher. Abundant and noisy, especially about certain fruit-bearing trees. Males with somewhat enlarged testes collected March 23.

Myiarchus tuberculifer lawrenceii. Lawrence Flycatcher. Noted but once: a male with small testes taken March 24 (Sutton).

Pitangus sulphuratus. Derby Flycatcher. Noted repeatedly along with several other noisy, combative, yellow-breasted members of the flycatcher tribe. No specimen taken.

Myiochanes pertinax pallidiventris. Coues Flycatcher. Noted but once: a female, with slightly enlarged ovary, taken March 24 (Sutton).

Tyrannus melancholicus. Kingbirds of this species, and presumably of the subspecies *couchii*, were seen repeatedly, but no specimen was taken.

Empidonax sp. Small flycatchers of this genus were seen infrequently.

Tachycineta thalassina. Violet-green Swallow. Small flocks noted March 25 (Burleigh).

Stelgidopteryx ruficollis. Rough-winged Swallow. Small flocks noted March 25 (Burleigh).

Xanthoura luxuosa luxuosa. Green Jay. Common. A male taken March 24 (Burleigh) had dark brown irides.

Psilorhinus morio. Brown Jay. Seen daily in the heavier woodland. Not common.

Corvus imparatus. Mexican Crow. Fairly common. Breeding pair taken May 1 (Semple and Sutton).

Parus atricristatus atricristatus. Black-crested Titmouse. Fairly common. The wing of a male taken by Burleigh March 24 measures 71.5 mm.

Nannorchilus leucogaster leucogaster. White-bellied Wren. Common in brushy tangles along the highway, where its bright, though not very loud, song was frequently heard in March as well as in May. Male and female specimens taken March 23 and May 1, the latter apparently being ready to nest. The species was more common here than at Gomez Farias, Tamaulipas (see Sutton and Burleigh, Occasional Papers Mus. Zool., Louis. State Univ., no. 3, 1939, p. 36).

Troglodytes domesticus parkmanii. Western House Wren. Noted but once: a female taken March 25 (Sutton).

Thryothorus maculipectus microstictus. Spotted-breasted Wren. Fairly common. Male and female specimens, with small gonads, taken March 23 to 25.

Mimus polyglottos. Mockingbird. Fairly common in more open country.

Toxostoma longirostre. Long-billed Thrasher. Noted several times March 23 to 25.

Turdus migratorius. Robin. A single robin joined the mixed flock of waxwings, flycatchers, orioles, tanagers, and jays that was feeding on berries in trees not far from the highway six miles north of Valles, March 25.

Turdus grayi tamaulipensis. Tamaulipas Gray Robin. Recorded but once: a male, with slightly enlarged testes, taken March 25 (Sutton). Specimen compared directly with the type of *tamaulipensis* at United States National Museum.

Hylocichla guttata. Hermit Thrush. Noted several times, March 23 to 25.

Poliottila caerulea. Blue-gray Gnatcatcher. Fairly common. Birds seen April 29 to May 2 apparently nesting.

Bombycilla cedrorum. Cedar Waxwing. Abundant locally, large flocks being seen in fruiting trees on both our visits.

Lanius ludovicianus mexicanus. Mexican Shrike. Fairly common. Female specimen of present race (tail, 103 mm.) taken March 25 (Burleigh).

Vireo griseus micrus. Small White-eyed Vireo. Seen repeatedly. The only specimen taken, a male with enlarged testes (March 25, Burleigh) represents the present race (wing, 55 mm.; tail, 42).

Vireo bellii medius. Texas Bell Vireo. Recorded with certainty but once: a female taken March 23 by Burleigh. The tail of this specimen measures 44 mm. (a trifle long for *medius*); but the back is too gray and the yellow of the flanks and under tail coverts is too pale for *V. b. bellii*.

Vireo solitarius. Blue-headed Vireo. Noted twice: one March 24, and one May 1.

Mniotilta varia. Black and White Warbler. A male noted March 24.

Vermivora celata. Orange-crowned Warbler. Noted several times, March 23 to 25.

Compsothlypis pitiayumi nigrilora. Sennett Warbler. Noted several times, particularly on March 25, on which date a singing male (wing 52 mm., tail 38 mm.) was collected (Sutton); and on May 1 and 2, when many were seen and heard.

Dendroica coronata. Myrtle Warbler. Recorded daily, but not common, March 23 to 25. Not recorded with certainty April 29 to May 2.

Dendroica auduboni. Audubon Warbler. A few noted on both visits.

Dendroica virens. Black-throated Green Warbler. Recorded only on March 25, when several males were seen.

Seiurus motacilla. Louisiana Water-Thrush. A single bird seen along a small stream just south of town, March 25 (Burleigh).

Icteria virens virens. Yellow-breasted Chat. Seen repeatedly March 25 to 28. The only specimen taken (male, March 25, Burleigh) clearly represents the eastern race (wing, 74.5 mm., tail 73).

Sturnella magna mexicana. Mexican Meadowlark. Rare. Our only specimens, a breeding pair taken ten miles north of town, April 30 (Sutton), are of the present race, the male in particular having the narrow black pectoral crescent, broad dark postocular streak, and dark back and rump that characterize *mexicana*, as compared with *hoopesi*. In one particular only does our male specimen fail to conform with Griscom's concept of the race; the fourth rectrix from the outside is predominantly dark rather than white on the inner web (see Hellmayr, Catalogue of Birds of the Americas, part 10, 1937, p. 213, footnote). The following measurements were taken from our specimens: male, wing 113 mm., tail 72, culmen 32.5, tarsus 42; female, wing 102, tail 64, culmen 30, tarsus 38.

Icterus gularis. Alta Mira Oriole. Fairly common. Half-finished nest found about fifteen feet from ground in leafless, thorny tree, May 2 (Sutton).

Icterus graduacauda. Black-headed Oriole. Not common, but noted daily, especially about fruit-bearing trees.

Icterus cucullatus cucullatus. Hooded Oriole. Fairly common, especially about bananas and palmettos in town. Our only specimen, a male (March 24, Burleigh), is in first breeding plumage.

Cassidix mexicanus. Great-tailed Grackle. Not abundant, but noticeable, especially in town where males devoted themselves to singing and courtship display.

Tangavius aeneus aeneus. Red-eyed Cowbird. Not common, but noted daily. Male of this race collected May 1 (Sutton).

Dives dives dives. Sumichrast Blackbird. Noted but once near Valles proper; a single bird on March 24 (Sutton). Much more common about Las Armas, where a female was taken March 26 (Burleigh). Valles apparently is at the northern limit of the range of this interesting genus. We did not record it in the vicinity of Gomez Farias, Tamaulipas, in the spring of 1938.

Piranga rubra rubra. Summer Tanager. Noted several times, March 23 to 25. Our only specimen, a female (March 25, Sutton), is of the present race.

Tanagra lauta lauta. Bonaparte Euphonia. Not common but noted daily. Adult and subadult male of present race taken March 23 and 25, respectively.

Tanagra affinis. Lesson Euphonia. Uncommon, but noted daily. Our only specimen (March 25, Sutton) is an adult male.

Rhodothraupis celaeno. Crimson-collared Grosbeak. Seen repeatedly; adult males taken March 24 and May 1 (Semple). Common at Las Armas, March 26 (Burleigh).

Richmondia cardinalis. Cardinal. Uncommon, though noted daily.

Pyrrhuloxia sinuata. Pyrrhuloxia. Noted only about town in thorny thickets.

Cyanocompsa parellina lucida. Bright Blue Bunting. Not common. Two male specimens (March 23 and 24) are not quite as bright blue below as the type of *lucida*, but they are too bright for *C. p. parellina* or *benepiacita* Bangs; the single female (March 23) is far too pale below for either of these races. The more we investigate *benepiacita* the less clearly do we comprehend its range. Described from Santa Leonor, Tamaulipas (supposedly in the southwestern part of the State), its range would seem to overlap that of *lucida* to some extent if, indeed, our Victoria (Tamaulipas) and three Valles specimens represent a breeding rather than a transient population. When the exact position of Santa Leonor is made clear, the difficulty may be cleared up.

Passerina versicolor versicolor. Varied Bunting. Recorded but once: a male of present race collected March 24 (Sutton).

Tiaris olivacea pusilla. Mexican Grassquit. Fairly common. Adult males (with small testes) of present race collected March 23 and 24.

Sporophila moreletii. Seedeater. Uncommon, one or two being noted daily on both visits.

Saltator coerulescens grandis. Lichtenstein Saltator. Rare. Two females (not in breeding condition) of present race taken March 24.

Arremonops rufivirgatus. Texas Sparrow. Fairly common. Noted repeatedly on both visits.

Ammodramus savannarum perpallidus. Western Grasshopper Sparrow. This species was noted several times in open, grassy places. The only specimen collected (male, March 23, Burleigh) is of this small-billed race; the wing measures 65 mm., the tail 47.

Melospiza lincolni lincolni. Lincoln Sparrow. Noted several times. Our only specimen (male, March 25, Burleigh) represents the eastern race.

Cornell University, Ithaca, New York, May 2, 1940.