

A NEW SUBSPECIES OF THE YUCATÁN FLYCATCHER,
MYIARCHUS YUCATANENSIS

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The specific characters and intrageneric relationships of the Yucatán Flycatcher (*Myiarchus yucatanensis*) have recently been clarified by Lanyon (1965). In discussing the distribution of the species, Lanyon mentioned briefly that its presence on Isla Cozumel, Quintana Roo, had been verified. He did not mention geographic variation within the very restricted range of *M. yucatanensis*. Examination of all known specimens from Isla Cozumel, including two collected subsequent to Lanyon's study, shows that the insular population is strikingly distinct and, in fact, represents one of the best-marked color subspecies in the genus *Myiarchus*.

A recapitulation of the history of our knowledge of *Myiarchus yucatanensis* on Isla Cozumel is appropriate at this point. The first attribution of the species to the island was that of Sclater (1888:260), who listed two specimens, now in the Salvin-Godman collection of the British Museum, taken there by G. F. Gaumer. Sclater states: "Mr. Lawrence's type [of *yucatanensis*], which he has most kindly sent for examination, is a very worn specimen. It was obtained by Dr. A. Schott near Merida. Mr. Gaumer's specimen (a) [listed as being from 'Northern Yucatan'] is in good plumage, and, no doubt, identical. The Cozumel bird (b) has a darker back and a darker head." Salvin (1889:362) was less cautious about the identity of the northern Yucatán specimen, but also less impressed by the color of the Cozumel birds, stating that the latter had "the upper surface, especially the head, slightly darker than a third from Northern Yucatan, which has been compared and found identical with the type of *M. yucatanensis*."

These two Gaumer specimens remained for many years the only record of the Yucatán Flycatcher from Isla Cozumel. Meanwhile it had become apparent that the data on many of Gaumer's labels were highly suspect (Paynter, 1955:79; Bond, 1961a:4-5). Of *Myiarchus yucatanensis*, Paynter (1955:195) stated that the species "is not unexpected on Isla Cozumel, but the fact that Gaumer's two specimens (Salvin, 1889) constitute the only record of the species on the island causes one to be somewhat hesitant in accepting it." Later in the same work, Paynter (p. 309) lists *Myiarchus yucatanensis* among 12 species "recorded [from islands off the Yucatán Peninsula, including Cozumel] chiefly by Gaumer, but for various reasons . . . considered to be hypothetical." Finally, Bond (1961b) placed the species in a list of "21 land birds, apart from what are certainly North American migrants" that he considered to be of hypothetical occurrence only, on Isla Cozumel, as records for the island were based solely on Gaumer skins. Neither Paynter nor Bond mentioned the darker color of the alleged Cozumel specimens, noted by both Sclater and Salvin.

The Yucatán Flycatcher was not recorded by Nelson and Goldman during their stay on Isla Cozumel, 4 to 18 April 1901 (field notes on file with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service), nor was it mentioned by Griscom (1926) in connection with his visit in February 1926. To our knowledge, none of the field parties collecting birds on Isla Cozumel in recent years (cf. University of Kansas, Louisiana State University, E. P. Edwards and R. Tashian) encountered *Myiarchus yucatanensis*.

Thus the situation remained dubious when the authors and Robert W. Dickerman visited Isla Cozumel on 20 to 23 January 1965. On 22 January Dickerman collected a flycatcher at the village of Cedral, in the southwestern part of the island. It was

the only *Myiarchus* encountered during our stay on Cozumel, and was so conspicuously different in color from the *yucatanensis* we had been collecting a few days earlier on the mainland that we at first did not even believe the bird to be of that species, and suspected it to be perhaps of some West Indian form (a logical guess in view of the substantial Antillean element in the Cozumel avifauna). The specimen was sent to Lanyon, who found it to be typical of *yucatanensis* in all characters that serve to distinguish that species from its congeners.

At about the same time, Lanyon had reexamined a *Myiarchus* collected on Cozumel by Griscom on 25 February 1926, but not identified by Griscom to species or mentioned in his report (1926). It had later been identified as *M. tuberculifer platyrhynchus* by Zimmer, but Lanyon found it to be *yucatanensis* (Lanyon, 1965:10). There were thus two Isla Cozumel specimens of *Myiarchus yucatanensis* extant with full data, in addition to the two Gaumer birds whose origin had been questioned. Parkes borrowed the latter two specimens, and brought together at the American Museum of Natural History all four Cozumel specimens. Here he was able to compare them with the excellent series of mainland *yucatanensis* Lanyon had assembled for his study, as well as with our own freshly collected specimens from the mainland.

Several things became apparent when these comparisons were made. First, there is a decided postmortem fading in these *Myiarchus* specimens, in approximate proportion to museum age. Second, when the Cozumel specimens were compared with birds of similar age, they were quickly seen to represent an excellent undescribed subspecies. Third, the questioned Gaumer specimens did, indeed, belong to the population of Isla Cozumel, as might have been expected from the comments of Sclater and Salvin.

In November 1965 the authors returned to Isla Cozumel for a longer stay, this time accompanied by Juan Nava S., an experienced collector and preparator. In spite of the fact that the collection of *Myiarchus* sp. was one of the major missions of the trip, and that we were constantly searching for these birds, only two individuals were definitely seen; both of these were collected by Nava, on 4 and 17 November, and both proved to be *yucatanensis*. Parkes saw what was probably another, near the locality at which the specimen of 17 November was taken.

No significant generalization can be made about the habitat of this flycatcher on Isla Cozumel on the basis of the one January and two November specimens collected. The first was taken at the edge of Cedral, an almost-deserted village well inland in the southwestern part of the island, close to some of the highest forest we encountered. The bird taken on 4 November was in a small clearing along a trail only a few meters inside the woods from a large cow pasture, near Laguna Chancanab, about 10 km southwest of the town of San Miguel. The locality of the 17 November specimen (and the probable sight record) was near the end (at that time) of the paved road, about 2 km beyond the last locality. The woods here, although relatively dry, were quite close to a mangrove lagoon to the northwest, and within earshot of the surf of the west shore of the island. No vocalizations of any kind were heard from these *Myiarchus*.

The two freshly collected specimens confirm the distinctness of the Cozumel population. It is with great pleasure that we name it for the ornithologist who has contributed most to our modern knowledge of the difficult genus *Myiarchus*, as follows:

***Myiarchus yucatanensis lanyoni*, new subspecies**

Type. Carnegie Mus. No. 140201, adult ♂ (cranium fully ossified, testes 2×1.5 mm); taken ca. 12 km southwest of San Miguel, Isla Cozumel, Quintana Roo, México, 17 November 1965, by Juan Nava S. for Kenneth C. Parkes (original No. KCP 2888).

Diagnosis. Differs from *M. y. yucatanensis* Lawrence of the mainland of the Yucatán Peninsula as follows: entire dorsum much darker and blacker; the crown with only a faintly visible trace of rufous feather edgings, which are so dark as scarcely to contrast with the centers of the feathers; back dark, sooty olive rather than olive; tail blackish brown, with the rufous outer edgings of rectrices and upper coverts darker and less contrasting; rufous of inner webs of rectrices slightly darker; all edgings of remiges and wing coverts much darker; posterior portion of breast less purely gray, mixed with a darker greenish gray, this color extending posteriorly at lower edge of breast, sides and flanks and thus reducing the yellow area of the underparts; thighs darker gray-brown, with little or no yellow edging; under wing coverts and axillars dull yellowish white rather than light yellow. The two subspecies do not differ in size; measurements of Cozumel specimens all fall within the range given for *yucatanensis* by Lanyon (1965:4).

Remarks. The color comparisons above were made with November specimens just completing the prebasic (= postnuptial) molt. There is a rapid color change thereafter, in both *yucatanensis* and *lanyoni*. Mainland specimens taken in mid-January have noticeably paler yellow abdomens than birds taken 6 to 12 November, and specimens taken 1 February are even paler, and are, in addition, rather discolored below. Dorsally the color change is manifested chiefly by a darkening and browning of the olive mantle; change of edges of tertials from pale yellow to white; and fading of the dark brown of remiges and rectrices. Similarly, the 22 January specimen of *lanyoni* is paler yellow below than the two November birds, and is slightly discolored. Dorsally the January bird is less blackish, especially the flight feathers; again, the tertial edgings have faded from pale yellow to white; and the mantle is perceptibly browner.

It is thus obvious that color comparisons must be made between specimens of corresponding stages of plumage wear as well as museum age. Even in faded specimens, however, the reduced yellow and increased gray areas of the underparts are visible in *lanyoni*, and the crown, although browning with age, is never as rufescent as that of mainland birds of similar age.

In the key to *Myiarchus* given by Ridgway (1907:609–613), one character given for *yucatanensis* (p. 611), "the pileum browner," would not apply to fresh-plumaged *lanyoni*. Ridgway's other key characters are applicable to either race, but his color description (p. 632) fits mainland birds only.

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