

SPECIMEN OF THE MAGNIFICENT FRIGATEBIRD FROM NEW MEXICO

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Possibly a casualty of hurricane "Beulah," which struck southern Texas and northern Tamaulipas so severely in late September, an adult female Magnificent Frigatebird, *Fregata magnificens*, was found dead in the Gila National Forest near Little Walnut Ranger Station (elevation 6600 feet) five miles north of Silver City, New Mexico, on 1 October 1967. The bird was brought to me by Frank Light on whose property it was found. Nearby was a small pond which may have attracted the lost bird to this specific site. Mud on the bill and in the buccal cavity indicated that the bird had been in or near the pond shortly before its demise. Immediately prior to its preparation as a study skin (presently at Western New Mexico University) the bird weighed 2450 g. It had begun to decompose only on the throat and face. The date of death probably was 29 or 30 September.

The wing molt is nearly completed, with some of the new secondaries very pulpy at the base of the calamus. Excepting the faded and worn outermost right rectrix, the tail is composed of newly acquired feathers, some not fully elongated. Measurements are: wing 625 mm, tail 400 mm, bill 116 mm.

Frigatebirds have occurred in several areas in temperate North America as "stragglers" or "accidentals." Palmer (*The Handbook of North American Birds*, vol. 1, p. 372, 1962) reveals such records in Wisconsin, Iowa, Kansas, and Oklahoma, but in no other inland areas. Peterson (*A Field Guide to Western Birds*, Houghton Mifflin, 1961, p. 21) includes California, Arizona, and New Mexico among states where the bird is considered casual or accidental. Nevertheless, excepting coastal California, there appear to be no records of Frigatebirds positively identified to species anywhere in the southwestern United States. The only New Mexico report is the unsatisfactory one casually cited by Ligon (*New Mexico Birds*, p. 307, 1961): a bird reported from the Bitter Lake National Wildlife Refuge by "Refuge Personnel" on 4 October 1955. The four hypothetical occurrences of "*Fregata* sp." reported by Phillips, Marshall, and Monson (*The Birds of Arizona*, 1964, p. 4) include two sightings of birds "suspected of being *F. minor* because of their buffy coloration." It is of interest, therefore, to note the adventitious tawny color of unknown source on portions of the white ventral plumage of the New Mexico specimen. Hellmayr and Conover (*Field Mus. Zool. Ser. 13, Part 1, No. 2, 1948, p. 165*) include both Lower California and California within the range of *F. minor ridgwayi*, but I know of no specimens of this form from these areas.

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