

I also gratefully acknowledge the Canadian Wildlife Service and the National Research Council of Canada for financial support.

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Received February, 1969.

GENERAL NOTES

Wing formula as a means of distinguishing Summer Tanager, *Piranga rubra*, from Hepatic Tanager, *P. flava*.—The eastern race of the Summer Tanager, *P. r. rubra*, occurs widely, as a migrant and winter resident, through Middle America and western South America, where it overlaps the breeding ranges of various races of the Hepatic Tanager, *P. flava*, found chiefly in open woods of hilly or mountain country. While the northern races of *P. flava* can be separated readily from *P. rubra* by the grayish to dusky of lore and cheek, this does not hold for the southern races, which can present difficulty where the bird is in female or first basic (postjuvenile) plumage if no specimen series is available for comparison. Recently I encountered the problem in identifying a *Piranga* from South America. The literature gives as characters for distinguishing *P. flava* (in the broad species sense) from *P. rubra* the presence in the former of a distinct median "tooth" on the sides of the maxilla, and the dusky to blackish color of the maxilla (in dry skins) compared with the lighter brownish or horn color in *P. rubra* (yellowish brown in life). Although these differences generally hold, The American Museum of Natural History collection shows that some examples of *P. rubra* have an evident maxillary "tooth", which, while distinctly less marked than that in most specimens of *P. flava*, is as obvious as in some. Zimmer (1929. *Field Mus. Nat. Hist., Zool. Ser.*, **17**, (5): 173) long ago observed that in some specimens of *P. flava* there is little trace of the "tooth" (thus approaching the usual condition in *P. rubra*). In some specimens bill color does not provide an adequate basis for identification. Phillips *et al.* (Birds of Arizona, p. 176, 1964) refer to the dark bill color of fall *P. rubra*, particularly of young birds. I have noted another difference, which, although subject to some variation, can be useful as a supplemental character, especially to banders and others unable to make color comparisons. As might be expected of a long-distance migrant, the eastern race of the Summer Tanager, *P. r. rubra*, has a more pointed wing than the essentially sedentary Hepatic Tanager, *P. flava*. In *P. r. rubra* the 6th primary is distinctly shorter than the 7th (usually from 3-5 mm. shorter in fairly fresh plumage), and almost always slightly shorter than the 9th (outermost); the 8th primary is definitely the longest. In *P. flava*, although the 8th primary is generally

the longest, the 7th and 6th tend to be but slightly shorter; the 6th is often as long as, or only slightly shorter than, the 7th (usually less than 2 mm. shorter); the 6th is usually slightly longer than the 9th. That wing shape is correlated with length of migration seems to be indicated further by the fact that *P. r. cooperi*, the race of the Summer Tanager breeding in southwestern United States and northwestern Mexico, which is at most a short-distance migrant (not reported wintering south of Mexico), shows a more rounded wing than the highly migratory eastern race. Of 30 adult specimens of *cooperi* examined, while all had the 6th primary slightly shorter than the 7th, 23 had the 6th slightly longer than the 9th (a few of these perhaps the same length); only 7 had the 6th definitely shorter than the 9th. Of course, these comparisons assume remiges that are full grown and not excessively worn. Length of primaries here refers to relative extent of the tips of the feathers without flattening (not to over-all dimensions of individual remiges from their insertion at base).—E. Eisenmann, American Museum of Natural History, New York, N. Y. 10024.

White-breasted Nuthatch Bill Abnormality Corrected by Wear.—On November 2, 1963, I banded a male White-breasted Nuthatch (*Sitta carolinensis*) whose maxilla extended about 2 mm. beyond his mandible and curved up at the tip. I did not then measure culmen and gonys, but on January 26, 1964, I found these to be 20 and 16 mm. respectively; the maxilla now extended 1.5 mm. beyond the mandible. On the same day another male's culmen was 18 mm., which agrees with the .70 inch given by Chapman (Handbook of Birds of Eastern North America, 1940: 397); this bird's gonys was 16 mm. Again on April 19 I trapped the first male; his culmen then was 17.75 mm., gonys 14.25 mm., and the tips of the bill were even. So over the winter the excessive growth had been worn away and a normal bill attained. Mason (*Bird-Banding*, 33: 100, 1962) has reported a Brown Thrasher (*Toxostoma rufum*) whose excessively long mandible "corrected itself."—Hervey Brackbill, 2620 Poplar Drive, Baltimore, Maryland.

An Apparently Melanic Hairy Woodpecker from New Mexico.—While studying specimens of various species of *Dendrocopos* in the American Museum of Natural History, I came upon an oddly plumaged Hairy Woodpecker taken at Folsom, New Mexico. The specimen (A.M.N.H. No. 363272) was collected on 9 October 1918 at an elevation of 7,500 feet, and is from the collection of Austin Paul Smith. Two other specimens taken at the same locality on 9 and 13 October 1918 are typical of the large, and sharply contrasting white and black subspecies *Dendrocopos villosus monticola*. The aberrant specimen, an adult male, exhibits a reduction of white on its back—only the central back feathers show any white, and the white occurs mixed with black as barring. Instead of the large white wing spots of *D. v. monticola* this male's wings have but traces of spotting in two areas of the primaries (near their base, and about midway in their length). In contrast to this dorsal restriction of white, the white of the underwings is extensive, almost forming a white patch. This ventral white is on the inner vanes of the flight feathers, which normally have large white spots in the race *monticola*. Indeed, the four outermost secondaries on each side have typical white spotting. The closed wing, however, appears all black.

The facial pattern of this male is abnormally black; the white superciliary stripes are restricted and the white subocular stripes are almost eliminated anteriorly by the broadened black malar and anterior auricular stripes. The malar stripes are virtually black, without the white marking normally found in the Hairy Woodpecker. Its nasal tufts are dusky white with black infringing on its borders. Posteriorly the black malar stripes become much broader, forming a large black patch before the shoulder; this patch continues onto its sides. The sides and flanks are heavily streaked with black, many feathers being entirely black on their inner vanes. Medially the streaking is less pronounced. Overall the black of its sides considerably restricts the ventral white coloration, especially in the lower throat and lower breast regions. Posteriorly the markings form conspicuous bars on the flanks of the specimen. The outer rectrices are heavily barred in this specimen. The outermost (sixth) rectrices bear three full bars, as do the inner vanes of the fifth and the fourth rectrices. The outer vanes of the fourth rectrices bear one incomplete bar, and those of the fifth rectrices have two bars. Hairy Woodpeckers (most races) normally lack barring on the outer rectrices, or at most show traces of a single bar.