

Seventeenth in the Fuertes print series

[The original painting by Louis Agassiz Fuertes was reproduced in *Bird-Lore*, Vol. XXV, No. 5, September-October 1923, opposite page 295. The dimensions of the original watercolor are $9\frac{3}{8} \times 14\frac{1}{4}$ inches, and of the *Bird-Lore* reproduction $4\frac{1}{2} \times 6\frac{1}{2}$ inches. The accompanying text, written by T. Gilbert Pearson, is reprinted herewith somewhat abridged and updated.]

*Green-backed Heron*¹ (*Butorides virescens virescens* = *B. striatus virescens*)

DESCRIPTION — The feathers of the back and wing-coverts, although tinged more or less with bluish gray, show much green, which has been the cause of giving this bird the name Green Heron. The chestnut color of the neck and sides of the head is very noticeable. There is a white streak running down the throat. The legs and feet are yellow. On the top of the head we again find green, here in the form of greenish black.

The above description, especially when taken in connection with the accompanying picture (No. 1) should be sufficient for identifying a specimen. Inexperienced students have sometimes confused this species with the Least Bittern, to which there is a certain slight similarity of appearance. There is, however, a decided difference in the size of the birds, the Green Heron being much larger. The length of a typical specimen from bill-tip to tail-tip is 17 inches, although individuals may be found that vary an inch one way or the other. The expanse of the wings between their tips is usually about 25 inches. The bill is $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches in length.

Two subspecies of the Green Heron are recognized; one, Frazar's Green Heron (*Butorides virescens frazari*), described by William Brewster, from Lower California; and Anthony's Green Heron (*Butorides virescens anthonyi*), found in the arid regions of southwestern United States, ranging also from Yreka, California on the north to southern Mexico. Both of the above-mentioned birds are extremely similar to the common Green Heron; Anthony's, for example, being simply a paler desert form of the eastern bird.

RANGE—Green Herons breed from Nova Scotia, southern Ontario and Wisconsin southward to the West Indies. They are migratory and pass the winter in the West Indies and southward, remaining within the borders of the United States only in Florida, the Gulf Coast, the Central Valley and Southern California, with scattered occurrences north to New England and Vancouver Island, B.C.

Least Bittern (*Ixobrychus exilis*)

DESCRIPTION—The feathered covering of the Least Bittern is indeed a coat of many colors. The neck is chestnut-rufous, particularly dark on the back. There is rufous on the wings and a general buffy color beneath. In the male the top of the head, as well as the back and tail are shiny black. On the female the black of the back is covered with a thin washing of chestnut, and the under parts are a little darker. The drawing by Fuertes (No. 2) will give a good idea of the colors of the bird as it appears while perched and at rest. It is four inches shorter than the preceding species, measuring

about 13 inches from bill-tip to tail-tip. The bill is a little less than 2 inches in length.

RANGE—The general range of the Least Bittern may be said to cover temperate North America and the northern part of South America. It breeds in Nova Scotia and westward as far as Saskatchewan. From here the range extends southward to the West Indies and Brazil. In winter it may be looked for in the United States only in Florida or in those states bordering on the Gulf of Mexico. The great majority of these birds depart in autumn for more tropical regions. In spring they usually arrive on their nesting-grounds during March or April and nest-building is soon afterwards started.

Cory's Least Bittern (*Ixobrychus neoxenus* = *exilis*)

DESCRIPTION—Described in 1886 as a new species from a Florida specimen, Cory's Least Bittern (No. 3) is now considered a melanistic or erythristic color morph of the Least Bittern.

RANGE—Most records date from its discovery to the year 1914, during which 31 specimens were collected, of which 16 were taken in the vicinity of Toronto, Ontario, and 7 in Florida, with the rest scattered from Massachusetts west through New York, Ohio, Illinois, Michigan and Wisconsin. There have been few if any *bona fide* sightings in recent years, and the genetic signature of this color form may have disappeared entirely.

American Bittern (*Botaurus lentiginosus*)

DESCRIPTION—The general appearance of this species (No. 4) is that of a large brown bird which on closer inspection seems to be streaked with white on the breast and to some extent the sides and back. Even the black area on the sides of the neck assumes the form of streaks. On the back of the neck the dominating color is bluish slate with much buff on the back and wings. The legs are green. From the bill-tip to tail-tip the bittern measures about 28 inches. The bill is 3 inches in length.

RANGE—The American Bittern breeds across North America from about Latitude 51° North (central British Columbia to Newfoundland) and south to middle-latitude United States, with local records for Texas, Louisiana and Florida. Other race in South America south to Argentina. Northern populations move southward in winter to ice-free areas, and to Central America at least to Panama and the Greater Antilles. There are casual records from Alaska, Labrador and the Virgin Islands. Accidental in eastern Atlantic Islands from Greenland to the Canaries. The type specimen was a bird found in England in 1813.

¹Name will be adopted in 1983.