

Gray-collared Becard in Sonora

Gale Monson

THE GRAY-COLLARED BECARD (*Pachyrhamphus major*) is a resident of arid tropical and arid temperate zones from western and central Mexico to north-central Nicaragua (Miller *et al.*, 1957). In western Mexico it has been unrecorded north of the famous Barranca (or Rancho) Liebre area near the Mazatlan-to-Durango highway in southeastern Sinaloa (Alden 1969); moreover, it has been seen so seldom that birders who have visited this part of Mexico have regarded it as a rare species.

Therefore, it is somewhat surprising that four individuals were found in eastern Sonora not far from the Chihuahua border in January and May, 1983 and March, 1984. The first bird was found in oak-pine woodland about 7 miles west of the village of Yécora at about 7000 feet elevation, January 9, 1983. It was first seen by J. Bates about 0645, and then shortly later by C. Green, when he joined Bates. The two observed the bird for about 5 minutes, during which time it made short flights from branch to branch, foraging in the upper portion of large oaks (*Quercus* spp.), and once briefly in a Chihuahua Pine (*Pinus leiophylla*). It was a male and had an oblong patch of rusty measuring about 10 × 14 mm in the center of its otherwise black crown, and an-

other patch of the same color about 20 mm square on its rump. After the initial sighting, the bird was seen 2 hours later by a third observer, A. Moorhouse.

The second individual was discovered in mixed oak woodland about 15 miles north of Yécora, May 11, 1983, by Monson and was observed briefly on three separate occasions during the forenoon. This bird was also a male, but lacked rusty coloration. It was not foraging. On each occasion the bird peered intently at the observer briefly, then flew off at least 200 feet to another location, but remained in the general area. Subsequently, on the same date, S.M. Russell briefly saw a female as well as the male in the same vicinity. This locality is at a somewhat lower elevation than the one west of Yécora. Of interest was the presence of a number of alders (*Alnus oblongifolia*) and a low, dense patch of *Rubus* sp. in the vicinity.

A third locality observation was made March 17, 1984, by Monson, R. Bowers, J. Dunning, and M. Kot in the vicinity of a place known as "El Tabacote," in mountains about 16 air miles east of Sahuaripa. Again, the bird was a male, and was in sight only briefly before it flew into an adjacent canyon. The general area is an oak-pine woodland, some of the oaks being quite large, and the pines (*P. durangensis*) few and scattered,

at an elevation of about 5100 feet and approximately 50 miles north of the May, 1983 record.

"El Tabacote" is at about latitude 29° and longitude 108°. It lies about 420 miles northwest of any previous-to-1983 Gray-collared Becard sighting in western Mexico. It is less than 160 miles from the United States border. The questions of whether the species is a casual or regular visitor to this part of Sonora, or is spreading its breeding range, remain to be answered.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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LITERATURE CITED

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Gray-collared Becard, female (left), male (right). Painted for American Birds by John P. O'Neill.

