

Why a New Florida Blue Jay?—The *Auk* (xlv, p. 364, July, 1928), has an article giving the description of "A New Blue Jay from South Florida," by W. E. Clyde Todd, that calls for comment.

For the past eight years, the writer has spent on the average of ten months yearly (excepting generally July and August) in Florida, most of it in lower Dade, Monroe, Brevard and West Palm Beach Counties, with the months excepted having been spent in collecting in the Piedmont and mountain sections of Georgia and North and South Carolina.

During this time, and especially previous to the going to press of "Birds of Florida," late in 1925, the writer very carefully studied the Blue Jays of Florida, and secured as well numerous skins from Georgia, with a possible view to "splitting" the local bird from those farther north.

A large series was handled, of both winter and summer birds, and birds of various ages, and after boiling it all down, the writer came to the final decision that a subspecific "split" was not warranted.

In the first place, Mr. Todd erred in selecting a winter (January 21) bird for his type, which specimen is undoubtedly a migrant; for it is a well known fact to all our year around residents that our breeding birds do not arrive in numbers until in late March or early April, and then in almost a regular migratory wave. It has always been a question where our local birds migrate to, and from whence they come in the spring.

A few Blue Jays do, however, remain in Dade County during the winter, but nothing like ten per cent of the number that breed here during the summer; and the majority of these winter birds are from farther north, generally migrating southward.

A study of the color distinction, as set forth by Mr. Todd, will not hold good, for seldom can one find any two birds alike in plumage, winter or summer; and Mr. Todd has based his supposed subspecies on color alone.

Mr. Todd uses the words "extreme southern Florida" in giving the range of this new bird. This, however, would not be Coconut Grove from whence comes his type. This would mean Monroe County, especially the keys, and possibly the Cape Sable region, where, however, Blue Jays are seldom found except as rare stragglers. If Mr. Todd means Dade County, from whence his supposed type came (Coconut Grove), he should have used breeding birds of June and July, or August (second settings), instead of a migrant of which we know not whence it came.

Much as we would like to see some bird named after Mr. John B. Semple, for he is also a personal friend of the writer, I feel certain that it should not be tacked to this supposed new subspecies, as offered by Mr. Todd, which I for one would certainly not have passed up as a "split" after all the time spent on it. Such fine points of plumage only, and which do not remain constant, varying as they do with food conditions, seasons, years, and age, must exclude it.

I must, therefore, assume that Mr. Todd, who generally is so thorough and painstaking, has in this case sacrificed his usual thoroughness. We trust he will admit his error, and so follow in the footsteps of another of our leading ornithologists, who has lately admitted in print that a subspecies he created, and which has been even universally accepted for some years, was uncalled for.—
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