

NEW RECORDS OF BIRDS  
FROM BRITISH HONDURAS (BELIZE),  
INCLUDING A SKUA

JON C. BARLOW,

J. A. DICK,

Department of Ornithology  
Royal Ontario Museum  
Toronto, Ontario, Canada

DORA WEYER,

AND

W. FORD YOUNG

Belize City  
British Honduras

Since the publication of Russell's (1964) distributional account of the birds of that country and of two supplemental papers (Barlow et al. 1969, 1970), important records of birds in British Honduras have continued to accumulate. Two of us (Weyer and Young, as permanent residents of the country, with the aid of several collaborators) have been able to secure most of the specimens mentioned beyond. Likewise, the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM) has maintained a continuing interest in the avifauna of the area. J. A. Dick and Peter L. McLaren, in the course of studying vireos there for that institution between 10 and 31 March 1971, also obtained several

specimens of note. Dick and McLaren worked primarily near the city of Belize and on Ambergris Cay, whereas Weyer and Young have ranged over most of the country. Unfortunately, data for many of the specimens are minimal.

*Agami agami*. Agami Heron. Dora Weyer secured an adult individual (ROM 109141) of unknown sex at Spanish Creek Lagoon (Western Lagoon on current maps) on 15 April 1969. Russell (op. cit.) regards this species as a local or rare resident and mentions five specimens and several sight records.

*Botaurus pinnatus*. Pinnated Bittern. An adult of unknown sex (ROM 109140) was found dead by Mrs. Weyer, impaled on a barb-wire fence on 29 March 1970, 1 mile N Hattievillle, Belize District. She saw another individual nearby. There is no previous record for the country, but Russell (op. cit.) notes that it has been recorded by Paynter (1955) in nearby Quintana Roo.

*Dendrocygna autumnalis fulgens*. Black-bellied Tree Duck. Weyer obtained an adult (ROM 109143), apparently a female by measurements and plumage, at the Mussel Creek Rice Station, 4 miles W of Burrell Boom, Belize District. Russell (op. cit.) mentioned three unsexed specimens and two sight records. Barlow et al. (1969) reported two females taken from a flock of 30 in 1967. Continued presence of this species in the country adds support to Russell's suggestion that it may be increasing in numbers there.

*Anas carolinensis*. Green-winged Teal. Weyer obtained a female (ROM 109142) from a small flock

on 24 January 1971, at Cox Lagoon on Mussel Creek, Belize District. This specimen is the first for the country, as Russell (op. cit.) mentions only a flock seen by N. S. Goss on 23 March 1887, on the Belize River near Orange Walk, Orange Walk District.

*Spatula clypeata*. Shoveler. Chuck Bevis obtained a male (ROM 109144) at Big Falls Ranch, Belize River, Belize District, on 20 March 1970. He subsequently gave the duck to Mrs. Weyer. This bird represents the first specimen and record of occurrence for the country.

*Catharacta s. skua*. Skua. On 20 March 1971, McLaren and Dick found a Skua lying dead on the beach ½ mile S and ¼ mile W of San Pedro, Ambergris Cay, Belize District. This locality is on the east side of the Ambergris Cay Peninsula. The specimen (ROM 109298) is of note not only because it is the first record for the country but because it is apparently the only report for the western Caribbean area as well. It is not mentioned in other regional works such as Blake (1953), Friedman et al. (1950), Land (1970), and Monroe (1968). Bond (1971) mentions three records from the eastern West Indies including a bird off Puerto Rico (26 November), another off Iles des Saintes (17 May 1967), and a third off Barbados (27 November). The bird was an adult, but sex couldn't be determined because of decomposition of the gonads. The stomach was empty; the bird lacked subcutaneous body fat and in fact was somewhat emaciated.

*Rynchops n. nigra*. Black Skimmer. Young obtained two adults of unknown sex (ROM 109152-153) on 18 December 1970, at the mouth of Stann Creek, Stann Creek District. These birds comprise the first records of occurrence of this species in the country, as the species is not mentioned by Russell (op. cit.).

*Sterna hirundo*. Common Tern. Young took an adult (ROM 109151) of unknown sex on 18 December 1970, also at the mouth of Stann Creek, Stann Creek District. This specimen is the first for the country, as Russell (op. cit.) mentions only a banding recovery from Belize.

*Thalasseus sandvicensis acufavidus*. Sandwich Tern. The third set of important records obtained on 18 December 1970, by Young at the mouth of Stann Creek, Stann Creek District, was of two adult Sandwich Terns (ROM 109149-150) of unknown sex. These birds constitute the second and third specimens from the country. Russell (op. cit.) mentions only a specimen from Belize, taken 11 November 1927; sets of eggs from Two Cays taken in the 19th century and sight records of 20 (17 January 1926, at Chetumal Bay by Griscom), 6 (21 December 1960, by van Tets) and 12 (3 January 1961 by van Tets) individuals, respectively.

*Leptotila p. plumbeiceps*. Gray-headed Dove. John Dunning obtained an adult (ROM 109146) of unknown sex on 2 May 1970, at the Columbia Forest Station, Toledo District. Russell (op. cit.) notes that this species is a common resident in the northern two-thirds of the country, but that it has not been found in Toledo District.

*Threnetes ruckeri ventosus*. Band-tailed Barbthroat. An individual (ROM 109147) not in adult plumage and of unknown sex was netted at the Columbia Forest Station, Toledo District, on 2 August 1970, by Mrs. Weyer. Russell (op. cit.) makes no mention of this species in British Honduras. Its nearest occurrence is in the Caribbean lowlands of the Department of Izabal, Guatemala.

*Piranga roseogularis tinca*. Rose-throated Tanager. J. A. Dick obtained a mated pair of this species on 29 March 1971, 19 miles N and 6 miles E of Belize, Belize District. The birds were taken in rain forest at the Salt Creek Estates. The male (ROM 109189) had a completely ossified skull, light body fat, left testis 8 × 5 mm, and weighed 24.3 g. The female (ROM 109173) had a completely ossified skull, no fat, an enlarged oviduct, an ovary measuring 8 × 5 mm having one ruptured follicle measuring 4 × 4 mm, and weighed 29.9 g. These birds comprise the first specimens from the country as well as the first indication of breeding of this species there. Russell (op. cit.) notes that this tanager has been taken at Chetumal, Quintana Roo, and that there is a probable sight record by Edwin O. Willis at Gallon Jug, Orange Walk District, on 14 July 1957.

The authors are most grateful to Chuck Bevis and John Dunning for their help in obtaining the Shoveler and the Gray-headed Dove, respectively, and to Peter L. McLaren for his help in the field. We wish to thank the officials of the Forestry Department, British Honduras (Belize), for granting of scientific collecting permits. Research on vireos was supported by National Research Council of Canada Grant A3472 to Barlow.

#### LITERATURE CITED

- BARLOW, J. C., J. A. DICK, D. H. BALDWIN, AND R. A. DAVIS. 1969. New records of birds from British Honduras. *Ibis* 111:399-402.
- BARLOW, J. C., J. A. DICK, AND E. PENDERGAST. 1970. Additional records of birds from British Honduras (Belize). *Condor* 72:371-372.
- BLAKE, E. R. 1953. *Birds of México*. Univ. Chicago Press, Chicago.
- BOND, J. 1971. *Birds of the West Indies*. Second ed. Collins, London.
- FRIEDMAN, H., L. GRISCOM, AND R. T. MOORE. 1950. Distributional check-list of the birds of México. Pt. 1. Pacific Coast Avifauna, no. 29.
- LAND, H. C. 1970. *Birds of Guatemala*. Livingston Publ. Co., Wynnewood, Pa.
- MONROE, B. L., JR. 1968. A distributional survey of the birds of Honduras. *Ornithol. Monogr.* no. 7.
- PAYNTER, R. L. 1955. The ornithogeography of the Yucatán Peninsula. *Bull. Peabody Mus. Nat. Hist.* no. 9.
- RUSSELL, S. M. 1964. A distributional study of the birds of British Honduras. *Ornithol. Monogr.* no. 1.

Accepted for publication September 7, 1971.