

## LATE NORTH AMERICAN SPRING MIGRANTS IN MEXICO

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OF the 10 birding vacations that Mrs. Coffey and I have undertaken in Mexico since 1946, five have been in late spring and one in late April. As a result, one of our special interests was that of observing the extent of the spring migration of North American species through eastern and southern Mexico. Published data on such species at this season appear to be limited. Stevenson (1957) in his study of trans-Gulf and circum-Gulf migration was able to use data from only two Mexican regions, one somewhat inland and one coastal. For the latter he relied greatly on Loetscher's recent (1955) and comprehensive summary of migrants in Veracruz. At times we will make direct comparison with the latter summary, since for much of our time we were in Veracruz. Among other recent data are those of Amadon and Eckelberry (1955). The significance of data in general works such as Bent's Life History series cannot always be gauged. We do not usually know whether the extreme dates are based on a few or on many observations.

From 20 May through 10 June 1951, we went as far as the highway's end just south of Catemaco, Veracruz. From 17 May through 6 June 1953, we rushed to the end of the Inter-American Highway, at the Guatemalan border, then lingered at Las Casas, Chiapas, and detoured to Veracruz. From 9-30 May 1954, our route was chiefly in coastal Veracruz, from Tampico through Tuxpan to the Isthmus, crossing it and visiting Las Casas, returning by the Oaxaca-Laredo route. This circuit was repeated as far as the Isthmus, 27 May through 11 June 1955, omitting the Tuxpan leg, but 12 May through 1 June 1957, reversing the circuit, we reached the Guatemalan border again, spent a week at Las Casas, then returned along the coast. Since the coast was worked last, we missed the bulk of the swallows then, as also, due to a delayed start, in 1955. Our 1958 trip does not enter into our data frequently since it was from 19 April through 4 May, going down the Veracruz coast (Tantoyuca, Tuxpan, Coatzacoalcos) and returning, Tehuantepec, Oaxaca, to Laredo.

Some of the species have been noted only sparingly by collectors in the states we covered, based on the ranges as given in the Mexican Check-list (Friedmann *et al.*, 1950 and Miller *et al.*, 1957) from known specimens. Where our observations are apparently the first from those states, we have indicated this with an asterisk.

Most of our transients were seen near the coast, and the swallows outnumbered all others. Unfortunately, we could not always be at favored localities, such as the Tecolutla-Nautla strip, at the best hours of the day. In 1958, although we arrived earlier than in previous years, we found the shorebird "pits" and Laguna Chila near Cacalilao dry, which may have been a frequent condition in the past and could thus explain the scarcity of records and reports of shorebirds on the coast. Conditions were generally favorable on the three previous spring visits. Most of the shorebirds and other waterbirds appeared to be transients, especially the flocks, but some were, undoubtedly, stragglers. Eisenmann (1951, 1957) has reported northern birds summering in Panama, the writer has noted such stragglers on our Gulf Coast, and other observers have made similar observations.

Many of the waterbirds were noted at pits along the Tampico-Valles highway, in Veracruz. According to the AMA highway guide, the state line was at Kilometer 134.6 and Cacalilao, a village on the first rise, at K101.3. Large pits were marked by K125 (near Tamos, a rail junction on the map and a locality of Loetscher's). Since our visits the kilometers have been reversed, and the large pits are between K9 and K10. Others extend from K16 to K26. At about K18 a road goes along Laguna Chila to a Pemex Estacion, said to be "Caracol." This general area is referred to as east of Cacalilao.

*Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*. White Pelican. On 29 May 1951, we saw a flock of 52, while on a scheduled launch trip between Tlacotalpan-Alvarado. Our 1958 flocks were 80 near Cacalilao, 20 April, and 180 north of Alvarado, 24 April. Loetscher's late date is 16 April, from Wetmore (1943: 232). In Tamaulipas\* we saw 4 at Alta Mira, 28 May 1955, and on 20 May 1951, south of Matamoros, we saw 37, 3, and 13, respectively—apparently the first state report. For the first published report see Amadon and Eckelberry (1955: 68). (On 20 November 1956, we saw 72 at Lomas del Real, Tamps.)

*Anas strepera*. Gadwall. Fourteen west of Nautla, 29 May 1957; our only spring sighting. (Up to 3 noted (BCs, R. B. Fischer) in the Huichihuayan-Jalpilla area, San Luis Potosi,\* on 28 November and 10 and 11 December 1948.)

*Anas carolinensis*. Green-winged Teal. We rarely saw this species. One was east of Cacalilao, 28 May 1955. (Two were seen on the Rio Huichihuayan, near Jalpilla, San Luis Potosi,\* 11 December 1948 (BC, R. Fischer).)

*Anas discors*. Blue-winged Teal. Small numbers seen east of Cacalilao, as late as 31 May (1957), three pairs west of Nautla, 13 May

1954, 20 from the Alvarado-Tlacotalpan launch, 29 May 1951, and 2 males near Tehuantepec, 17 May 1957.

*Mareca americana*. American Widgeon. Saunders reports it common in Veracruz\* according to Loetscher (1955: 23), where we have seen small flocks in winter. Our late spring reports here are: a total of 16 from the Alvarado-Tlacotalpan launch, 29 May 1951, and 1 on Lake Catemaco, 4 June 1955.

*Spatula clypeata*. Shoveler. Common east of Cacalilao, Veracruz, through 31 May (1957), at least; reported common by Saunders (Loetscher, 1955: 23). On 2 December 1948, we saw 2 northeast of Tehuantepec, Oaxaca\*; Amadon and Eckelberry (1955: 67) found the species there 22 May 1952. On 25 November 1956, we had 5 near Chilpancingo, Guerrero,\* and 14 scattered, the next day, north of Acapulco. The 1956 birds were all in fall plumage.

*Oxyura jamaicensis*. Ruddy Duck. East of Cacalilao, 100 on 30 May 1955, and 5 on 31 May 1957; Lake Catemaco, 45, on 4 June 1955; Lake Alchichica, Puebla, 5 on 2 June 1951. In Hidalgo,\* 3 noted near Jacala, 9 June 1955 (and 20 there 22 November 1956). Loetscher (1955: 24) quotes Saunders that a few remain in summer, according to local informants, in the Tampico area, but the 100 reported above, in that area, were evidently transients. The species breeds elsewhere in Mexico, but its status at the other points above is unknown.

*Squatarola squatarola*. Black-bellied Plover. In Veracruz 1 was seen 27 May, between Boca del Rio and Anton Lizardo, while flocks of 6 and 21 were seen 31 May, east of Cacalilao. Loetscher's latest is 10 May—5 at Veracruz. (One on 27 November 1956 at Colonia Copacabana, south of Puerto Marques, is apparently the first report for Guerrero.\*)

*Arenaria interpres*. Ruddy Turnstone. The Check-list shows only the Yucatan peninsula for the east coast, but Loetscher (1955: 26) reported it common for Veracruz.\* Our only reports were at Coatzacoalcos, 1 on 17 May 1954, and 1 on 4 June 1955.

*Capella gallinago*. Common Snipe. One, 10 May 1954, Alta Mira, Tamaulipas. (One we saw is apparently a first report for Puebla.\* On 30 November 1948, I found 1 in a very small meadow, wet from an irrigation ditch above, near Los Molinos, 15 miles south of the city of Puebla.)

*Numenius phaeopus*. Whimbrel. For Veracruz\* Loetscher (1955: 27) quotes Dr. George B. Saunders, "Regular spring transient along

the coast." Our only May record was of 1 at K10, east of Cacalilao, 11 May 1954.

*Numenius americanus*. Long-billed Curlew. Twelve were seen 31 May 1957, along Laguna Chila (Cacalilao), Veracruz. (Two, 27 November 1956, at Colonia Copacabana, Puerto Marques, are apparently the first reported for Guerrero.\*)

*Actitis macularia*. Spotted Sandpiper. One seen at Lake Catemaco, Veracruz, 4 June 1955. A very few on both sides of the Isthmus, 17-19 May 1954, and 1 near Tehuantepec, 22 May 1953; 1 on 21 May 1951, north of Ciudad Mante, at a ditch near K601.

*Totanus melanoleucus*. Greater Yellowlegs. East of Cacalilao, Veracruz: 2 on 11 May 1954, 1 on 29 May 1955, and 1 on 31 May 1957. Loetscher (1955: 27) gives a date of 10 May for both yellowlegs. (On 25 November 1956, I found 2 at a small lake near Chilpancingo, Guerrero.\* North of Acapulco, 26 November, we listed 5 individuals, and south, 27 November, we tallied 3.)

*Totanus flavipes*. Lesser Yellowlegs. East of Cacalilao, we saw a total of 11 on 11 May 1954, while on 31 May 1957, we saw 3, then a flock of 45, which surely must have been transients. A scattered 14 were seen 12 May 1957, along the Matamoros-Victoria highway. Northeast of Tehuantepec we had 1 on 18 May 1954, and again, 17 May 1957.

*Erolia melanotos*. Pectoral Sandpiper. Loetscher (1955: 28) gives a "latest" date of 11 May. Scattered along the Matamoros-Victoria highway, 12 May 1957, we saw a total of 18; on 20 May 1951, only 5. East of Cacalilao 11 May 1954, we listed 26 (two flocks). Two days later we had 9, west of Nautla. On 17 May 1957, we saw 2 northeast of Tehuantepec, and next day, 2 just north of Teopisca, Chiapas. (Our winter reports are: Cacalilao, 12, on 21 November 1956; Tecolutla, 5, on 7 December 1949; Veracruz to Alvarado, 5, on 2 December 1956. The Check-list does not indicate presence at this season.)

*Erolia fuscicollis*. White-rumped Sandpiper. Another species treated by the Check-list as unrecorded except from the Yucatan peninsula. Loetscher (1955: 28) saw 1 on 10 May 1939, near Veracruz.\* On 20 May 1951, we saw 6 along the Victoria highway south of Matamoros, Tamaulipas.\* In the roadside pits east of Cacalilao we saw 5 on 11 May 1954, and 3 on 31 May 1957, and a nice flock in May 1955. We counted 57 on the 28th, then next day had 80 at the same spot, with 25 others nearby. Having to turn back that night (below Tantoyuca), we returned to the pit 30 May, but found rain had raised the water level so that all small shorebirds were gone, at least from that locality. We

spent much time with the White-rumped, relearning their weak, wiry notes.

*Erolia bairdii*. Baird's Sandpiper. East of Cacalilao, 29 May 1955, I was able to get close to 4 Baird's, at a hidden pit crowded with ducks, Avocets, etc. Our only record. Loetscher (1955: 28) gives no recent spring record for Veracruz. Amadon and Eckelberry (1955: 67) saw 4 on 12-14 May 1952, "on the south side of the river in Oaxaca." According to highway markers, the state line at this point is not at the Rio Jaltepec, but five miles south, so this may be another Veracruz report. Bent (1927: 200) gives late dates of 19 May for Mexico, D.F., and 1 June for Iguala, Guerrero.

*Micropalama himantopus*. Stilt Sandpiper. Cacalilao, 11 May 1954, a total of 230 (80, largest group) at one series of pits, plus 21 to the west. Loetscher (1955: 28) gives only one report—8 seen, 14 March 1939, at Isla, Veracruz.\*

*Ereunetes pusillus*. Semipalmated Sandpiper. One was seen 12 May 1957, between Matamoros and San Fernando, Tamaulipas.\* East of Cacalilao we saw 40 on 29 May 1955. On 18 May 1954, we had 1 at the Rio Jaltepec (Veracruz) on the Isthmus highway, and the next day, 3, east of Tehuantepec, Oaxaca.\* The Check-list carries this species as unrecorded in Mexico, except from the Yucatan peninsula. Loetscher (1955: 28) gives several August-September reports for Veracruz,\* including a collection by G. B. Saunders. We had good looks at legs and bill. (Other records were: 7 December 1949, 20, near Tecolutla; 21 November 1956, variously, east of Cacalilao—2, 200, 300, 2, 1.)

*Ereunetes mauri*. Western Sandpiper. East of Cacalilao we saw 8 on 29 May 1955, and along the Coatzacoalcos beach, 1 on 4 June 1955. (Only 1 other seen—4 December 1956—near the latter town.)

*Limosa fedoa*. Marbled Godwit. One was seen 11 May 1954, east (K10) of Cacalilao, Veracruz.\* Not listed for Veracruz in the Check-list, nor by Loetscher (1955).

*Limosa haemastica*. Hudsonian Godwit. Not in the Check-list. Blake (1953: 140) gives a sight record for Salina Cruz, Oaxaca, July 1952, by Irby Davis and Richard Herbert. On 12 May 1957, in Tamaulipas, from the Victoria highway, 46 miles south of Matamoros, I saw 2 with a few smaller shorebirds, on a low, undrained area of a cotton field. It was necessary to wade in close in order to make them fly and show the wing and tail pattern. At K9, east of Cacalilao, Veracruz, I studied and flushed another, 31 May 1957, and a third, 20 April 1958. Four were seen at close hand, 19 April 1958, at 36

miles south of Matamoros. These are apparently first reports for the two states and second to fifth reports for Mexico.

*Recurvirostra americana*. American Avocet. Loetscher (1955: 28) found only three undated records for Veracruz, two being published in 1881. We saw this species on four trips past the highway pits, east of Cacalilao. Totals were: 11 May 1954—10; 28–30 May 1955—110; 31 May 1957—21; 21 November 1956—76.

*Steganopus tricolor*. Wilson's Phalarope. Loetscher (1955: 28) found only an 1864 published record for Veracruz. On 11 May 1954, at six points east of Cacalilao we totaled 51; a Kodachrome photograph was made of a few, with some Avocets. Apparently the first report for Tamaulipas\* is that of 8 females and 2 males seen 12 May 1957, 15 to 30 miles south of Matamoros. Farther down the Victoria highway we saw a single male.

*Larus argentatus*. Herring Gull. On 31 May 1957, east of Cacalilao, we saw 7. Loetscher's latest record (1955: 29) was 10 May.

*Larus pipixcan*. Franklin's Gull. This species does not appear on many lists, but we have a number of records for late May (and a few in winter). They range from 110 at Tehuantepec, 22 May 1953, and along the coast from 50 near Coatzacoalcos, 26 May 1957, to 22 between Nautla and Tecolutla, 1 June 1951. On 28 May 1957, wind 25 mph, northeast, we noted 12 gulls low over fields, east of Perote, Veracruz, too fast to identify. West of Perote, we saw 12 and identified them as Franklin's; then down at the edge of Lake Alchichica, Puebla, I leisurely studied 2 Franklin's Gulls through a 20x Balscope. (Two at Salina Cruz, 2 December 1948, are apparently the first Oaxaca\* report.)

*Gelochelidon nilotica*. Gull-billed Tern. On 27–28 May 1951, 6, just southeast of Alvarado; 28–29 May 1955, 2 near Cacalilao (also 6 here, 19 April 1958). Our only other sighting is a winter report for Guerrero—1 on 26 November 1956, north of Pie de la Cuesta.

*Sterna hirundo*. Common Tern. On 10 May 1954, 2 at Alta Mira, Tamaulipas, and 26 May 1957, 20 near Coatzacoalcos (also 260 there—5 with bands—4 December 1956).

*Hydroprogne caspia*. Caspian Tern. Loetscher (1955: 30) refers only to two winter areas in Veracruz.\* On 31 May 1953, we saw 1 at Boca del Rio, and 1 the next day, from the road from there to Anton Lizardo. On 17 May 1954, we had 10 at Coatzacoalcos. (Also rarely seen on winter trips. First state reports, apparently, are: 2 December 1948, 4 at Salina Cruz, Oaxaca\*; 20 November 1956, 1 at Lomas del Real, Tamaulipas.\*)

*Chlidonias niger*. Black Tern. Five at Lake Alchichica, Puebla, 2 June 1951, and 2 northeast of Tehuantepec, 17 May 1957. Loetscher (1955: 30) gives no spring dates for Veracruz. At Coatzacoalcos we had 25 on 26 May 1957. Southeast of Alvarado we saw 40 on 27 May 1951, and a total of 40 from the Tlacotalpan launch, two days later. North of Nautla we saw 15 on 31 May 1951. At Laguna Chila, Cacalilao, we noted 230 on 31 May 1957. (None noted, mid-April 1958.) Stevenson (1957: 59) comments on the lack of spring records from Mexico.

*Tyrannus tyrannus*. Eastern Kingbird. In 1954 in Veracruz we saw 1 south of Tecolutla, 13 May, 6 in the dune area just east of Veracruz city, 16 May, 1 northwest of Coatzacoalcos, 18 May, and that evening, 9, from the Isthmus highway and 24 miles south of Acayucan. In 1957 we had 1 between Matamoros and San Fernando, 12 May, and 7 (with *M. forficata*) northeast of Tehuantepec, 17 May. Stevenson (1957: 59) mentions the lack of large numbers in data from Mexico. This agrees with our experience cited above and also for an earlier period of the season, since 2 in the city of Veracruz were the only ones we saw during our 19 April–4 May 1958 trip. However, Amadon and Eckelberry (1955: 67) mention "hundreds" in the middle of the Isthmus, 12–14 May 1952. (In winter we saw only 1—near Taxco, Guerrero,\* 28 November 1946.)

*Muscivora forficata*. Scissor-tailed Flycatcher. Mid-May flocks were 28 birds south of Tecolutla, 13 May 1954, and 35 (two groups) about 20 miles northeast of Tehuantepec, 17 May 1957. Later birds were: 22 May 1953, 2, northeast of Tehuantepec; 25 May 1957, 1, northwest of Coatzacoalcos; 27 May 1957, 1 at K11, Boca del Rio–Anton Lizardo highway; 28 May 1955, 1 between Ciudad Mante and Manuel. One at the north end of the Monterrey airport, 1 June 1957, may have been summering.

*Iridoprocne bicolor*. Tree Swallow. Three were seen at Tecolutla, 12 May 1954, and 1 at Monte Alban, near Oaxaca, 16 May 1957. (Apparently the first report for Morelos\* is that of a flock of 500 high over the Canon del Lobo, between Cuernavaca and Yautepec, 24 November 1956. Later that day we saw flocks of 10 and 50, Cuautla to Amayuca, and 30 and 20 south of Yautepec.)

*Riparia riparia*. Bank Swallow. Near K601, north of Ciudad Mante, we saw 1 on 21 May 1951; but it was a flock of 8, passing by rapidly, with 40 Barn Swallows, 23 May 1953, at the far end of the country, that interested us in checking for transients. This was just north of the Museum of Zoology, Tuxtla Gutierrez, Chiapas. Another

20 Barn Swallows followed. During the evening of 12 May 1954, we saw 40, then 300, near Tecolutla. From the Hotel Marsol there, at 7:45 A.M. the next morning, Mrs. Coffey estimated 100 swallows a minute passing northward, parallel to the shore. This flight, ending at 8:00 A.M., was about one-fourth Banks and three-fourths Barns. Driving south from there, at 11 A.M. we counted 100, 25, and 25 Bank Swallows. Then we met a flight of about 7,000 swallows, mostly Barns and Banks, ending at 11:45 A.M. Twelve miles west of the coast (and Nautla) we saw 30, but no others toward Tezuitlan. On 16 May 1954, we saw over 25, Paso del Toro to Alvarado, and 6, south of Catemaco the next day. In 1955 we saw 15, Panuco to Tempoal, 29 May, while in 1957 we had one, 28 May, at El Lencero, near Jalapa. Loetscher (1955: 35) saw 12 at Jalapa, 6 May 1939, the only report for Veracruz (and apparent basis for inclusion there, in the Check-list), but stated the species should be a regular transient. In 1957 we reached the Tecolutla coastal strips in midafternoon and could not remain over.

*Stelgidopteryx ruficollis*. Rough-winged Swallow. We have no late records. Since Stevenson states that numbers reported from eastern Mexico have been comparatively small, we might mention that in 1958 we witnessed a good migration, 22 April, during our drive from Tecolutla to Nautla, a heavy movement, 24 April, from Veracruz southeast, and a small number (230), 26 April, near Coatzacoalcos. Because of widespread summer distribution in the areas we covered, it would be difficult to differentiate smaller numbers.

*Hirundo rustica*. Barn Swallow. See also under *Riparia riparia*. Small flocks noted 26-29 May 1951, Boca del Rio to Catemaco (and Tlacotalpan) and again, 16-18 May 1954, down to Coatzacoalcos. On 22 May 1954, we saw flocks of 20 and 12 near Tuxtla Gutierrez. In 1957 we drove the coastal route on our return, missing all but a few transients. Our latest were 6 near Tecolutla, 1 June 1951. All coastal area birds should be northbound transients. (Small numbers seen in Veracruz, early winter: 2 December 1948, 8 at Salina Cruz, and 4 the next day, northwest of Tehuantepec.)

*Bombycilla cedrorum*. Cedar Waxwing. Loetscher (1955: 37) gives 8 May as the latest spring record for Veracruz. On 11 May 1954, we saw 26 and 20, from Tampico Alto to Tuxpan. On 14 May 1954, we noted 28 below La Joya, Veracruz; in Puebla that day we had 15 at Tezuitlan, and 6 northeast of that city.

*Dendroica magnolia*. Magnolia Warbler. In the dunes, south environs of Veracruz city, 16 May 1954, we saw 3, and 18 miles north of Acayucan, the next day, we saw a male. Bent (1953: 210) gives a

27 April date for Minatitlan, while to the south of it Amadon and Eckelberry (1955: 67) found the species, 12–14 May 1952.

*Dendroica virens*. Black-throated Green Warbler. On 10 May 1954, we saw a male, 20 miles from Ciudad Mante on the Tampico highway. Records near San Cristobal de Las Casas, Chiapas, in 1957, were: 1, four miles west, 19 May; 1, seven miles east, 22 and 23 May; below Cate Pass, 2 on 20 May. At the first Las Casas point, we had also noted 1 on 26 May 1953. Bent (1953: 306) gives the late date of 11 May—in Tamaulipas.

*Dendroica fusca*. Blackburnian Warbler. A female was seen 15 miles southeast of Catemaco, 17 May 1954, and 1 of each sex, 20 May 1957, below Cate Pass in Chiapas.

*Seiurus aurocapillus*. Ovenbird. One seen 19 May 1953, in Chapultepec Park, Mexico, D.F.

*Wilsonia pusilla*. Wilson's Warbler. On 14 May 1954, we saw a male Wilson's at Tezuitlan, Puebla, another in Veracruz, southeast of Jalacingo, and 2 females southeast of Jalapa. Amadon and Eckelberry (1955: 67) reported the species in mid-Isthmus, 12–14 May 1952.

*Passerina cyanea*. Indigo Bunting. Northwest of Coatzacoalcos, Veracruz, I saw 2 males and 4 females, 18 May 1954. Early season sightings were also scarce.

*Spiza americana*. Dickcissel. Between Matamoros and San Fernando, Tamaulipas, we encountered a total of 180 on 12 May 1957. Loetscher (1955: 46) gives the latest date of 18 May for Veracruz.

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