

THE CUBAN CRAB HAWK, *URUBITINGA GUNDLACHII* (CABANIS).

BY ·OUTRAM BANGS.

THE Crab Hawk or Black Hawk of Cuba was described by Cabanis in 1854 and named *Hypomorphnus gundlachii*.¹ Since then authors have sometimes given it by that name, but have more often referred it to the continental *Urubitinga anthracina* (Licht.), it appearing thus in 'Catalogue of Birds in British Museum,' Vol. I, and in Sharpe's 'Hand-List of Birds.'

Gundlach was of course familiar with the bird, but probably never had an opportunity of comparing it with *U. anthracina*, and in his 'Ornitología Cubana' (Habana, 1893) gives the following account of the Cuban species, pages 18 and 19.

"Genus *Urubitinga* (Lesson).

"6. *Urubitinga anthracina* (Falco anthracina Licht). Batista and in the Isle of Pines it is called *Copete*.

"This species has on p. 40 of my Contributions the name of *Hypomorphnus Gundlachi*, Cabanis, but as this name is later than that of Lichtenstein I place it in the synonymy. It is also found in the Isle of Pines, in Jamaica, in Guadalupe, and in Grenada, and probably in other of the Lesser Antilles, besides Central America and Mexico.

Apparently it is found only in mangrove swamps and on the banks of large rivers. Its note resembles its common name *batis-ta*. I have killed a few, both adults and young.

"Dimensions are adult male, length 488-520, extent 1226-1232. Of the female, length 566-610, extent 1367-1418 mm.

"I found in the stomach remains of crustaceans. Other naturalists have found in the stomachs frogs, snakes, and fishes, but no one has found remains of birds. It is then a species which is neither useful nor harmful.

¹J. f. O., 1854, extra page, lxxx.

"In the Isle of Pines I found a nest in a Júcaro (*Avicennia*), constructed of twigs like nests of other hawks. The egg was dirty white with a greenish tinge. At the larger end there were some very pale lilac spots. The dimensions were 58×45 mm.

"Its flight is rapid, rather in a straight line and not in circles."¹

Specimens of *U. gundlachii* are singularly rare in collections, so much so, that it is very doubtful if any American ornithologist has ever seen one. Cory speaks of the bird as though he had never seen a skin, and I know Ridgway never saw it. I was therefore delighted when my friend, John E. Thayer, Esq., presented me with a fine adult male, shot at its nest, together with the female, in Cayo Romano, Puerto Principe, Cuba, April 15, 1905, by Harry A. Cash.

I at once saw Mr. Cash and got him to tell me all he knew of the species, with which he had become very familiar during a short collecting trip, made in an open boat among the Cays of the north coast of Puerto Principe, in April and March last. Mr. Cash says that the 'Batista' is a common bird in this region, but that it appears to be entirely confined to the vicinity of the coast — the mangrove swamps and shores of the salt lagoons and rivers — and that he did not see it far inland.

At that time of year the birds were in pairs, and each pair seemed to hold undisputed possession of three or four miles of coast in the neighborhood of its nest. About ten pairs in all were seen.

My bird, a male, was killed at its nest April 15, and next day the female was shot and one fresh egg taken from the nest. The female contained another egg, soft-shelled and without markings, but nearly full size.

The nest was about twenty feet from the ground in a small 'hobo' tree, standing at the edge of a salt lagoon two miles from the sea. It was in appearance much like an Osprey's, evidently used year after year, the lower twigs showing signs of age and

¹This translation was kindly made for me by Capt. Wirt Robinson, U. S. A.

I have omitted Gundlach's description because it is long and detailed and when translated into English not particularly clear.

decay. The twigs used in the construction of the nest were very large, and there was no lining of soft material or feathers, and no feathers were found on the bushes in the vicinity of the nest.

The egg which Mr. Cash has kindly given me is rounded ovate in shape. The ground color is dirty bluish white, and it is irregularly covered with small blotches and dots of pale, dilute chestnut, a few little dots here and there being strong chestnut; these markings rather more numerous at the larger end. It measures, 56 by 45.5 mm.

Mr. Cash shot, in all, three adult birds but unfortunately two of them spoiled; he informs me they were all practically alike.

The Cuban Crab Hawk is a very distinct species, and of course should be known as *Urubitinga gundlachii* (Cabanis). It differs from all other members of the genus in the body color, in the fully adult plumage, being rich chocolate brown, *not black*, the tail and primaries only being blackish. It differs also in many details from *U. anthracina* with which it has been confused, but to which, I should say, it bears only a distant relationship. The more marked of these are, that the lining of the wing is much purer and more extensively white; the two lower white bands on the tail (usually indicated by a few white spots in *U. anthracina*) are broader and more pronounced and the dusky band separating the broad central white band from the next lower one is very narrow. It is of about the size of, or a trifle larger than, *U. anthracina*, with a decidedly heavier, broader bill.¹ My skin, no. 15242, adult ♂, measures: wing, 365; tail, 206; tarsus, 92; culmen, 38.5 mm.

The Cuban species differs much from the Crab Hawk of St. Vincent, lately described by Austin H. Clark as *Urubitinga anthracina cancrivora*,² not only in color and other characters, but in habits. The St. Vincent *Urubitinga* is a bird of the high mountain forest, while *U. gundlachii* appears to be wholly confined to the mangrove-fringed sea coasts and cays.

¹ Most of these characters were dwelt upon at length by Cabanis in his original description of the species.

² Preliminary Descriptions of Three New Birds from St. Vincent, West Indies. Proc. Biol. Soc. of Washington, Vol. XVIII, p. 63, Feb. 21, 1905.