

**The Type Locality of *Colaptes cafer*.**—According to the A. O. U. Check-List *Colaptes cafer* described by Gmelin in 1788 is an extralimital species, and the type locality, erroneously given as Cape of Good Hope, is generally assumed to be Mexico.

Gmelin's original description (Syst. Nat., 13th ed., I, p. 431), is as follows:

P. supra fuscus, subtus vinaceus nigro-guttatus, alis subtus, scapisque remigum et retricibus miniatis.

Habitat ad caput bonæ spei, aurato multum similis, sed minor.

Rostrum fuscum, ad utrumque latus stria rubra notatum; cauda acuta, reatricibus apice bifurcis.

There is no citation here as there is under most of the other species to indicate the original source of the description. It is well known however, that Gmelin's descriptions were not made from specimens but were compiled from the works of previous authors and in the case of birds from the west coast of North America his information was obtained almost entirely from Latham's 'Synopsis.'

Latham did not recognize the Red-shafted Flicker as a distinct species nor did he give it a name, but in his General Synopsis of Birds (II, p. 599, 1782), after the account of the Gold-winged Woodpecker he adds the following note:

49a. "I have lately seen, in the Museum above referred to [the Leverian Museum of Sir Ashton Lever to which Latham had free access], a bird which appears to be a mere variety, though brought from a far different country. This was *much like the last* described in colour, *but rather less in size*. The bill exactly made like that bird [the Gold-winged Woodpecker], and brown: *on each side* of the jaw is a *stripe of crimson*, like a whisker: the *under parts of the wings* of a pale red colour, not unlike what is called *red lead*: and the *shafts of the quills and tail*, which in the other bird are yellow, in this are *red*: the plumage on the *upper parts* of the body is *brown*: *beneath vinaceous*, marked with round black spots: tail black, pointed, and each feather bifurcated at the tip, exactly like the American one.

"This was brought from the *Cape of Good Hope*. I have seen two specimens of this bird."

It will be seen by a comparison of Gmelin's description with the extract from Latham which I have italicized that practically every word even to the locality is found in Latham's account. Five years later, in 1787, in his Supplement to the Synopsis of Birds (Vol. I, p. 111) Latham makes this significant statement:

"Gold-winged Woodpecker. Gen. Syn., II, p. 597, No. 49."

Captain Cook in his last voyage found this bird at Nootka Sound.<sup>1</sup>

Turning to the page cited, we find that Cook in speaking of the birds found at Nootka Sound mentions two species of woodpeckers, one of which, evidently the Red-shafted Flicker, is described as follows:

"The other is a larger, and much more elegant bird, of a dusky brown

<sup>1</sup> Voy., II., p. 297.

colour, on the upper part, richly waved with black, except about the head; the belly of a reddish cast, with round black spots; a black spot on the breast; and the under-side of the wings and tail a plain scarlet colour, though blackish above; with a crimson streak running from the angle of the mouth, a little down the neck on each side."

A reëxamination of these descriptions in chronological order shows: (1) that the bird found by Cook at Nootka Sound in 1778 and that described by Latham in 1782 are one and the same species, even without reference to Latham's statement in the Supplement; (2) that the birds described by Latham and Gmelin are identical and Gmelin's description is evidently taken from Latham. Gmelin's description of *cafer* follows the description of *auratus* based on Latham's Gold-winged Woodpecker No. 49, and precedes the description of *olivaceus* based on Latham's 'Crimson-breasted Woodpecker' <sup>1</sup> No. 50, so that the sequence of these three species is the same in both books.

Latham's connection with Gmelin's description was evidently recognized by contemporaneous authors as is shown by the citation of the reference to the 'Synopsis' in the synonymy of *cafer* by Donndorff in 1794 (Ornith. Beiträge zur XIII Ausgabe Linn. Natursyst., p. 518) and Suckow in 1800 (Anfangsgr. Thiere, II, p. 547).<sup>2</sup> Later Wagler, in 1827, proposed *lathamii* as a substitute for Gmelin's inappropriate name *cafer* (Syst. Avium, Picus, sp. 85). The reason that Gmelin included no reference to Latham was probably due either to inadvertence or to the fact that Latham gave no distinctive name or number to the Red-shafted Flicker.

The locality 'Cape of Good Hope' which has caused so much confusion also shows the close connection between the two descriptions. It may be regarded as a case of transposed labels on the specimens or a typographical error, but it is interesting to note that on Cook's chart of his routes in the Pacific Ocean the entrance to Nootka Sound is marked Bay of Good Hope ('B. of G. Hope'). It is mentioned in the text as Hope Bay, the name being given by Cook upon first sighting this point on the coast and "hoping, from the appearance of the land, to find in it a good harbor" (II, p. 264). Possibly this troublesome 'Cape of Good Hope' which has always been associated with South Africa may have been only a misprint for the long forgotten 'Bay of Good Hope' on the west coast of Vancouver Island. Latham's statement that Captain Cook found the *Gold-winged Woodpecker* at Nootka Sound is not to be taken literally for at that time Latham regarded the Red-shafted Flicker as merely a variety of his Gold-winged Woodpecker and both he and Cook described the red-shafted and not the yellow-shafted bird.

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<sup>1</sup> This specimen which was also in the Leverian Museum later passed into the possession of the Bullock Museum and on the disposal of that collection was sold on May 18, 1819, to Baron Laugier for 12 shillings (Hist. Coll. Nat. Hist., Depts. Nat. Mus., II, 223, 1906). I have been unable to ascertain the history of the flickers.

<sup>2</sup> For the opportunity of consulting these rare works I am indebted to Dr. C. W. Richmond of the U. S. National Museum.

I therefore designate Nootka Sound as the type locality of Gmelin's *Picus cafer*.

Admitting that Gmelin's description really belongs to the bird found by Cook at this locality, several changes in nomenclature are unavoidable. Gmelin's name must be adopted for the Northwest coast Flicker which thus becomes *Colaptes cafer cafer* and *Colaptes c. saturator* is reduced to synonymy. *Colaptes mexicanus* of Swainson should be restored as the name of the Mexican bird in accordance with the usage of most English ornithologists but in the form *Colaptes cafer mexicanus*. No change is necessary in the name of the California bird which remains *Colaptes c. collaris* (Vigors) or in that of the Guadalupe Flicker, *Colaptes c. rufipileus* (Ridgway). Such a solution of the *cafer* difficulty seems reasonable and has much in its favor. It is inconceivable that such a conspicuous bird as the Red-shafted Flicker which was represented in England at the time of the return of Cook's expedition by at least two specimens, two published descriptions, and a colored plate<sup>1</sup> should have remained unnamed for nearly half a century until Swainson in 1827 described the bird brought from Mexico by Bullock, and Vigors in 1829 named the flicker obtained on the Pacific Coast during the Voyage of H. M. S. 'Blossom.' Moreover the transfer of the name *cafer* to the Northwest Coast Flicker connects the history of the bird with that of Capt. James Cook, the famous navigator and explorer, to whom undoubtedly belongs the honor of collecting the first specimens which were carried to Europe.—T. S. PALMER, *Washington, D. C.*

**The Scissor-tailed Flycatcher in New Mexico.**—The Scissor-tailed Flycatcher has long been known as an inhabitant of western Texas almost to the New Mexico line, but up to the present time has had no unquestionable published record for the latter State. A recent letter from Mr. E. H. Byers says that the species is nesting this summer at Hobbs, New Mexico, close to the Texas line and about 45 miles north of the southeastern corner of New Mexico.

Mr. Byers was familiar with the bird in former years in eastern Texas, and was pleased to welcome an old acquaintance when it first appeared at Hobbs in June, 1912, and raised a family in a mesquite bush about a mile from water and from the nearest human habitation. Since then the numbers have increased until the summer of 1915 they were fairly common and ranged at least ten miles into New Mexico from the Texas line. But instead of nesting in isolated places, most of the species have built in the trees near houses where there are reservoirs supplied by windmills. One pair actually built their nest on a windmill at the middle of the vane,

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<sup>1</sup> This plate was drawn by William W. Ellis, the artist, who accompanied Captain Cook on his third voyage. The plate is No. 19 and is marked "King George's Sound (= Nootka Sound) W. Ellis, del. etc., 1778." According to Sharpe, this plate which represents *Colaptes auratus* is now in the Museum of Natural History at South Kensington, England (Hist. Coll. Brit. Mus., II, 173, 200).