

4. The following birds require exceptional skill or favorable circumstances to distinguish:—Female Gadwall; female Ring-necked Duck; female Harlequin Duck.

5. The following species can only be identified by color markings at close range:—Female and immature American and Red-breasted Mergansers; male European Widgeon; male European Teal; female Wood Duck; female Redhead; male Barrow's Golden-eye; adult female King Eider; female and immature Surf and American Scoters.

6. Sight records of European Teal, Blue Goose, and White-fronted Goose are best left unpublished along the Atlantic Coast. Sight records of the three females in section 4 that are of special difficulty to identify are of little value in sections where they are very rare, unless accompanied by males.

7. These remarks apply to trained observers only. Beginners had better divide the family into Swans, Geese, and Ducks, and then confine themselves to color markings within each group. The "fine points" discussed in this paper are *possibilities* for trained students of these birds with years of experience. No sight record of a rarity should be founded on these "fine points" alone for a moment by anybody, no matter how experienced. Nor should the beginner identify his first flock of Ducks by these "fine points." It is hoped, however, that they may be helpful and assist him in gaining an acquaintance with one of the most fascinating groups of birds.

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NOTES ON THE FORMS OF THE GENUS *OREORTYX* BAIRD.

BY HARRY C. OBERHOLSER.

A RECENT investigation into the status of the bird described as *Ortyx douglasii* by David Douglas led incidentally to the examination of the *Ortyx picta* of the same author. This latter specific name, as *Oreortyx picta*, has been used for the dark race of Mountain Quail, or Mountain Partridge, that inhabits a narrow strip along

the Pacific Coast of North America from northwestern Oregon to central California; while the name *Oreortyx picta plumifera* has been applied to the subspecies occupying the interior of California and the interior of western Oregon.

The Mountain Quail has an interesting history, nomenclaturally and otherwise. It was originally described as *Ortyx picta* by Douglas¹ in a report of the December 16, 1828, meeting of the Linnean Society, given in the 'Philosophical Magazine' for January, 1829, which number was published on or near the first of this month. This brief description, long overlooked, has priority over the later and more elaborate account that appeared in the 'Transactions of the Linnean Society of London' which certainly did not appear so early in the year 1829, but probably about March or April. As many American ornithologists have not access to the 'Philosophical Magazine,' the original description is here reproduced:

"*Ortyx picta*. Mas. Fusca subtus ferrugineo-flava nigro fasciata: gulâ rubro-purpureâ albo graciliter cinctâ: pectore vertice caudâque plumbeis: cristâ nigrâ longissimâ, lineari; lineis super cileare albis, caudâ tectricibus inferioribus ferrugineis.

Foem. Subcristata, gulâ pectoreque fusco-ferrugineis, fusco fasciatis.
Interior of New California."

The later description in the 'Transactions of the Linnean Society,' in so far as its Latin portion is concerned, is practically the same, but there is also an elaborate description in English and much on the habits and distribution from information obtained by Douglas from his own explorations. These two descriptions were composed by Douglas from his own notes, but no specimens were saved. The reason for this is evident from the following quotation. Speaking of the bird, Douglas says:

"Common in the interior of California, and during the summer months extending as far northward as 45° north latitude, that is, within a few miles of the Columbian valley. No specimen of this exceedingly interesting bird exists in any collection. Several pairs, male and female, as well as several of the following species, which I prepared with great care in the interior of California, in November 1826, I had the misfortune (too painful to dwell upon) to lose, with a multitude of treasures botanical and

¹ Philosophical Magazine, new series, V, No. 25, Jan. 1, 1829, p. 74; Trans. Linn. Soc. Lond., XVI, pt. 1, 1829, (before May) p. 143.

zoological, crossing one of the rapid tributary streams of the river *Multnomah* [= Willamette], near its source in the mountains, on my return northwards. On this occasion I lost the labour of fifty-four days of fatigue and anxiety, the too frequent attendants of such undertakings."¹

These notes refer to Douglas' first journey to the northwestern part of America, during which he traveled from the Columbia River south to the headwaters of the Umpqua River, Oregon, but at no time was he within the present State of California. In his day all the region north to the Columbia River was called "California," which accounts for his using the expression "the interior of California" as the habitat for his Mountain Quail. As he tells us in the extract above reproduced, the specimens obtained by him were collected in November, 1826, at which time he was at the headwaters of the Umpqua River near the Calapooia Mountains. This may, therefore, be properly considered the type locality of *Ortyx picta* Douglas.

Mountain Quails of the interior, from Siskiyou in southern Oregon north to near the mouth of the Willamette River, belong to the light-colored interior race, not to the dark coast form, which is confined to the narrow, humid coast strip. Furthermore, the original description of *Ortyx picta*, in so far as determinable, indicates that the bird from which it was taken belonged to the same race, that is, the bird now called *Oreortyx picta plumifera*.

In view of these facts it is evident that the name *Ortyx picta* must be transferred to the interior race now known as *Oreortyx picta plumifera*.

The name *Ortyx plumifera* was proposed by Gould in his 'Icones Avium,' a rare work not often consultable by ornithologists, for which reason some of his remarks are possibly worth quoting here. He says:

"Having been always particularly interested with this New World group, it was with almost inexpressible pleasure that I hailed the arrival of this lovely species of *Ortyx*, three specimens of which formed a part of the ornithological collection of the late Mr. David Douglas, which collection was forwarded to England shortly after his lamentable death and was finally consigned to the Museum of the Zoological Society of London; and it is to the Council of that Society that I am indebted for permission to figure this species in the present way.

¹ Trans. Linn. Soc. Lond., XVI, pt. 1, 1829, (before May), p. 145.

"Had the gentleman who procured this valuable addition to our ornithological stores been permitted to return to his native land, we should doubtless have been put in possession of some details respecting its history, which deficiency I am unable to supply; and in all probability a considerable period will elapse before another equally intrepid traveller and enthusiastic naturalist will, solely for the love of science, risk his life in pursuit of the unknown treasures of the little-explored regions of California, of which this bird is a native."¹

The plate and description of *Ortyx plumifera* apply without much doubt also to the interior race, as currently supposed. Gould tells us in a later publication² that the specimens on which the description of *Ortyx plumifera* was based were found in the baggage of Mr. David Douglas after his unfortunate death in the Hawaiian Islands, and were, therefore, doubtless collected in the interior of Oregon (whither Douglas returned after his sojourn at Monterey, California), as all of his Monterey collections were previously sent to England. Gould's use of "California" as the home of *Ortyx plumifera* refers, of course, to Oregon; and to make still more definite the application of the name *Ortyx plumifera*, it might be well to have an exact type locality; so for this reason we designate the lower part of the Willamette Valley, Oregon, since Douglas is known to have traveled in this general region during the journey that must have yielded the specimens from which *Ortyx plumifera* was described.

From the above details it is evident that the name *Ortyx picta* Douglas and *Ortyx plumifera* Gould both apply to the interior race now called *Oreortyx picta plumifera*. This necessitates of course the transfer of the name *Oreortyx picta* to the bird from the interior; and *Oreortyx picta plumifera* (Gould) becomes a synonym. Such action leaves the coast form currently known as *Oreortyx picta* without a name. In this connection it is of interest to mention that after the present writer had worked out the application of these names he discovered that Dr. T. S. Palmer, some years ago, while tracing the route of David Douglas, had reached the same conclusion, but had withheld publication in the hope of obtaining additional material from the type locality. In view of the fact that he now courteously declines to publish his findings, it

¹ Gould, *Icones Avium*, I, August, 1837, text to pl. IX, p. [1].

² Monograph *Odontophorinae*, I, 1844, text to pl. XV, p. [1]

seems appropriate to call the dark coast race of the Mountain Quail

***Oreortyx picta palmeri*, nom. nov.**

Subspecific characters.—Similar to *Oreortyx picta picta*, but darker and more rufescent brownish (less extensively grayish) above, the hind neck usually of the same color as the back (not plumbeous); forehead and inner edges of tertials darker.

Type.—Adult male, No. 140847, United States National Museum, Biological Survey collection; Yaquina, Oregon, December 7, 1893; C. P. Streater.

A recent careful examination of a large series of specimens of this species from California and Lower California indicates that *Oreortyx picta confinis* is a recognizable race, differing from *Oreortyx picta picta* in still paler, more grayish (less rufescent), and less uniform coloration above; and that its range extends northward into California as far as the San Bernardino and San Gabriel Mountains. Specimens from southern California are, of course, more or less intermediate between *Oreortyx picta confinis* and *Oreortyx picta picta*, but as a whole average decidedly nearer the southern race.

The geographic ranges of the three recognized races of *Oreortyx picta* are as follows:

Oreortyx picta picta (Douglas).—Mountain regions of California, south to Ventura County and the southern end of the Sierra Nevada; east to the western edge of Nevada and the Cascade Mountains of Oregon; north to the Columbia River, Oregon, and on the coast of California to San Luis Obispo County; and west to the eastern coast ranges in western California and western Oregon.

Oreortyx picta palmeri Oberholser.—The narrow strip along the Pacific coast from Monterey County, California, north to north-western Oregon; introduced into western Washington and Vancouver Island, British Columbia.

Oreortyx picta confinis Anthony.—Northern Lower California, south to the San Pedro Martir Mountains; and southwestern California, north to the San Bernardino Mountains and San Gabriel Mountains.

Biological Survey, U. S. Dept. Agriculture.