

NOTES ON SOME BIRDS OF THE CHISOS MOUNTAINS  
OF TEXAS.

BY JOSSELYN VAN TYNE.

DURING the summer of 1928 it was my privilege to accompany an expedition from the University of Michigan Museum of Zoology to the Big Bend region of Texas. The party consisted of Frederick M. Gaige, Helen T. Gaige, and the writer, to whom was left the ornithological work of the expedition. The work was supported by William G. Fargo of Jackson, Michigan.

We established our base at Glenn Spring, 84 miles south of Marathon. After collecting about Glenn Spring we made a trip up into the Chisos Mountains, where we made camp at Upper Juniper Spring at an elevation of 5,000 feet. There we spent June 29, July 5 to 23, and July 31. Our camp was just within the edge of the forest which extended from that point up to the tops of the highest peaks at nearly eight thousand feet. Below 5,000 feet the vegetation and bird life are like that of the surrounding desert country. I shall concern myself here only with the more interesting species of birds found in the Chisos Mountains above 5,000 feet.

The birds of the Chisos Mountains were first investigated by a party from the U. S. Biological Survey which spent the period of May 31 to June 24, 1901 in the mountains, collecting principally, I understand, in Pine Canyon. The most important records they obtained were very briefly summarized by H. C. Oberholser (Auk 19, pp. 300-301) but his full report still awaits publication by the government. An account of the flora of the Chisos Mountains and a list of the Transition Zone birds is included in the "Biological Survey of Texas" (North American Fauna No. 25. 1905) by Vernon Bailey. Early in July, 1904, Thomas H. Montgomery, Jr. made a two day collecting trip into Green Gulch (4700 to 6000 feet) and later published an account of the birds of the region (Auk 22, pp. 12-15). The topography of the region and the place names used here are shown in the Chisos Mountain Quadrangle map published by the U. S. Geological Survey (1905).

**Columba fasciata fasciata.** BAND-TAILED PIGEON.—Rather common. By July 31 they had come down to Juniper Spring in considerable numbers to feed on the ripening acorns.

**Balanosphyra formicivora formicivora.** ANT-EATING WOODPECKER.—Very common from the lower limit of trees to the top of Emory Peak. By July 31 they had completed their molt.

**Aëronautes melanoleucus.** WHITE-THROATED SWIFT.—Seen in numbers about the higher peaks and cliffs. Occasionally they strayed down the valleys as far as 5,000 feet.

**Cyanolaemus clemenciae clemenciae.** BLUE-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD.—Of regular occurrence in the dark forested canyons. I collected six adult males and, with the help of James L. Peters, have compared them with the series from Arizona and from Mexico in the Museum of Comparative Zoology. The Chisos Mountain birds prove to be like the Mexican form and not like *bessophilus*,<sup>1</sup> of Arizona. My specimens are exactly like Mexican birds in color and only show an approach to *bessophilus* in their smaller average bill length. But the bill of this species, as in many Hummingbirds, is apparently quite variable in size.

**Selasphorus platycercus.** BROAD-TAILED HUMMINGBIRD.—I collected an adult male July 18 at 5,500 feet. *Archilochus alexandri* was common in the mountains and was the only other Hummingbird collected.

**Empidonax difficilis difficilis.** WESTERN FLYCATCHER.—A pair and four young just out of the nest were seen July 19 at Boot Spring (7,000 feet). A few days later two were collected and others seen there.

**Aphelocoma sieberi couchi.** COUCH JAY.—Very common everywhere in the forest. When we arrived they were already in flocks of twenty-five or more of old and young. The old birds were molting heavily throughout our stay. They were very noisy, constantly repeating a shrill, rasping *scree, scree, scree*. I also heard them give a peculiar rattling note, not unlike the call of *Dryobates pubescens*. Their food consisted mainly of coleoptera and orthoptera, together with a few nuts and seeds. They probably also raid the nests of small birds, for I saw them repeatedly pursued by Scott's Orioles and Mockingbirds whose nests they had approached.

**Aimophila ruficeps eremoeca.** ROCK SPARROW.—Fairly common. On July 9 and 18 I saw females nest building and on July 22 I collected a fully fledged juvenal.

**Pipilo maculatus montanus.** SPURRED TOWHEE.—Common above 7,000 feet. A few were seen at 6,000 feet and one at 5,500 feet.

**Hedymeles melanocephalus.** BLACK-HEADED GROSBEEK.—In full song as late as the third week in July. Fairly common but amazingly wild.

(**Piranga hepatica.** HEPATIC TANAGER.)—Fairly common and in song throughout our stay, but so wary that I was unable to collect a specimen.

<sup>1</sup> Oberholser—Condor, vol. XV, p. 181, Sept. 1918.

**Piranga ludoviciana.** WESTERN TANAGER.—I collected a female at 5,000 feet and saw an adult male at 5,500 feet. Not previously recorded from the Chisos Mountains.

**Vireo huttoni stephensi.** STEPHEN'S VIREO.—Rather common at Boot Spring (7,000 feet) where we took several adults and on July 18 a juvenal.

**Vermivora crissalis.** COLIMA WARBLER.—On July 20 Mr Gaige collected an adult male of this very rare Warbler near Boot Spring. The specimen is exactly like those in the Museum of Comparative Zoology taken by W. W. Brown in Tamaulipas, Mexico, at the same time of year. This is apparently the twelfth known specimen of the species (Bangs—Auk 42, p. 252) and constitutes an addition to the American Ornithologists' Union 'Check-List.' The most northern previous record is an adult taken in the Sierra Guadalupe, Coahuila, Mexico, by Nelson and Goldman.

**Setophaga picta.** PAINTED REDSTART.—Another interesting discovery was the addition of this species to the known avifauna of Texas. In the forest about Boot Spring it proved to be fairly numerous. We collected two adults and on July 19 a juvenal bird. On July 21 I saw a young one just out of the nest and barely able to fly. The species was seen only in the heavy pine and cedar forest at 7,000 feet. As they hunted insects in the pine trees their actions were often very Creeper-like, but with the additional spreading of the tail so characteristic of *S. ruticilla*.

**Toxostoma crissale.** CRISSAL THRASHER.—On July 17 I collected an immature bird at 5,500 feet in Juniper Canyon.

**Sitta carolinensis nelsoni.** ROCKY MOUNTAIN NUTHATCH.—Common above 6,500 feet. Its thin, weak voice is quite different from that of the White-breasted Nuthatch of the eastern States.

**Baeolophus atricristatus atricristatus.** BLACK-CRESTED TITMOUSE.—Very common throughout the forest. As late as the middle of July they were still going about in little family parties, the young constantly begging for food.

**Psaltriparus melanotis lloydi.** LLOYD'S BUSH-TIT.—Both this species and *plumbeus* occurred regularly throughout the forest.

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