

THE SCREECH OWLS OF EASTERN NORTH AMERICA.

BY OUTRAM BANGS.

Ridgway's treatment, of the Screech Owls of Eastern North America in 'Birds of North and Middle America' (Bull. U. S. Nat. Mus. No. 50, part, 6, 1914), does not appear to me to quite express the facts as they really are. Before this was written, it was the custom to call the more northern form *Otus asio asio* (Linnaeus) and the Florida bird, *Otus asio floridanus* (Ridgway). Ridgway dropped *floridanus*, called the northern bird *Otus asio naevius* (Gmelin) and used the old name *Otus asio asio* (Linnaeus) for all Screech Owls from Florida north to Virginia and west to western Tennessee, southern Illinois, southeast Kansas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Louisiana, etc. Ridgway, however, does not mention, nor does he list measurements of any birds from Georgia, South Carolina or North Carolina; apparently at that time he lacked material from this most important region.

A study of the material in the Museum of Comparative Zoology leads me to believe that three instead of two forms should be recognized. Our material is very complete so far as the eastern tier of states is concerned. From the Mississippi Valley region however, we have unfortunately, only scattering specimens, with no series from any one place.

The Screech Owl is nonmigratory. Wherever it occurs it is present in about the same numbers throughout the year. It is therefore safe to say that any specimen, wherever taken, regardless of season, represents the resident form of the region whence it came.

The three eastern races, according to my views, are as follows:—

***Otus asio naevius* (GMELIN)**

Strix naevia Gmelin, S. N. 1, pt. 1, 1788, p. 239. Type Locality, New York.

Range:—From southern New Brunswick and Maine south in the east to New Jersey, at least (rare at the north, abundant from southern New Hampshire south), west to Wisconsin, Minnesota and South Dakota. Birds from Ohio, Indiana and northern Illinois, belong here. Details of the range of the form in the Mississippi Valley etc., must be worked out with the aid of much more material than is available to me.

Characters:—Size large in 45 skins from New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania. Wing in ♂, 160 to 168, (mostly about 165). In ♀, 165 to 177, (mostly about 170).

Underparts in both phases, the red and the gray, coarsely marked with much white intermixed and with a large area of plain white in the middle of the belly. (For full description see Ridgway, 'Birds of North and Middle America,' part 6, 1914).

Otus asio asio (LINNÆUS)

Strix asio Linnaeus, S. N. ed. 10, 1, 1758, p. 92. Type Locality, South Carolina.

Range:—In the east from Georgia north to Virginia, and west to western Tennessee, southern Illinois, southeastern Kansas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Louisiana, etc. Intergradation in the east takes place gradually in the region lying between Virginia and New Jersey. In the west, skins from southern Illinois and Kansas and southward are wholly referable here.

Characters:—Size decidedly smaller; Wing in ♂ from Georgia 149, in ♀ 153 (one each); from South Carolina, in ♂ 150 to 155 (three) in ♀ 160 to 167 (three); from North Carolina, in ♂ 150 to 155 (four), in ♀ 157 to 167 (four); from Virginia, in ♂ 156 and 160 (two) in ♀ 166 (one). One male from Kansas has a wing of 150 and one ♂ from southern Illinois 154. (Other unsexed specimens afford similar measurements).

In color and markings quite the same as *O. a. naevius*.

Otus asio floridanus (RIDGWAY)

Scops asio var. *floridanus* Ridgway, Bull. Essex Inst., 5, 1873, p. 200. Type Locality, Indian River, Florida.

Range:—Peninsular Florida. Intergradation with the last form apparently takes place rather gradually, as two birds from Georgia (Broro Neck and Sapelo Island) are somewhat intermediate in color, but are larger than in *floridanus* and one bird out of six from southern South Carolina, though much larger than Florida examples, somewhat resembles them in markings. All others from southern South Carolina are quite the same as those from farther north.

Characters:—Size very small; in 30 skins from the Florida Peninsula, wing in ♂ 134 to 144 (mostly about 140). In ♀ 140 to 152 (mostly about 145). In markings standing off sharply from the other two forms, in that the underparts are much more heavily and finely penciled with less intermixture of white and with less white in middle of belly.

*Museum of Comparative Zoology,
Cambridge, Mass.*