

NOTES ON THE COLLECTING TRIP OF M. ABBOTT
FRAZAR IN SONORA AND CHIHUAHUA FOR
WILLIAM BREWSTER.

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IT HAS long been known that Frazar made an important collection of birds for Mr. William Brewster in 1888 in Sonora and Chihuahua. Most unfortunately this collection was never reported upon as a whole. Mr. Brewster described a considerable number of novelties, but shortly thereafter seemed to lose interest in Mexican birds, and returned once more to his North American studies. No itinerary of the expedition was ever published, and the type localities of many of the novelties cannot be found on any map.

Recently Mr. Adriaan J. van Rossem, with the assistance of other Pacific coast collectors, has made an extensive survey in Sonora, and in the preparation of a final report, he naturally wanted to know exactly where some of these localities were. He tells me that since Frazar's day the boundary between Sonora and Chihuahua has in places been moved some miles east of its former position, and that consequently some localities formerly in Chihuahua might now be in Sonora.

The only possible way of settling this question was, as van Rossem suggested *in litt.*, to refer to any existing notes or diaries left by Frazar, on the chance that they might furnish some clue. It so happens that Frazar wrote Brewster with considerable regularity; these letters were preserved and were bequeathed by the latter to the Museum of Comparative Zoology. Dr. Barbour, the director, has suggested that I put the itinerary on record, especially as digging it out proved quite difficult. Frazar had an old-fashioned and very flowing angular hand. The letters were written on bills of lading, leaves torn from account books, or other scraps of paper, and not only did he use both sides for economy, but having filled a page in one direction, he would write completely across it at right angles. One letter would be written on three different sizes of paper, and the lapse of time had sometimes served to separate these installments widely in the pile of his correspondence.

In the matter that follows it will be understood that all statements are the equivalent of quotations from Frazar's letters. Comments by me are in brackets.

Guaymas. Jan. 17, 1888. Arrived here this morning [from Lower California]. [Specimens in Brewster Coll. catalogued as collected Jan. 13-17 consequently wrongly dated.] I have your letter of Dec. 6, and in it you tell me to get at once to the Chi. [= Chihuahua] Mts. [It later transpires that this was because Godman had sent W. B. Richardson to this region, and Brewster hoped to get Frazar in first. As a matter of fact Richardson got in 2 months ahead of Frazar, and the former has himself told me that his special instructions from Godman were to find the Imperial Ivory-billed Woodpecker and the Long-eared Trogon, and he was provided with colored sketches of these two birds. He was entirely successful, but Frazar's general collection was much better and larger, and made at the height of the breeding season.] I shall probably go to Alamos by mule. Alamos is in the dry, barren country at an elevation of 1800 ft.

Guaymas. Jan. 26, 1888. The steamer will leave tomorrow and in three days I hope to be in Alamos . . . I shall probably stop in Alamos until March 1st . . . from there I expect to start towards Pinos Altos, but will aim to stop in the oak level if I can find a suitable place for about two months or about that, for I doubt if many birds will have arrived at Pinos Altos before late in May, and this will I expect be the best side of the range for "oak level" birds, and then as most of the year anyway will be spent among the pines, I don't see any special advantage in rushing there at once, undoubtedly at present there is snow there. Pinos Altos is but 6 miles from Jesus Mary [= Jesus Maria of labels and published records] and is an Eng [lish] camp whereas the latter is Mex., so I shall make for the former, and besides I have a letter to the bookkeeper at the mines there. [In general this plan was adhered to, and we now see why Richardson arrived in the mountains first, coming in on the newly-built Mexican Central Railroad. Frazar's judgment, ornithologically, was, however, entirely correct.]

Alamos. Feb. 5, 1888. At last I am located and at work again. I am not in the town but three miles down the arroyo at a large hacienda called "Mercedes," but I suppose you will label all the

birds from here as taken at Alamos. The country about here is dry but more brushy than in Lower Cal., and in the arroyo bottom there are small spots of heavy growth. [The letter continues to expatiate on the primitive conditions in the mountains ahead, and advises Mr. Brewster to abandon his idea of going to Chihuahua City and joining Frazar in the mountains in June.] I am rather thinking now of taking this route . . .

*Pinos Altos

*Alamos

*Mines,

*Chinipas,

*Wasiparis, and

*Batopillas, *Yoquibo and

and it would not get me to Pinos Altos until August. I have recently been offered the chance to stay at the place I have marked the mines, which is three days from here and is among the pines. I thought I might spend April there, then May at Chinipas which is down on the oak level . . . Then June at Wasiparis which is way up among the pines again, then Batopillas is way down on the low oak level again, and then from there to Yoquibo, which is on the main plateau of the range and at an elevation of 7425, but right close by is the highest peak of the range something over 11,000 ft. high, then to Pinos Altos which is 7900 ft. up. Although the mines and Wasiparis are not on the main plateau, still they are about as high. [The letter then continues to say that he would prefer to go straight from Chinipas to Pinos Altos, but he does not know if this is possible.]

[There are two Alamos in Sonora, one in the north central part of the State, and the present one, which is in extreme southern Sonora on the northern headwaters of the Rio Fuerte. Chinipas is shown on the current New World Atlas map of Mexico, as is Batopillas and Pinos Altos. Chinipas is almost due northeast of Alamos, and is well over the Chihuahua boundary. It will be noted that the relative positions of the other two localities on the map do not agree with Frazar's sketch.]

Rancho Mercedes, Alamos. April 3, 1888. I have finished my collecting here, made my arrangements, and leave tomorrow for the mine of "Abundancia" in the "Durazno District," 21 miles this side [= northeast] of Alamos.

Mina Abundancia, Chihuahua. April 15, 1888. I have been here at work a week . . . I am high in the oak level and at the beginning of the pine, and am just inside the Chihuahua line on the direct road to Jesus Mary, in fact the state line is less than 200 yds. back of the house. I intend to stay here for two weeks longer then I shall go down to the hacienda [= San Rafael] which is 2000 ft. lower down in a well watered arroyo. [It follows that this collecting point is now in Sonora, without the slightest doubt, and the collecting around the Hacienda de San Rafael was probably in what is now Sonora also.]

Hacienda de San Rafael. May 22, 1888. I have finished my collecting here and tomorrow leave for Chinipas to remain two weeks when I shall return here and start at once for Pinos Altos.

[A letter from Chinipas May 23 shows that it was a day's ride from the Hacienda de San Rafael. Frazar is much disappointed and says the country is no good, just like Alamos, but the river has no woods along the banks. He proposes to leave the earliest possible moment.]

Pinos Altos. June 10, 1888. I arrived here a week ago yesterday . . . I left Chinipas in disgust the day after I last wrote you [= May 24], and started from the Hacienda de San Rafael the second day following. It was a very tiresome trip you may be sure, taking 8 days, 6 of which I passed entirely on foot, the mules getting tired . . . I am thinking of going to Jesus Mary which is 6 hours ride from here at a somewhat lower elevation. I may stay there until late in August, and then go to Yoquibo which is a day's ride from here in the opposite direction from J. M. and is considerably higher than here. [This letter shows that the location of various places was erroneous on the sketch map in the Alamos letter of Feb. 5, especially as regards Yoquibo. It also shows that he went straight across country from Chinipas to Pinos Altos. Actually Chinipas is about north by northeast of Alamos, Batopilas is about northeast of Chinipas, and Pinos Altos is just west of north of Batopilas. Recalling that Yoquibo is now only a day's ride from Pinos Altos, it must be approximately southeast, and consequently Jesus Mary would be west or northwest of Pinos Altos.]

Pinos Altos. July 15, 1888. Tomorrow I am off for Bravo.

Jesus Maria. Aug. 26, 1888. I was four weeks at Bravo, the fauna there was very near that at Abundancia. I lost just a week in changing to here, and have had one week in the field. . . . Here we are not over 7000 ft. [There is no clue as to just where Bravo is in Frazar's correspondence, but as he was collecting birds there on July 18, it was at most a day's ride from Pinos Altos.]

Frazar now changed his mind and plans with increasing frequency and was obviously getting sick of the mountains and collecting generally. He resigned in a letter of July 4, serving notice that he would stop collecting at the end of his year's contract. In subsequent letters, however, he would write of plans after the Chihuahua trip was concluded. He left Jesus Maria Sept. 15, and went straight through to Chihuahua City, arriving on Sept. 26, though he admits that he erred in thinking that various places he passed through were unsuitable. By the middle of October he was more cheerful, and on the 18th wrote that he had changed his mind and would consider collecting another 6 months, if they could agree on a proposition. A week later he wrote he would stay in Mexico whether he worked for Mr. Brewster or not, and ordered a long list of supplies. In the meantime Mr. Brewster wrote that having received his resignation with great surprise, he had made other arrangements for next year, and had given up Mexico. On Nov. 2 Frazar wired, countermanding the supplies and on the 15th wrote saying that he had heard from his mother, and that he supposed he must return home in December as he had "all along intended." Frazar accordingly left Chihuahua on Dec. 20, 1888, after collecting in the immediate vicinity for two and a half months, and his Mexican expedition was over.

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