

A NEW BEWICK'S WREN FROM THE WESTERN  
PANHANDLE OF OKLAHOMA.

BY GEORGE MIKSCH SUTTON.

IN identifying a collection of birds made by Mr. John B. Semple and the writer in the vicinity of Kenton, Cimarron County, Oklahoma, during September and October of 1932 and later, in September 1933, some difficulty was experienced in determining the subspecies of *Thryomanes bewicki* (Audubon) represented in the region. According to Mrs. M. M. Nice (*Birds of Oklahoma*, 1931, 135) the subspecies found throughout most of the state is *T. b. cryptus* Oberholser, though eastern *T. b. bewicki* may occur "on the eastern border." During 1932 two specimens of this Wren were taken in the Kenton region and these were provisionally identified as *cryptus*, though plainly they did not agree with that form in the general color-tone of the upper parts. In 1933 we made a special point of procuring as many Bewick's Wrens as possible and succeeded in getting eight more—one a poor specimen (embalmed) in the midst of the post-juvenal molt. Our nine adult specimens, which are gratifyingly uniform, have been compared with an extensive series of *Thryomanes bewicki* (146 specimens in all) and prove to be of a race that is apparently without a name. We propose to call this bird

***Thryomanes bewicki niceae***,<sup>1</sup> subspecies nova.

*Type* No. 113,329, male, collection of Carnegie Museum; Kenton, Cimarron County, Oklahoma, October 1, 1932. Collected by George M. Sutton.

*Subspecific characters*.—In color resembling *T. b. eremophilus* Oberholser more closely than any other form of the species, but grayer throughout, especially on the upper parts and sides, and less buffy below. Much grayer throughout than *T. b. cryptus*, the general color of the back being close to that of the San Clemente Bewick's Wren, *T. b. leucophrys* (Anthony), a race which is strikingly dissimilar to *niceae* in other respects. In size about the same as *eremophilus* and *cryptus* and therefore noticeably larger than either eastern *T. b. bewicki* or western *T. b. spilurus* (Vigors). The grayish tone of the upper parts, especially of the middle tail feathers and upper tail coverts is decidedly noticeable.

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<sup>1</sup> In honor of Mrs. Margaret Morse Nice, author of *The Birds of Oklahoma*.

*Measurements of Type.*—Wing, 57 mm.; tail, 57; exposed culmen, 13.5; tarsus, 18.5.

*Measurements of males*<sup>1</sup> (eight).—Wing, 56 to 60 (average, 57.7) mm.; tail, 57 to 62 (average, 59.5); exposed culmen, 13 to 14.5 (average, 13.6); tarsus, 18 to 19.5 (average, 18.9).

*Measurements of females.*—Wing, 54, 54 mm.; tail, 59, 57; exposed culmen, 12, 13; tarsus, 18, 18.5.

*Description.*—Above uniform grayish brown, of a shade between pale Hair Brown<sup>2</sup> and pale Mummy Brown, slightly rufescent on the lower back and rump, the feathers of which have more or less concealed white spots; upper tail coverts Deep Mouse Gray, rather distinctly barred with Fuscous. Wing quills Fuscous, edged externally with grayish brown of back; secondaries and tertials indistinctly barred with blackish brown; wing coverts like the back. Middle tail feathers and basal portion of outer webs of the rest (with the exception of the outermost pair) Deep Mouse Gray, regularly barred with black; *two*<sup>3</sup> outermost pairs with broad grayish tips and bold whitish barring on the outer webs, this barring much more extensive on the outer pair; other rectrices more or less narrowly tipped with gray; rest of tail black. Superciliary stripe whitish, with faint buffy cast; lores and cheeks grayish white, somewhat streaked with dark grayish brown; post-ocular streak Hair Brown of a shade slightly darker than that of crown; sides of neck Light Neutral Gray with faint brownish cast. Under parts dull white, nearly clear white on chin and throat, faintly buffy on breast, and washed with Mouse Gray on sides and flanks; crissum heavily barred with black; lining of wing grayish white.

*Description of juvenal plumage.*—Adult males and adult females are alike in color. The juvenal is, however, browner than the adult. A juvenal male taken near Kenton on July 5, 1926, by E. L. Little, Jr. (Collection of University of Oklahoma Museum, No. 5661) is noticeably *browner* throughout than any of our fall specimens, the under parts being strongly buffy and the feathers of the cheeks and malar region being indistinctly tipped with Fuscous.

*Remarks.*—In view of the fact that the type locality of Oberholser's *eremophilus* is extreme southwestern New Mexico (Big Hatchet Mountains, Grant County), a region that is certainly

<sup>1</sup> Measurements of two juvenal males not included here.

<sup>2</sup> Capitalized color-names used here are from Ridgway's *Color Standards and Nomenclature* (1912).

<sup>3</sup> According to Oberholser's original description of *eremophilus* (Proc. U. S. Nat. Mus. XXI, No. 1153, 1898, 427) the *three* outermost pairs of rectrices in that form have "broad grayish tips." In the twenty specimens of *eremophilus* at hand nearly all are so marked; but in all of our *niceae*, save one, only *two* pairs of rectrices have these broad whitish tips. Apparently this restriction of gray tipping of the rectrices is characteristic of *niceae*.

more arid than the western Panhandle of Oklahoma, it is not surprising that our Kenton birds should prove to be different from this form. That they are decidedly more distinct from *cryptus* (type locality San Antonio, Texas) than from *eremophilus* is somewhat surprising and this close affinity with *eremophilus* makes it somewhat difficult at the present moment to postulate the range of *niceae*. Our bird apparently is distinctly migratory in the Oklahoma Panhandle, so there is a chance that some of our specimens (all were taken in the fall it will be remembered) are transient individuals from farther north, from Colorado perhaps, or from western Kansas. The fact that the only specimen of *eremophilus* in the collection of the U. S. National Museum (No. 62,875, Washington, Utah) from regions to the north of Arizona and New Mexico is decidedly closer to *niceae* than any other individual in this Museum's series of twenty specimens of this race lends color to our belief that *niceae* breeds along the eastern foothills of the Rocky Mountains in western Kansas, extreme western Oklahoma, eastern Colorado, and extreme northwestern Texas; and here and there in the mountains of northern New Mexico<sup>1</sup> and Arizona and of southern Colorado and Utah. The writer is not familiar enough with the Rocky Mountain region to suggest the extent of the particular ecological association in which this bird may find a suitable home, but *niceae* is apparently to some extent a mountain-inhabiting form and to some extent a desert-inhabiting form. As to the winter range of *niceae* we have no knowledge at present, save that a single male (?) bird in the Cornell University collection (No. 2173) from Brownsville, Texas (February 5) is apparently too gray for *cryptus* and the date suggests the possibility of its being a wintering individual of *niceae*. At any rate such an easterly specimen as this could hardly be *eremophilus*.

*Distribution of Thryomanes bewicki in Oklahoma.*—From the

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<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Bailey (Birds of New Mexico, 1928, 539-540) tells us that *T. b. eremophilus* "breeds irregularly in the lower parts of the mountains of New Mexico, but seems to be absent from many parts of the state where the conditions are apparently favorable." It is our present belief that *eremophilus* is found throughout southern and perhaps central New Mexico, but that birds reported from the Chuska Mountains and from Shiprock (see Mrs. Bailey's map) are probably closer to *niceae* than to *eremophilus*, and that there may be a hiatus in the range of *Thryomanes bewicki* across north-central New Mexico just as there is in the Panhandle Plain region of Oklahoma.

fifteen Oklahoma specimens of this species at hand it is evident that at least two subspecies are to be found in the state. Specimens from Canadian, Cleveland, and Caddo Counties are plainly *cryptus* (as Mrs. Nice has told us). They are strikingly browner than our Cimarron County birds, and the two strictly comparable<sup>1</sup> specimens from central Oklahoma (University of Oklahoma Museum Collection, Nos. 3118 and 3315) taken in November and December respectively, both have the *three* outermost pairs of rectrices broadly tipped with grayish-white.

The Oklahoma range of *T. b. niceae* is apparently restricted to the far western Panhandle. It is highly doubtful that any form of Bewick's Wren breeds in the Panhandle Plain section east of Cimarron County. Just east of this plain *T. b. cryptus* is found, and this subspecies apparently ranges throughout central and southern parts of the state unless the birds "on the eastern border" are the eastern *T. b. bewicki*.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Two specimens from the Collection of the University of Oklahoma are so worn and faded as to be almost albinistic in appearance. One of them may, indeed, be an albino.

<sup>2</sup> No specimens from eastern Oklahoma are available at present.