

A NEW BLUE JAY FROM THE WESTERN BORDER OF THE GREAT BASIN.

BY GEORGE MIKSCH SUTTON.¹

In my paper upon the birds of the Western Panhandle of Oklahoma² I call attention to the fact that Blue Jays from "extreme northwestern Oklahoma, western Kansas, and eastern Colorado" appear to represent a "westerly ranging race of *Cyanocitta cristata* that is different from any known eastern race . . ." (p. 30). I did not propose a name for two reasons: first, I had not examined any specimens from the westernmost portion of the species' Canadian range; second, I feared that the paleness of breeding specimens from Colorado and Kansas might be the result of midsummer fading and wear.

Recently I have had opportunity to examine many additional specimens, including several from western parts of Canada; and the consistent paleness of birds from the eastern foothills of the Rocky Mountains and western portions of the Great Basin (in freshly plumaged fall specimens as well as in breeding specimens) convinces me that these belong to a recognizable race that I propose to call

Cyanocitta cristata cyanotephra subspecies nova.

Type, No. 5252, Collection George M. Sutton, adult male; Kenton, Cimarron County, Oklahoma, September 29, 1933; John B. Semple.

Subspecific characters: Similar to all races³ of *Cyanocitta cristata* found to the east-

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² Sutton, George Miksch. Notes on the birds of the Western Panhandle of Oklahoma. *Annals of the Carnegie Museum*, XXIV, 1934, pp. 1-50.

³ Names of these races I have purposely omitted, first because I have not compared breeding birds from southeastern South Carolina, the region designated by Oberholser (*Auk*, XXXVIII, 1921, 83) as the type-locality of Linnaeus's '*Corvus cristatus*,' with breeding birds from Putnam County, Florida, the type-locality (as given in the present A. O. U. Check-List, 1931, 221) of *C. c. florincola* Coues; second, because there is apparently no way of determining beyond question that Catesby's drawing and description of '*Pica glandaria caerulea cristata*' (following which Linnaeus wrote his description of '*Corvus cristatus*') were based wholly upon breeding birds rather than upon transient or winter visitant individuals from regions to the north of South Carolina. At the present writing it appears to me that breeding Blue Jays from southeastern South Carolina and from northeastern Florida must certainly be the same; that Catesby's drawing and description are, as Oberholser believes, of "the small purplish blue race with narrow white wing and tail edgings" (*Ibid.*, 85); that *C. c. florincola* Coues is therefore a synonym of *C. c. cristata* (Linnaeus); and that the Blue Jay of the northeastern United States must be known as *C. c. bromia* Oberholser.

[Cf. however, *Auk*, 1929, pp. 447-454, where the question is fully discussed and the first revisor principal, later adopted by the A. O. U. Committee, advocated—Ed.].

ward of the Mississippi, but coloration paler, especially on the crest and back; paler even than *C. c. semplei* Todd, from which it differs also in being decidedly larger¹ and relatively smaller-billed; and much paler than birds from Michigan; Minnesota; Ontario and southeastern Canada; and the northeastern United States. White markings of wings and tail noticeably more extensive than in *semplei*, and somewhat more extensive than in breeding birds from Georgia, Louisiana, and northern Florida.

Remarks: The paleness of all Colorado, extreme western Oklahoma, and Kansas specimens at hand (forty-nine in all) is apparent when these are placed alongside comparable series from Whitfield, Florida; Charlton County, Georgia; Jefferson Davis County, Louisiana; Tompkins County, New York; and various localities in Minnesota, Michigan, Ontario, Ohio, and Maine.

Mr. Todd (Auk, XLV, 1928, 364) describes the pileum of *Cyanocitta cristata semplei* as "deep plumbago blue" of Ridgway. The pileum of *cyanotephra* is paler, bluer, and less purplish than in *semplei*, closer to Ridgway's "aniline lilac." The back, too, is somewhat bluer or more blue-gray than in *semplei*, being close to "deep violet-plumbeous."

Many of the twenty-eight Kansas specimens at hand are so worn, faded, or discolored as to be of little use in the present study; but fall birds in fresh plumage from Lane, Comanche and Norton Counties are pale, and breeding birds in good feather from eastern parts of the State are noticeably paler than Louisiana and eastern Oklahoma specimens. All available Minnesota specimens are far too dark for the present race; Manitoba specimens apparently tend to be a trifle paler than eastern Canadian birds; and a single male from Alberta (Lac la Nonne, June 28, Canadian National Museum No. 21512) is decidedly paler than any other Canadian specimen at hand, especially on the crest.

It is my present belief that the most typical examples of *cyanotephra* are to be found in extreme western Oklahoma, where the Blue Jay is decidedly rare as a breeding species, in eastern Colorado; in western Kansas; and in the northwestern corner of the northern Panhandle of Texas; but that the race ranges throughout Kansas and northern Oklahoma (save in treeless regions); throughout Nebraska (save presumably in the northeastern part where the race found in Minnesota should occur); and along the eastern foothills of the Rocky Mountains to the northwestward of Nebraska. I have thus far not examined any specimens from Nebraska and the Dakotas.

*Laboratory of Ornithology, Cornell University,
Ithaca, New York.*

¹ A male example of *semplei* (Cornell University Museum No. 5235) measures: bill (tip of upper mandible to anterior margin of nostril), 18 mm., wing, 126; tail, 118; tarsus, 33. Ten male *cyanotephra* measure: bill, 18-20.5 (average 19.1) mm.; wing, 132-141.5 (average 137); tail, 129-135 (average 131.6); tarsus, 34-36 (average 34.7). The type of *cyanotephra* measures: bill, 18 mm.; wing, 138; tail, 134; tarsus, 35.