GENERAL NOTES

The rose-throated becard, *Platypsaris aglaiae*, in the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas.—L. Irby Davis has published an interesting note (Auk 62: 316–317, 1945) on the breeding of the rose-throated becard in Cameron and Hidalgo Counties, Texas. Certain male birds observed by him were "dirty white," "not quite pure white," or "light" on the under parts; but one of them was "completely gray below except for the rose spot on the throat, including even the chin." Since there has been some doubt concerning the subspecies to which Lower Rio Grande Valley birds belonged, I wish to report that in late December, 1948, in brushy woodland just back from the shore of a small lake six miles south of McAllen, Hidalgo County, Texas, I collected three adult rose-throated cotingas, a male and two females, which I have identified as *Platypsaris aglaiae gravis* van Rossem. All three of the birds were in fresh plumage. In none of them were the gonads noticeably enlarged.

The three birds do not resemble at all closely the small-billed, western race *richmondi*, the female of which is gray-backed rather than brown-backed. In the male specimen (GMS No. 10533, collected December 30) the under parts, except for the spot of pink on the lower throat and upper breast, are ashy gray, lightest (almost white) on the lower belly, and strongly tinged with buff on the under tail-coverts. Many feathers of the belly, sides and flanks are pale-tipped, and this tipping produces a slightly mottled or barred effect. The back, as a whole, may be described as gray, but the middle of the upper back (just back of the light gray collar which incompletely separates the crown-patch from the back) is quite dark—almost as dark as the crown; the general tone of the upper parts is darker than that of two February males (in my collection) from the Victoria region of Tamaulipas. This darkness of upper parts probably indicates an "approach" to the race *sumichrasti*, but the bird is much lighter in general effect (both above and below) than two male *sumichrasti* in my collection from Boca del Rio, Veracruz and, furthermore, it is too large for either *sumichrasti* or the nominate race. It measures: wing, 94; tail, 71; culmen, 18; tarsus, 22.5 mm. The 48 male *gravis* examined by van Rossem, when he described that race, measured: wing, 90–96; tail, 66–74; culmen, 17.3–19.5; and tarsus 20.5–22.5 (Condor, 40: 263, 1938).

The female specimens (GMS Nos. 10528 and 10529, collected December 29) differ *inter se* in puzzling fashion. The coloration of 10528 instantly attracts attention because the whole lower throat and upper breast are washed with pink. One throat feather is clear pink throughout the tip (distal 4 mm.). This bird differs from the other in being paler on the top of the head (the gray of the forehead spreads backward through almost the whole of the crown) and less rufous (more olive brown) on the back, scapulars and wing-coverts. It is definitely darker on the lower mandible, and the tail is more rounded. It is also larger, the wing-length (94 mm.) being as great as that of the male discussed above, and the tail-length (76) exceeding that of the same male by five mm. The ovary appeared to be perfectly normal. Measurements of the two females are, respectively: wing, 94, 87.5; tail, 76, 70; culmen, 17, 18; and tail, 22.5, 22.5 mm.

Roger P. Hurd and I camped at the above-mentioned lake for three whole days and parts of two additional days (December 28, 1948 to January 1, 1949). We recorded *Platypsaris aglaiae* on two of the three full days: on December 29, when I collected the two females, and on December 30, when I collected the adult male and saw two more females. Hurd saw another adult male, and various persons observed two rather new-looking nests and two or more parts (probably remains) of nests. Neither of the two new-looking nests was occupied, of course, but they both looked

as if they had been used in the spring of 1948. All the nests, or parts of nests, were at the ends of downward-hanging branches directly over water. Dr. W. Frank Blair, of the University of Texas, and two of his students, Wilmot A. Thornton and William L. Gustafson, found some of these nests or nest-remains independently of Hurd and me. Thornton, on examining the females which I had collected, assured me that he had seen just such a bird a day or so previously.

Dr. Blair tells me that "the entire area in which we camped . . . has been cleared, and they are clearing 200 acres to the south of the road . . ." (personal letter, April 22, 1949), so I suppose the becard habitat near McAllen is doomed. According to my experience, *Platypsaris aglaiae* prefers to place its nest over water, or very nearly over water, and in a large tree. If a strip of woods along the lake-shore could be preserved, these beautiful birds might continue to breed there.—GEORGE MIKSCH SUTTON, *Museum of Zoology, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan.*

A white catbird nesting in Shrewsbury, Massachusetts.—During the first week in June, 1947, I received a report from my daughter, Mrs. Phyllis Lumb, 86 Grafton Street, Shrewsbury, Massachusetts, that a white catbird, *Dumetella carolinensis*, had been seen several times in her back yard and that it seemed to be building a nest in a shrub.

On June 10, I found the white bird, which was evidently a female constantly followed by its normally colored mate, collecting twigs from a small grove of low-growing locust and carrying them in the opposite direction from the first nesting site. The following week I found the white bird on her nest which was in a small lilac bush at the edge of the mass of low-growing locusts at a height of about five feet and within six feet of a sun porch. She was nearly white but had a small dot of black on top of her head and several very small dark spots on her breast. Some of the inner tail feathers were dark. The bird presented a startling and unique appearance. My daughter says the pair raised a normally-colored brood of young.—OLIVE P. WETHERBEE, *11 Dallas Street, Worcester, Massachusetts.*

Some central New York records of the black-backed robin.—Three specimens in the Louis Agassiz Fuertes Memorial Collection of Birds at Cornell University serve to add somewhat to our knowledge of the migration of the black-backed robin, *Turdus m. nigrideus* Aldrich and Nutt.

Evidence that this subspecies winters, at least in small numbers, in central New York is afforded by a male taken January 20, 1933, at Trumbull's Corners, about 17 miles southwest of Ithaca, Tompkins County. This specimen (C. U. no. 8883) weighed 100 grams and had a wing length of 134 millimeters.

It might be assumed that robins which are on their way to Newfoundland or the adjacent mainland to breed would be among the earlier migrants through central New York. However, the migration of this subspecies through this area may be quite protracted. Our two specimens, males from Ithaca, were taken on March 31, 1931, and May 13, 1941. The former specimen (C. U. no. 8843) had a wing length of 132 millimeters. The latter specimen (C. U. no. 10876) was found dead near the Cornell campus. It weighed 78.2 grams, and its wing measured 133.5 millimeters. These specimens were identified by Dr. John W. Aldrich.

It might be added, parenthetically, that males of this subspecies, at least in spring, are quite readily identified in the field at the close range robins often permit. I have seen two this spring; one in Central Park, New York City, on March 31, 1948, and one in Ithaca, New York, on April 16. In both cases, large numbers of male *T.*