

The Rediscovery of *Tangavius armenti* (Cabanis).—On December 12, 1956, the National Zoological Park obtained some live birds from a dealer, Lowry Riggs, of Rockville, Maryland, who had just received them from a collector at Leticia, in the Amazonian savannas of extreme southeastern Colombia. Leticia, the capital of the Intendencia del Amazonas, is on the north bank of the Amazon River, not quite 4 kilometers from Tabatinga, Brazil, and is just across the river from the territory of Peru. It is the southernmost tip of Colombia. Among other birds in the shipment was a single, fully adult, male Colombian Red-eyed Cowbird in fine plumage. It had been sent to Riggs together with a good number of the common Shiny Cowbirds (*Molothrus bonariensis*). This is the third known specimen of *Tangavius armenti* and constitutes a rediscovery of the bird, as the last one was taken some time prior to 1866. It also gives us a clue as to the range of the bird, previously thought to be restricted to the Caribbean coastal belt of Colombia, where it has been searched for in vain by several parties.

I have given full accounts of our fragmentary knowledge of this bird in earlier publications (The Cowbirds, 1929, pp. 318–319; Ibis, 1933: 492–494), and more recently Stresemann (Mitth. Zool. Mus. Berlin, 30:, 50–51, 1954) has given a little additional information. It may be of interest to summarize the picture very briefly here. In 1826 Gustav Haerberlin collected 3 specimens, a “♂” and 2 “♀ ♀”, on the basis of which Cabanis described the bird as *Molothrus armenti* in 1851 (Museum Heiniannum, 1: 192). In 1826 Lichtenstein had written the name *I. armenti* on the three birds, but never published this name, which, therefore, dates from Cabanis, 1851. The bird has since then been referred to as “Arment’s” cowbird, because of the patronymic appearance of the specific name, ending in “i,” but I was never able to learn who “Arment” was, as Cabanis merely used Lichtenstein’s old manuscript name without any further explanation. However, as Dr. Stresemann has pointed out to me, the name *armenti* was not created to commemorate a man, but stems from the Latin word *armentum*, meaning a drove of cattle.

The three examples of this bird sent in by Haerberlin, all apparently immature, were said to have been taken at Cartagena, between January and April, 1826. Of these three, but a single specimen is still extant in the collections of the Berlin museum, and no indication of what may have become of the other two has been found. The unique Berlin specimen may therefore be looked upon as the type of *armenti*. Aside from it, the bird is known from a single adult male said to have come from Savanilla, Colombia, in the G. N. Lawrence collection in the American Museum of Natural History, a skin without further data, but known to have been in Lawrence’s possession not later than 1866 when Cassin examined it. At that time Cassin (Proc. Acad. Nat. Sci., Phila., 1866, p. 18) thought that a young bird in his museum, said to have come from Demerara, was also of this form, but many years ago the late Dr. Witmer Stone informed me that no specimen of this cowbird was in the collection in Philadelphia, and that he had no record of one ever having been there.

The adult male, now in the American Museum of Natural History, has the initials J. A. on the label. Some years ago Zimmer suggested that these correspond to those of John Akhurst, and it may well be that Lawrence received his specimen from him. In 1859 the Smithsonian Institution received from Akhurst 7 birds from Savanilla, Colombia (*Gampsonyx*, *Colinus*, *Coereba*, *Todirostrum*, etc.), most of which are still in the collections in Washington. Unfortunately none of them have original field labels or any data other than “Savanilla” and “John Akhurst” on them. However, John Akhurst was not the collector; he was a taxidermist and

dealer in natural history specimens, with a business at 9½ Prospect Street, Brooklyn, N. Y., in the fifth, sixth, and seventh decades of the last century.

In reply to my inquiries, Dr. Stresemann has kindly searched the Haeberlin papers in the archives of the Berlin Museum, and informs me that this young collector landed at Puerto Cabello late in 1825 and sent his first shipment of birds from there. On January 10, 1826, he went to Cartagena, where he waited for Count von Sack, who arrived there on February 5. The Count made a contract with Haeberlin to collect along the Magdalena River from Cartagena to Bogota, on which journey he left Cartagena on April 26. However, some 4 days before starting on the journey, in the course of which he died, Haeberlin sent off to Berlin a consignment of 107 bird skins, all collected at Cartagena. In this shipment were the 3 specimens, on the labels of which Lichtenstein subsequently wrote the name *I. armenti*.

About 5 or 6 years ago Mr. M. A. Carriker was collecting birds in Colombia for the U. S. National Museum and made a special search for this bird in the Cartagena area. He found no sign of it and wondered, as others had done before him, if the localities on Cabanis's and Lawrence's birds were incorrect. Dugand (Caldasia, 4: 637, 1947) was also unable to turn up this species in the northern Colombian coastal area. It would appear now that the true habitat of the bird is the Amazonian savanna country of extreme southern Colombia, and, probably, adjacent areas of Brazil and Peru. There is no reason, however, to think that Haeberlin's specimens came from the interior; the above considerations do raise a question as to whether the bird has deserted the coastal area since Haeberlin's time. A cowbird is not a shy kind of bird that flees from human settlement, and the country around Cartagena is said to be still suitable for it.

This rediscovered bird is a relative, although a well-marked and quite isolated one, of the Red-eyed Cowbird, and may prove to be only a race of that species. Until more is learned of it there is no need to change its status, and it may be kept as a species, *Tangavius armenti* (Cabanis). The bird should no longer be called "Arment's" cowbird; if a common name is needed for it, it may be called the Colombian Red-eyed Cowbird.

This note is published by permission of the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution.—HERBERT FRIEDMANN, *Smithsonian Institution, United States National Museum, Washington 25, D. C.*

Great Black-backed Gull (*Larus marinus*).—On November 24, 1955, on Quouonset Pond at Little Compton, R. I., I was watching a flock of about 160 Baldpates 100 yards off shore. Just inside there was a single Ruddy Duck (*Oxyura jamaicensis*), apparently a cripple, winged-tipped three hours before by some gunners. It had escaped by swimming too fast for their retriever. A Great Black-backed Gull flew across the pond. As it approached the flock of Baldpates they all took wing, and the gull made straight for the Ruddy Duck, which dove as it came near. The gull hovered over the spot until the duck came up; it again darted at the Ruddy and forced it to dive. This was repeated 7 or 8 times. The last time just after the Ruddy dove, but was swimming so near the surface that it caused a ripple, the gull lit on the water and grabbed it by the neck, pulled it to the surface, and shook it vigorously, as a terrier shakes a rat, for about 4 minutes. Then, when the Ruddy's struggles ceased, the gull began eating it, apparently biting meat off the breast.

This episode was seen clearly with a 20-power telescope. It seemed that the gull recognized the injured state of the Ruddy Duck, singled it out for attack, and put through a successful campaign.—STANLEY COBB, 34 Fernald Drive, Cambridge, Massachusetts.