

TOXOSTOMA CURVIROSTRIS: I. DESCRIPTION OF A NEW SUBSPECIES FROM THE LOWER RIO GRANDE

By J. EUGENE LAW

BIRDS of the species *Toxostoma curvirostris* from southern Texas have long been regarded as representative of the typical subspecies, but in discussing the matter with him in 1916 Dr. H. C. Oberholser told me that the southern Texas birds were not typical. This led to a study of the birds from the range limits of the species. Dearth of fresh-plumaged material from both regions has, no doubt, been responsible for the inclusion of the Texas birds with those of the Mexican tableland, whence came the type of the species.

Nevertheless, a series of specimens collected for me in the Chiricahua Mountains of southeastern Arizona and such specimens as I have been able to examine from southern New Mexico are true *Toxostoma curvirostris curvirostris* and cannot satisfactorily be differentiated from those of southern Mexico by any tests that I have been able to devise.

It is a pleasure to compliment Dr. Oberholser's deference to me in the naming of the subspecies which I now present, and to connect his name with a bird from the state to whose ornithology he has given much time.

Toxostoma curvirostris oberholseri, new subspecies. Brownsville Thrasher.

Type and type locality.—No. 165931, Biological Survey, U. S. Nat. Mus.; San Diego, [Duval County], Texas; female [adult], collected April 17, 1900, by H. C. Oberholser.

Diagnosis.—On mass average, the smallest form of the species. Beak, in adults, usually evenly tapered, attenuate, near acute; spots of breast large for the species, deltoid; terminal spots on three or four pairs of lateral rectrices, abruptly defined, white; wash of ventral aspect buff-cream in early autumn, deepening posteriorly toward cinnamon-buff; flanks brown.

Comparison.—The white terminal spots of the lateral rectrices combined with the near-equal length of wing and tail differentiate *oberholseri* from *palmeri*, *occidentalis* and *maculata* of the Pacific watershed. From *curvirostris*, its nearest neighbor, of the continental highlands, *oberholseri* only differs in shorter length of wing and tail. Such specimens as are in autumnal plumage reveal no reliable color differences, though freshly-collected newly-molted series, when such can be assembled, may substantiate an impression that the browns in *oberholseri* are slightly more slaty, less pure brown, and the buffs paler than in *curvirostris* and that the near black spots which are sometimes present on the fore-belly are less common and smaller in *oberholseri*.

Measurements.—Females exhibit no consistent differences from the males in size or coloration. As indicated by the following table of conventional measurements, made from autumn specimens, the birds of the continental highlands average more than 5 mm. longer in both wing and tail.

	Wing	Tail	Exp. cul.	Tarsus
Lower Rio Grande	102.9	105.1	28.0	34.4
10 ♂♂	(98.3-108.4)	(98.2-110.5)	(25.8-29.9)	(32.3-36.2)
Chiricahua Mts.	108.9	112.4	31.1	34.6
10 ♂♂	(103.8-112.5)	(107.7-117.3)	(29.1-32.9)	(32.6-35.8)
Southern Mexico, Gulf slope	112.3	110.6	28.1	34.5
5 ♂♂	(110.0-116.1)	(108.0-116.2)	(26.7-29.2)	(32.4-36.4)

Range.—The material at hand does not carry this small race out of the lowlands of southern Texas and of northeastern Mexico (Tamaulipas, Nuevo Leon and Coahuila). More than 75 percent of the stations recorded on the labels of the series examined are under 500 feet altitude; none apparently is over 2000 feet.

Remarks.—At the western border of these lowlands rise the Sierra Madre Oriental of Mexico. How far *oberholseri* as a distinguishable subspecies spreads over

these highlands, remains problematical. No specimens have come into my hands from the entire region of this mountain chain nor from its broad slopes to the westward, nor do I find any records of the species from this region. However, I question if such hiatus between the range of *oberholseri* and that of *curvirostris* actually exists, since it seems probable that the species will be found to occur throughout the Sonoran Zone areas which must abound in this region.

Altadena, California, January 24, 1928.

A NEW POOR-WILL FROM THE COLORADO RIVER VALLEY

By DONALD R. DICKEY

FOR SOME YEARS the Poor-wills inhabiting the valley of the Colorado River in California and Arizona have generally been held to represent the race *Phalaenoptilus nuttallii nitidus* described by Brewster (Auk, iv, 1887, p. 147) from Texas. This assumption was apparently based on the probability of the birds being similar all along the Mexican border, rather than by actual comparison with adequate material. Soon after the receipt of the splendid assemblage of material generously sent me some time ago by L. B. Bishop, L. M. Huey, J. E. Law, the Museum of Comparative Zoology, the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, the San Diego Society of Natural History and the United States Biological Survey, it became apparent that there was a marked distinction between the birds from the range of *Phalaenoptilus nuttallii nuttallii* in general and those from the Colorado River Valley; but before naming the latter it was necessary to compare the two types upon which Brewster based his name *nitidus*.

Through the courtesy of Outram Bangs, A. J. van Rossem has recently made an examination of these two birds, which are in the Museum of Comparative Zoology, no. 213,076, a male, and no. 213,077, a female, both taken on the Nueces River, Texas, February 27, 1886. Van Rossem found this pair typical of the silver-gray type which is generally regarded as the light phase of *nuttallii*, and I am therefore able to give a name to our Colorado River Valley bird. In doing so it is with peculiar fitness that I dedicate this bird to Laurence M. Huey, since the subspecies is largely based on the splendid series he and Mrs. May Canfield secured for me through the effective use of the flashlight as a clever collecting ruse.

Phalaenoptilus nuttallii hueyi, subsp. nov. Huey Poor-will.

Type.—Female adult; no. J 973, collection of Donald R. Dickey; Bard, Imperial County, California, altitude 140 feet; May 8, 1921; collected by May Canfield and Laurence M. Huey; original no. 163.

Subspecific characters.—Nearest in color to the light type of *Phalaenoptilus nuttallii nuttallii* (Audubon), which Brewster named *nitidus* and to which he gave the eminently fitting vernacular of the Frosted Poor-will, but averaging very much lighter. The backs of *hueyi* are a pinkish tan, almost devoid of the silver frosting characteristic of more eastern birds, and with the size of the dark dorsal "owl's eye" marking greatly reduced, in many cases practically obsolete; under parts lighter throughout, with the dark band below the white collar narrower and of lighter tone, and with narrower barring of sides and flanks. Tail lighter and less contrastingly barred both above and below.

Measurements of type.—Wing, 139.5 mm.; tail, 84.0; tarsus, 15.0; middle toe minus claw, 17.2.

Range.—Lower Colorado River valley in Arizona and California.

Specimens examined.—*Phalaenoptilus nuttallii hueyi*: California: Imperial