

A FOSSIL GALLINACEOUS BIRD FROM THE LOWER
MIOCENE OF NEBRASKA

WITH FIVE ILLUSTRATIONS

By ALEXANDER WETMORE

Among some fragmentary fossil bones forwarded for study by Mr. Harold J. Cook of Agate, Nebraska, there is included a distinct form of the family Cracidae, accompanied by remains of an eagle that may not be identified. According to notes supplied by Mr. Cook he obtained these bones at different periods from July, 1929, to October 15, 1931, in the large quarry of the Agate Springs fossil deposits on the southwest side of Carnegie Hill, the specimens being exposed on the quarry floor following high winds that carried away loose earth and dust. The material comes



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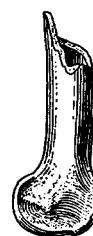
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Figs. 10-14. FIVE VIEWS OF TYPE SPECIMEN OF
Ortalis tantala, TWICE NATURAL SIZE.

from the Lower Harrison formation of the Lower Miocene and is all well fossilized. The specimens are preserved in the Cook collection at Agate, Nebraska. The drawings of the type specimen are by Mr. Sydney Prentice.

Family CRACIDAE

Ortalis tantala sp. nov.

Characters.—Similar to *Ortalis vetula* (Wagler)¹ but much smaller; tibio-tarsus with intercondylar sulcus relatively wider and more open; condylar region relatively broader.

¹ *Penelope vetula* Wagler, Oken's Isis, 1830, p. 1112 (Mexico).

Description.—Type, Cat. No. H.C. 498, collection of Harold J. Cook, distal end of right tibio-tarsus (figs. 10-14). Anterior face of shaft at lower end flattened, with a shallow groove toward inner margin that passes beneath a broad supratendinal bridge; openings beneath this bridge small, the bridge itself placed at an angle of 45° with axis of shaft; posterior surface of shaft rounded on sides and back; internal condyle in lateral outline rounded; a shallow groove for peroneus profundus on side of shaft just above this condyle; inner condyle projecting slightly farther anteriorly than posteriorly; outer condyle slightly flattened on distal margin, in general rounded but projecting decidedly toward front, this anterior projection being more pronounced than on inner condyle; intercondylar fossa broadly open, the external margins forming sharp angles with outer faces of condyles; intercondylar fossa narrow and relatively deep, with a distinct pit at its distal end; inner wall of fossa with a distinct overhang.

Measurements.—Transverse breadth across condyles 5.6 mm., depth of internal condyle 5.5 mm., depth of external condyle 5.2 mm., transverse breadth of shaft 3.3 mm.

Remarks.—The fossil has been compared with the modern genera *Crax*, *Penelope* and *Ortalis*, coming closest to the latter among these. Its differences from *Ortalis* are such that they may merit its distinction in a separate genus, but in view of the fact that skeletons of such genera as *Chamaepetes*, *Pauxis* and *Mitu* are not available at this time, and since the fossil material is small, it has seemed desirable to describe this form in *Ortalis*, to which it is certainly closely allied, rather than to erect a new generic group for it.

Ortalis tantala is peculiar in being the smallest known member of the family Cracidae, which includes the tree-inhabiting curassows, guans and chachalacas. Apparently it was less than one-half the size of the chachalacas, which include the smallest living members of the group, in point of size bearing about the same relations to these that they exhibit when compared with the curassows. It is interesting that in the latter part of the Tertiary there existed this relatively tiny species in a family that includes curassows as large as turkeys, a type of bird which certainly must have been in existence at that time, though the only other fossil of this family known at present is *Ortalis phengites* Wetmore described from the Snake Creek beds.

The type of *Ortalis tantala* is well fossilized and is ivory white in color.

ACCIPITRIDAE

Two phalanges come from two distinct forms of hawks, one (H. C. 499) being similar in size to the modern red-tailed hawk and the other (H. C. 497) considerably larger. It is not practicable to identify them more closely.

There is also the lower end of a left tibio-tarsus (H. C. 496), with the angles on the posterior faces of the condyles more or less broken away, that belongs in this same family. It seems near to what is currently known as *Geranoëtus*. Comparison made with the type of *Urubitinga enecta* Wetmore, through the courtesy of Mr. Barnum Brown of the American Museum of Natural History, indicates definitely that it is not that species. The specimen is too worn and fragmentary for satisfactory generic determination.

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