

THE TYPE LOCALITIES OF THREE BIRDS COLLECTED BY
LEWIS AND CLARK IN 1806

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Apparently the type localities of the three birds collected on the Lewis and Clark Expedition and later described by Alexander Wilson have never been definitely established. These are the Lewis Woodpecker, *Asyndesmus lewis* Gray, the Clark Nutcracker, *Nucifraga columbiana* (Wilson), and the Western Tanager, *Piranga ludoviciana* (Wilson). We believe that information is now available which will settle the status of these localities. To avoid confusion, the three species are treated separately, in the order named.

Lewis Woodpecker.—In the A. O. U. Check-list (4th ed., 1931, p. 192) the type locality of this species is stated thus: "(No locality mentioned=Montana, about lat. 46° N.)." This statement was probably based on the locality listed by Bangs (Types of Birds, Bull. Mus. Comp. Zool., 70, 1930, p. 232), which is "from Montana, about lat. 46° N.", or on a remark made by Coues (Key N. Amer. Birds, 5th ed., 2, 1903, p. 598) in which he says, ". . . it was discovered by the Lewis and Clark Expedition near Helena, Mont., Sat., July 20, 1805."

Inspection of the "Original Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition 1804-1806" (Thwaites ed., 2, 1904, p. 252) discloses that under date "Saturday, 20th July, 1805", Lewis, who was then encamped near latitude 46° N. on the Missouri River and thus in the vicinity of Helena, Montana, entered the following observation: "I saw a black woodpecker (or crow) today about the size of the lark Woodpecker as black as a crow. I endeavored to get a shoot at it but could not, it is a distinct species of woodpecker; it has a long tail and flies a good deal like the jay bird."

In "Wilson's American Ornithology" (Jameson ed., 1, 1831, p. 168) the following statement is made concerning this species: "*Several skins of this species were preserved [by Lewis and Clark], all of which I examined with care*" (italics ours). Then follows a detailed description of the bird. Since Wilson doubtless based his description on specimens in hand, and since none was collected in the vicinity of Helena, Montana, the question concerning the place from which these specimens came naturally arises. Further pursuit of Lewis and Clark's Journals throws light upon this topic.

Under date "Saturday, May 17th, 1806" (5, 1905, p. 43), the following entry was made by Clark: "[John] Shields rode out and hunted in the morning without success he returned at 11 A. M. having killed only a black wood pecker with a red breast as described hereafter." Under date "Tuesday, 27th May, 1806" (5, p. 70), Lewis entered the following notes: "The Black woodpecker which I have frequently mentioned and which is found in most parts of the rocky Mountains . . ., *I had never an opportunity of examining untill a few days since when we killed, and preserved several of them*" (italics ours).

In order to show that the Lewis Woodpecker is the bird alluded to by the term "Black woodpecker", a few excerpts from the description as entered in the Journals (*loc. cit.*) by Lewis himself, follow: "This bird is about the size of the lark woodpecker [*Colaptes*] . . . the beak is black, one inch long . . ., somewhat curved, and sharply pointed. . . around the base of the beak including the eye and a small part of the throat is a fine crimson red. the neck and as low as the crop in front is of an iron grey. the belly and breast is a curious mixture of white and blood reed. . . the [p. 71] red reather predominates. the top of the head back, sides, upper svrface of

the wings and tail are black with a g[il]ossey [brackets and letter inserted by Thwaites] tint of green in a certain exposure to the light. . . the legs and feet are black . . . it has four toes on each foot of which two are in rear and two in front. . . ”.

Lewis and Clark were on their return trip in 1806, and on May 27 they were encamped on the east bank of what is now the Clearwater River, about two miles north of Lawyer Canyon, that is, about the same distance below (north of) the present town of Kamiah, Idaho. They were encamped at that place from May 13 to June 10, awaiting the opening of the passes to the east. Lewis (5, p. 33) described this camp-site thus: “Our situation [known historically as Camp Chopunnish] was within 40 paces of the river in an extensive level bottom thinly timbered with the longleafed pine. . . the hills to the E and North of us are high broken and but partially timbered; the soil is rich and affords fine grass.” For an excellent map and a detailed description and photograph of this site, as it appeared in 1904, see Wheeler (Trail of Lewis and Clark, 2, 1904, pp. 112, 269-70).

Clark Nutcracker.—The type locality of this species as given in the A. O. U. Check-list (*op. cit.*, p. 228) is “(Shores of the Columbia [River between the Dalles and the mouth])”. (Brackets inserted by A. O. U. Committee.) The same locality is given by Hall (Studies in the History of Ornithology in the state of Washington, etc., Murrelet, 14, 1933, p. 66). These statements were doubtless based on Wilson (*op. cit.*, p. 249), who says: “In conversation with different individuals of the party [Lewis and Clark’s] I understood that this bird inhabits the shores of the Columbia, and adjacent country. . . ”.

The nutcracker was first discovered by the Expedition, August 22, 1805, on the Montana side of the Bitterroot Mountains, near the headwaters of what is now Beaverhead River. No specimens were collected. The next entry in their Journals concerning this species was made nearly a year later when they were encamped on the Clearwater River. Under date “Wednesday, May 28, 1806”, Lewis (Journals, 5, 1905, p. 75) made the following entry: “Since my arrival [on the Clearwater River] I have killed several birds of the *corvus* genus of a kind found only in the rocky mountains and their neighbourhood. I first met with this bird above the three forks of the Missouri [in Montana=Beaverhead River] and saw them on the heights of the rocky Mountains but *never before had an opportunity of examining them closely*” (italics ours). Thus the possibility that the Columbia River is the type locality of this species is definitely excluded on the basis of Lewis’ statement. That Wilson (*loc. cit.*) based his description on a bird in hand is shown by the following statement: “The following description was taken with particular care, after minute examination and measurement of the only preserved skin that was saved [by Lewis and Clark] . . . ”.

Wilson evidently had not read the (manuscript) Journals very carefully, for Lewis (*loc. cit.*) continues: “the small *corvus* described at Fort Clatsop [on the Columbia River] is a different species [*Perisoreus o. obscurus*], tho’ untill now I had taken it to be the same, this is much larger. . . ”. This oversight on the part of Wilson has doubtless caused all the uncertainty concerning the locality from which the nutcracker came. The following excerpts from Lewis’ Journal (*loc. cit.*) prove beyond doubt that it was the nutcracker to which he alluded: “the beak of this bird is 1-½ inches long, is proportionately large, black and of a form which characterizes this genus. . . it [i. e., the bird] is about the size and somewhat the form of the Jaybird tho’ rather rounder or more full in the body. . . the head neck and body of this [p. 76] bird are of a dove colour [in all probability an immature bird]. the wings are black except the extremities of six large f[e]athers [brackets and letter inserted

by Thwaites] occupying the middle joint of the wing which are white. . . . the two feathers in the center of the tail are black as are the two adjacent feathers for half their width the ballance are of a pure white." Clark's description (pp. 82-83) is almost identical.

Western Tanager.—The type specimen of this species was also collected by Lewis and Clark near their Clearwater Camp and a detailed description was entered by Lewis (Journals, 5, 1905, p. 111), June 6, 1806, excerpts from which follow: "We meet with a beautifull little bird in this neighbourhood about the size and somewhat the shape of the large sparrow. . . the plumage is remarkably delicate; that of the neck and head is of a fine orange yellow and red. . . the breast, the sides, rump. . . are of a fine orange yellow. the tail, back and wings are black. . .".

The A. O. U. Check-list (p. 311) lists the type locality of this species as: "(Prairies of the Missouri—mouth of Lolo Creek Fork of Clearwater River, western Idaho.)" This locality is some twelve miles to the northwest of Lewis and Clark's camp. We grant the mouth of Lolo Creek to be within possible range of their hunting activities, but since the immediate vicinity of their camp was suitable to these birds, and since no mention is made any place in their Journals of anyone hunting in that locality, it seems more probable that the specimens of this, as well as the other two species, were taken in the immediate environs of their camp.

To summarize:

1. From May 13 to June 10, 1806, Lewis and Clark were encamped on the east side of the Clearwater River about two miles north of the present town of Kamiah, Idaho.
2. While encamped at this place, three species of birds were collected and preserved, all of which were later described by Alexander Wilson from specimens in hand.
3. The immediate vicinity of their camp presented habitats suited to all three species.
4. No records are available elsewhere in their Journals relating to the taking of these birds at any different locality.

Therefore, on the basis of the above information, it seems necessary to designate the type locality for each of these three species, namely, Lewis Woodpecker, Clark Nutcracker, and Western Tanager, as: About two miles north of Kamiah, Idaho County, Idaho.

Upon the return of the Expedition, the ornithological specimens were deposited in Peale's Museum, Philadelphia. With the decline and disintegration of that institution, the specimens were scattered, some of which later appeared in Boston and were acquired by Charles J. Maynard. Among these was a specimen of the Lewis Woodpecker, without much doubt, an original, and in all probability the only specimen out of the collection made by Lewis and Clark still extant. (See Journals, 6, 1905, p. 121, footnote of a communication from Witmer Stone.) What is now considered the type specimen of the Lewis Woodpecker is listed by Bangs (*loc. cit.*) as no. 67,854 in the Museum of Comparative Zoology, and is, perhaps, the same specimen to which Dr. Stone referred. The type specimens of the other two species, in all probability, are lost. (See Stone, Proc. Acad. Nat. Sci. Philadelphia, pt. 1, 1899, p. 11.)

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