

In conclusion, it now seems clear that the Cañon Wrens from west of Texas cannot with any degree of consistency be divided into races. *Punctulatus* is not separable from *conspersus*, and since the latter is the older name, *punctulatus* goes into synonymy under that name; *polioptilus* also. While selected individuals from the two areas may differ pronouncedly from one another, this condition may be attributed to extreme individual variation. Erroneous conclusions are liable to be drawn unless birds of the same sex, age and state of wear are compared, and allowances made for an apparent differential rate of wear and fading under different climates.

There are thus but two recognizable forms of *Catherpes* within the United States, as follows: *Catherpes mexicanus albifrons* (Giraud), ranging across the Mexican line into southwestern Texas, near the mouth of the Pecos River; and *Catherpes mexicanus conspersus* Ridgway, whose range may be defined approximately as the Rocky Mountain region, the Great Basin, and the Pacific states, and west from western Texas to southern California and south through Lower California.

Finally, it should be pointed out that we are not alone in the above conclusions. Willett, in his recently "Revised List of the Birds of Southwestern California" (Pacific Coast Avifauna No. 21, 1933, p. 127), stated that he could not find any differentiating characters between *conspersus* and *punctulatus*. Hellmayr, in his Part VII of the "Birds of the Americas" (Field Mus. Nat. Hist., Publ. 330, Zool. Ser., 12, 1934, p. 278), remarks concerning *polioptilus* that "its recognition in nomenclature is open to serious question."

Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, Berkeley, California, January 15, 1935.

THE RANCHO LA BREA WOOD IBIS

WITH ONE ILLUSTRATION

By HILDEGARDE HOWARD

During the past year I have been going over several boxes of bones excavated from Rancho La Brea by the Southern California Academy of Sciences. This material was given to the Los Angeles Museum many years ago, but much of it was still coated with asphalt, and it had never been added to the regular museum collection.

In this material I found a fragment of mandible, a proximal end of tarsometatarsus and a complete carpometacarpus of Wood Ibis. The Wood Ibis was early recorded from Rancho La Brea by Miller (Univ. Calif. Publ., Dept. Geol. Sci., 7, 1912, p. 78). Later, in referring to this record, Miller said (Carnegie Inst. Wash. Publ. 349, 1925, pp. 73-74) that "the record was based upon the very characteristic symphyseal region of the lower jaw in the collections made by the Los Angeles High School under direction of Mr. J. Z. Gilbert. The specimen has been lost to sight, hence the record can not be reviewed in this paper with positive results. There is no doubt in the mind of the writer, however, as to the very close affinity if not identity of this fragment with the Recent *Mycteria americana*." Dr. Miller, upon seeing the mandible from the Southern California Academy excavation, is convinced that this is the specimen upon which he based his record. Since Dr. Gilbert was in charge of both the Los Angeles High School and the Southern California Academy excavations, it is not difficult to understand how confusion may have arisen regarding the collection from which the mandible came.

The specimen, as Dr. Miller said, is undoubtedly close to *Mycteria americana*. However, it is strikingly large and appears less curved than the modern species.

Though it is difficult to make exact comparison with the living form, since the mandible bears no definite mark which can be used as a point of reckoning, combined details give a fairly accurate basis of comparison. On the fossil symphysis the dorsal edges of the rami, toward the posterior end, are still parallel; they have not begun

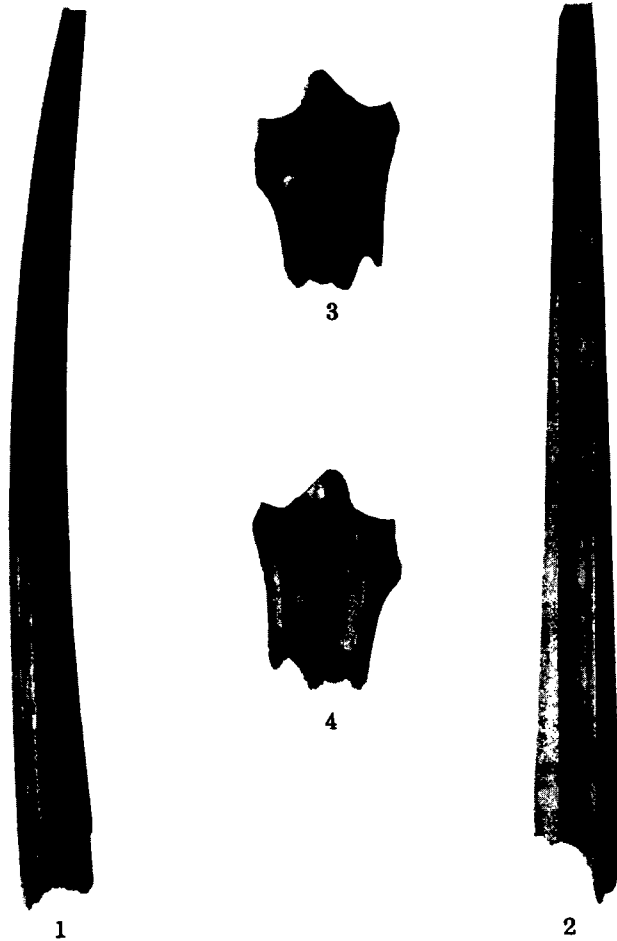


Fig. 47. 1 and 2, fragment of lower mandible of *Mycteria wetmorei*, type specimen, Los Angeles Museum no. K3527, lateral and dorsal views; 3 and 4, proximal end of tarsometatarsus (L. A. Mus. no. K3528), referred to *Mycteria wetmorei*. Natural size.

Photographs by H. Wm. Menke, retouched by John L. Ridgway.

to flare outward. In the modern species the flaring of these edges usually begins just a little more than one-third of the distance back from the tip of the mandible, with some small variation. This calculation coincides also with the faint lateral grooving near the dorsal edge, a portion of which is visible in the fossil fragment. It is estimated, therefore, that the fossil specimen represents approximately the last third of the mandible, with the exception of the extreme tip, which is missing.

In both size and curvature the fossil bone differs from the nine modern specimens available to me in the combined collections of Dr. Loye Miller and the Los Angeles Museum. Thinking that a larger series of specimens might reveal a greater

range of variation, however, I communicated with Dr. Wetmore, who offered to compare the bone with specimens in the United States National Museum collections. The result of all comparisons is the decision that the Rancho La Brea bird was a distinct species. It is therefore here described as:

***Mycteria wetmorei*, new species**

Type.—Fragment of lower mandible, coll. Los Angeles Museum no. K3527, from excavations by Southern California Academy of Sciences, north bank of "pool" near Wilshire Boulevard, Rancho La Brea, Los Angeles, California; Pleistocene age.

Description.—Similar in general characters to *Mycteria americana*, but differing as follows:

(1) Roughly from thirty to forty-five per cent larger. Available fragment 121 mm. in length, from which length to tip is estimated at 135 mm. Comparable portion of mandible of *M. americana* measures: largest, 90 mm., smallest 76 mm.

(2) Curvature slight, amounting along ventral edge to a 13.5° arc of a circle about 326 cm. in circumference. Straightest mandible of *M. americana* available, measured over comparable distance, equals a 15.5° arc of a circle about 192 cm. in circumference.

Referred material.—Proximal end of tarsometatarsus, coll. L. A. Mus. no. K3528 from same locality as type. Distinguished from members of the ciconiine subfamily by more proximal position of hypotarsus. In general characters similar to *M. americana*, differing from that species, however, in the following details:

(1) Ten per cent broader across proximal end than largest available specimen of *M. americana*.

(2) Large surface for muscle attachment distal to external cotyla at its posterior edge, facing directly laterally; this surface deflected posteriorly in *americana*.

(3) Posteriorly, region between articular facets and calcaneal ridges less excavated than in *americana* and traversed by faint, even ridge running from internal cotyla to muscle surface mentioned above (under 2); possibly comparable to this ridge in *americana* is a short, irregular, raised area extending from external cotyla past middle of bone, but not reaching muscle surface.

(4) Intercotylar prominence lower and broader than in *americana*. Height of prominence relative to breadth of articular facets, 91 per cent, as compared with 97 to 103 per cent in *americana*; breadth relative to height of prominence, 30.4 per cent, contrasted with 24 to 26.6 per cent in *americana*.

MEASUREMENTS OF TARSOMETATARSUS

Breadth prox. end across facets	Breadth of hypotarsus	Depth along external side	Intercotylar prominence Height	Breadth
18.0 mm.	11.9 mm.	19.3 mm.	16.4 mm.	5.0 mm.

The carpometacarpus (L. A. Mus. no. K3529) may or may not belong with this species. Its size, 104.6 mm., is exceeded by large specimens of *M. americana* (Dr. Wetmore gives me a measurement of 110 mm. on one of his specimens), and there are no outstanding characters which distinguish the bone from the modern species. This element, however, is never very diagnostic; so the absence of distinguishing features is not necessarily important.

Discussion.—Several explanations present themselves regarding the occurrence of the three elements here discussed. It is significant that nowhere else in the Rancho La Brea excavations has *Mycteria* been found. The specimens in question, therefore, may represent a single individual, with exceptionally large beak, sturdy legs and small wings. On the other hand each element may have belonged to a separate individual, one of which, the carpus, may have belonged to *M. americana*, or all three to *M. wetmorei*. In the latter case the fossil species must have had considerable range in size, though perhaps less than it might seem from the extremes of large mandible and smaller carpus. I have noted in specimens of *M. americana* that the size of different elements does not vary in exact proportion throughout the skeleton.

The species name is chosen in honor of Dr. Alexander Wetmore, whose kindly interest and generous assistance in the matter of determining the correct status of this species have greatly facilitated its description.

Los Angeles Museum, Los Angeles, California, May 4, 1935.