

COMMENTS ON *ICTERUS CUCULLATUS CUCULLATUS* SWAINSON
IN THE UNITED STATES

By GEORGE MIKSCH SUTTON

On April 17, 1935, I collected a female Hooded Oriole, *Icterus cucullatus* Swainson, among scattered trees along Maravillas Creek on the Combs ranch, 13 miles south of Marathon, Brewster County, Texas. The bird had not scolded me at all, and, since I did not hear nor see another oriole in the immediate vicinity, I concluded that it was not on its nest-territory. It did not have a brood patch. The ovary measured 5x6 mm., the largest ovum being about 1.5 mm. in diameter. Josselyn Van Tyne and I identified this specimen as *Icterus cucullatus cucullatus* (see Birds of Brewster County, Texas. Misc. Publ. Mus. Zool., Univ. Mich., No. 37, 1937:92).

The only other specimen of Hooded Oriole from Brewster County, Texas, in existence, so far as I know, is a male in first breeding plumage which I collected May 18, 1935, on the Graham Ranch along the Rio Grande a mile west of the village of Boquillas (about 75 miles south of Marathon). The bird was singing brilliantly in cottonwoods not far from the river. Its testes were considerably enlarged and I believe it had established a nest-territory, although I did not, admittedly, see nor hear a female anywhere in the vicinity. Dr. Van Tyne and I felt uncertain about the subspecific identification of this specimen, so we sent it to Harry C. Oberholser, who pronounced it *Icterus cucullatus nelsoni* Ridgway (*ibid.*).

Since the publication of these findings, *Icterus cucullatus cucullatus* has again been recorded in Texas—an adult male collected at Del Rio, in Val Verde County (see Burleigh and Lowery, Auk, 58, 1941:101). This specimen I have not examined, but both Burleigh and Lowery have had considerable experience with the nominate race of this oriole in Mexico and I feel sure that their identification was correct.

Since the A.O.U. Committee on Classification and Nomenclature has not listed *Icterus cucullatus cucullatus* in any of its recent supplements to the Check-list of North American Birds, and since female Hooded Orioles are, perhaps, less easy to identify subspecifically than adult males, I deemed it advisable to re-examine the female specimen from Marathon, Texas, referred to above, and to compare it directly with recently collected material from Tamaulipas and Nuevo Leon. W. E. Clyde Todd was good enough to send the specimen (GMS 6067) from the Carnegie Museum; Kenneth C. Parkes sent me all the Hooded Orioles (20 specimens) from the Louis Agassiz Fuertes Memorial Bird Collection at Cornell University; and I assembled all the Hooded Orioles available in Ann Arbor (from the University of Michigan Museum of Zoology, Max Minor Peet, and Sutton collections).

A surprising fact about the extensive series (162 specimens) thus amassed is that there are only 4 female *Icterus cucullatus cucullatus* from Mexico in the lot. As a series, these four birds stand out instantly from females of the races *nelsoni*, *sennetti*, *californicus*, and *trochiloides* (there are no female *restrictus* in the series) by reason of the strongly orange tone of the under parts, even the least richly colored of them, a specimen taken June 7, 1939, at Linares, Nuevo Leon (UMMZ 101012) being more orange on the breast and lower throat than the most richly colored female *sennetti*. They are more orange in tone below and grayer on the sides than female *igneus* from Yucatan and Campeche, some females of that race having a veiled gray throat-patch occupying about the position of the black throat-patch of the adult male.

The female from Marathon, Texas, is strikingly orange below—richer in general effect than any of the four Mexican females just referred to. The wing-length (83 mm.) and tail-length (88.5 mm.) of this bird further indicate the nominate race, Ridgway's aver-

age for 3 female *cucullatus* being: wing, 81, tail, 87.4; while his average for 5 female *sennetti* is: wing, 79.5, tail, 86.4, and for 4 female *nelsoni*: wing, 81.8, tail, 82 (Birds of North and Middle America, part 2, 1902:288-290). A female *cucullatus* from Monterrey, Nuevo Leon, in my own collection (GMS 8476) measures: wing, 81, tail, 86. A female *cucullatus* from Sabinas, Coahuila, in the Peet collection measures: wing, 81.5, tail, 90.5. The female *cucullatus* from Linares, Nuevo Leon, measures: wing, 78, tail, 81.5. This bird is too orange below and too gray on the flanks for either *sennetti* or *nelsoni* despite its shortness of wing and tail.

I am convinced that *I. c. cucullatus* should be added to the A.O.U. Check-list. How frequently the bird ranges into western Texas is, of course, a question. The taking of the singing subadult male "*nelsoni*" at Boquillas would appear at first glance to prove that the breeding form of the region is *nelsoni*. But this specimen should be compared directly with male *cucullatus* in first breeding plumage. The probability is that two or three races of the Hooded Oriole meet and intermingle in southwestern Texas—*nelsoni* ranging eastward by way of "southwestern New Mexico" (see Florence Merriam Bailey, Birds of New Mexico, 1928:652); *cucullatus* ranging northward through Nuevo Leon and Coahuila; and *sennetti* making its way up the Rio Grande Valley from the Brownsville-Matamoros region.

Although *sennetti* is said to breed in Nuevo Leon and Coahuila (Hellmayr, Cat. Birds Amer., Part X, 1937:149), I have not thus far handled specimens from either of those states which I would call *sennetti*. Nuevo Leon specimens before me (several males and 2 females from Monterrey and Linares) are all *cucullatus*. An interesting lot of 7 specimens in the Peet collection taken at Sabinas, Coahuila, by H. H. Kimball, are clearly *cucullatus*, all of them, especially the female and subadult males, being too richly colored below and too long-winged and long-tailed for that race. The 4 adult males measure: wing, 84-87 (85.5); tail, 88.5 (badly worn)-97 (94). The subadult males measure: wing, 82.5, 85.5; tail, 84.5, 88 (both worn).

As for Tamaulipas birds, those which nest in the northeastern part of the state are *sennetti*, of course; but I suspect that this race ranges well to the south of Brownsville along the coast, perhaps as far as Tampico. An adult male specimen (Cornell University 17611) collected by Louis Agassiz Fuertes along the Rio Tamesi, 35 miles northwest of Tampico, near the village of Paso del Haba, on April 17, 1910, may well have been breeding in that region. On the original label is an outline sketch, drawn in ink by Fuertes himself, of the considerably enlarged testes. The wing of this specimen measures 86 mm., the tail, 91. The bird is slightly more richly colored below than topotypical adult male *sennetti*, but is not nearly so reddish orange in tone as *cucullatus* from Monterrey and Linares, Nuevo Leon, and from the Gomez Farias district of southwestern Tamaulipas. This individual might possibly have been a transient on its way north; but along the Rio Sabinas (roughly 100 miles inland, and at a slightly more northerly latitude from Tampico) my party found the Hooded Oriole paired and nesting as early as April 1, 1941, and by that date the migration of the species apparently had ceased there (Sutton and Pettingill, Auk, 59, 1942:30).

At this writing, it appears to me that the nominate race of *Icterus cucullatus* is an inland form which ranges northward to the south edge of western Texas; and that *sennetti* occurs in Texas only in the Lower Rio Grande Valley, its breeding range otherwise being the coastal plain between Matamoros and Tampico, and northern Tamaulipas, and (possibly) parts of extreme northern Nuevo Leon and Coahuila lying just to the south of the Rio Grande.

Museum of Zoology, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan, February 9, 1948.