

FROM FIELD AND STUDY

The Baer Pochard, a Bird New to the North American Fauna.—Over a hundred years ago the United States Exploring Expedition under Capt. Wilkes made an extensive stay along the coasts of Oregon, and even sent a party inland a very considerable distance in western Oregon and northern California. Among the birds collected in Oregon were what were subsequently identified as a pair of Ring-necked Ducks, then called *Fuligula ruftorques* Bonaparte. The supposed female of this pair is specimen 12773 of the United States National Museum's collection, and it turns out to be, not of this species at all, but an immature, unsexed, example of the Baer Pochard, *Aythya baeri* (Radde). For about a century it has reposed in the study collections at Washington under a false name and in a drawer with specimens of the species to which it had been erroneously relegated. The fact that it was in immature plumage, was not sexed, and had no exact locality or date, and the fact that its diagnostic white under tail coverts were hidden by the stretched webs of its crossed feet, probably led to its being left unstudied by the long line of ornithologists who in the past hundred years have pored over the material in the National Museum. The male of the pair (U.S.N.M. no. 12771) is no longer to be found.

The discovery of this specimen came about when Father Antonio Olivares, a young Colombian priest, who has been assisting me in his spare time as a way of learning American museum techniques and methods, began to assemble all the Ring-necked Ducks for measuring. He noted that it was different from any of the other examples and brought it to my attention. Examination of specimens and literature made it seem evident that it was really *Aythya baeri*. However, the series of this duck immediately available did not include young birds exactly like this one. Thanks to the kindness of Dr. John T. Zimmer, Mr. James L. Peters, and Mr. Boardman Conover, it has been possible to compare our bird with a number of similar, young birds from the collections in New York, Cambridge and Chicago. They are one and the same form.

The identification of no. 12773 is, thus, definitely *Aythya baeri*. The next problem is the locality. All that the label tells us on this point is the one word "Oregon." It is true, of course, that the United States Exploring Expedition went to many parts of the world, but, it so happens, to none in which this duck is known to occur (the species was not even known at the time). The range of the Baer Pochard is in eastern Asia from Transbaikalia and Manchuria to the lower Ussuri and the Amur, and, in winter, from China, Korea, and Japan south to Assam, Burma, and Siam. It follows from this that the possibility of the specimen having been collected on the western side of the Pacific and inadvertently labeled "Oregon" is too slight to be seriously considered, as the expedition did not touch any of these countries. It is unfortunate that the locality "Oregon" is not more definite as the concept of "Oregon Territory" as shown in the atlas of the reports of the expedition indicates that by it was meant what we now know as Oregon, Washington, Vancouver Island, and the southern part of the mainland of British Columbia. It may be pointed out, parenthetically, that neither Gabrielson and Jewett (*Birds of Oregon*, 1940) nor Brooks and Swarth (*Distr. List of Birds of British Columbia*, 1925) make any mention of the work of this expedition. The former pair of authors really missed a good number of "Oregon" records substantiated by specimens still preserved in the United States National Museum.

In corroboration of the correctness of "Oregon" as the locality, we may note that Titian R. Peale, who collected the specimen, stated (*U. S. Exploring Expedition*, 8, *Mammalia and Ornithology*, 1848: 253, under "*Fuligula ruftorques*") that, "We obtained specimens in Oregon, but they did not appear to be common there." The only specimens mentioned are two from Oregon, and no other duck, with which the present specimen might have been confused, is listed from elsewhere than the Oregon area. Cassin's later report on the collection (1858) adds nothing to Peale's earlier statement.

The fact that this early example of the Baer Pochard remained unnoticed for so long is in itself not without its good side, for had it been correctly diagnosed prior to 1863, when Radde (*Reisen Süd. von Ost-Sibirien*, 2, 1863:376, pl. 15) described the species from southeastern Siberia, we might well have had an unfortunate type locality in America for a bird that ordinarily occurs only in eastern Asia.

The occurrence of the Baer Pochard in western North America calls to mind the fact that it has also been found to "stray," in the opposite direction, as far as England: Tring Reservoirs (*Bull. Brit.*

Ornith. Club, 12, 1902:25) and Trent (Brit. Birds, 7, 1914:268). These records are noted by Witherby *et al.* (Handbook British Birds, 3, 1939:296) with the following comment: "These may have been wild birds, but since 'water-fowl' are kept in semicaptivity sometimes without even being properly identified, it seems inadvisable to admit this duck to the list . . ." At the time our specimen was taken, it is safe to say there were no estates with semicaptive waterfowl within even a very great distance of "Oregon."

The specimen is somewhat foxed and the skin apparently was stretched over too large an amount of stuffing originally, causing the brown basal areas of the feathers of the underparts to show more extensively than in any of the others with which it has been compared and giving it a more brownish, less whitish ventral aspect.—HERBERT FRIEDMANN, *United States National Museum, Washington, D.C., July 26, 1948.*

The Dickcissel in California.—The Dickcissel, a species indigenous to the midwestern United States, has not previously been recorded in California. There are, however, records of accidental occurrence in New Mexico, Arizona, and Lower California.

On September 29, 1948, Mrs. Norris Kittinger of Santa Monica, California, inquired by telephone about the identify of a strange bird which had come to her feeding station. I was unable to identify the bird from her preliminary description and called her again the following day. At this time she informed me that not only was the bird still there but that she had succeeded in capturing it alive. According to her, the bird first made its appearance at 5 p.m. on September 29, 1948. It was observed sitting near the feed box and did not appear to be wary, but it refused to enter the box until all the other birds had left. It preened itself for a while and then entered and fed.

On September 30, 1948, at Mrs. Kittinger's request, I went to Santa Monica and closely examined the captive. It proved to be an adult male Dickcissel (*Spiza americana*) in beautiful, fresh-fall plumage. Its legs were fresh and clean in appearance and gave no sign of having been confined in an aviary. The bird was extremely wild and refused to sit still upon the perch for even a second, another characteristic which would seem to indicate that it had not previously been confined in a cage. The freshly molted plumage was typical of the male of the species except that the black throat patch, instead of being very pronounced, consisted of a scattering of black-tipped feathers. The supraocular stripe was very yellow. During the course of my half-hour study of the bird, it hopped continuously from one perch to another, uttering a solitary, sharp chirping note every few seconds.

On October 9, 1948, Mrs. Kittinger informed me that she had changed her mind about keeping the bird and had liberated it, thus closing the story of the first Dickcissel for California.—KENNETH E. STAGER, *Los Angeles Museum, Los Angeles, California, October 14, 1948.*

Eye-color of the Green Jay in Mexico.—Three Green Jays (*Xanthoura yncas*) which we collected in Mexico in 1947 throw further light on the distribution of the yellow-eyed and brown-eyed forms discussed by Sutton (Condor, 49, 1947:196-198). A male which Edwards took approximately four miles northwest of Potrero, which is near Córdoba, Veracruz, had bright yellow irides. This substantiates Sutton's belief that Fuertes may have had experience with yellow-eyed Green Jays in the vicinity of Córdoba. In plumage coloration our Potrero specimen is intermediate between *X. y. luxuosa* and *vivida*. Also yellow-eyed was a male which Edwards collected in Chiapas near the Hacienda Monserrate, about forty miles north of Arriaga. It appears to be *vivida* in the decidedly yellowish tinge of the belly and reduced amount of green in the under tail coverts.

Lea secured a brown-eyed male along the Rio Sabinas near Gómez Farias, Tamaulipas. It is the least yellowish of our three specimens, appearing to be typical *luxuosa*. Individuals which we were able to observe closely in the field at this locality were all dark-brown eyed.—ROBERT B. LEA, *Northwestern University Medical School, Chicago, Illinois*, and ERNEST P. EDWARDS, *Laboratory of Ornithology, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York, July 24, 1948.*

The Oven-bird and the American Redstart in Imperial Valley, California.—A female Oven-bird (*Seiurus aurocapillus*) was collected by us on October 3, 1948, near the southern end of Salton Sea, Imperial County, California. The bird was first observed in a tamarisk tree. The specimen is now no. 676 in the Cardiff Collection and is the third thus far taken in southern California.