

## NOTES ON MEXICAN BIRDS FROM THE STATES OF DURANGO AND ZACATECAS

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Between June 20 and July 31, 1950, the senior author collected birds and mammals for the California Academy of Sciences in the states of Durango and Zacatecas, México. The areas in which field work was carried on were in the southern part of the Sierra Madre Occidental Biotic Province as defined by Goldman and Moore (1946:349) except for a few observations in the Chihuahua-Zacatecas Province in eastern Durango. Four or five of the major vegetation types as mapped by Leopold (1950) were involved.

Since no comprehensive report has ever been published on the birds of Zacatecas and none on the birds of Durango since W. DeWitt Miller's report (1906) on the Batty collection, comments on the distribution and taxonomy of certain species obtained or seen in these two states in 1950 seem warranted. An asterisk indicates that a record is a new one for the state of Zacatecas; a dagger indicates a new record for the state of Durango.

Lerdo is a city in central eastern Durango; observations near here were made in desert valleys to the south and east, where the vegetation is chiefly dwarf agave, creosote bush, and mesquite and the elevations a little over 4000 feet. Yerbanis and Tmalpan (=Tapona) are towns on the Lerdo-Durango highway, in the mesquite-grassland plains. The city of Durango is on a mesquite-grassland plain at an elevation of 6200 feet. Mezquital, 44 miles south of Durango City at 4700 feet, is in an arid, near-tropical valley heavily grown to thorny scrub.

The next seven localities are in the Sierra Madre Occidental, west of Durango City. Arroyo Mimbres is in the yellow pines, but along the bottom of the arroyo, at 7600 feet, are a good many large oaks. El Salto is an old, but still active, lumber mill town on the 8300-foot plateau and ten miles northeast is Coyotes, another mill town. The country around El Salto and Coyotes has been logged over and burned many times but still supports a good growth of moderate-sized yellow pines, with a ground cover of sparse grass, or, in spots, of a dwarf *Vaccinium*; several open areas become wet meadows late in the rainy season in July and are heavily covered with tall grass; some rocky hill-sides support a growth of large, spreading oaks. Quebrada del San Juan is a deep canyon 19 miles north-northeast of El Salto, where the logging road descends to 6500 feet; collecting was done in a cool, fir-grown ravine on the south side of the canyon. San Luis is a lumber mill 30 miles northwest of El Salto; collecting was done in a cool ravine, in fir-oak-madrone-yellow pine forest at about 8700 feet. Cerro Huehuento is the highest mountain in Durango, 10,335 feet. There is a good growth of fir, aspen, and white pine near the top, which has not been logged. Cerro Prieto, 10,171 feet, and 45 miles west-northwest of Durango City, has been logged to the summit, but there remains a patch of fir, aspen, and white pine on the north slope, and the yellow pines are regrowing well on the other slopes.

In the extreme northern part of the state of Zacatecas, collecting was done on Cerro Pachon, 11,700 feet (U. S. Air Force Chart, 1949 edition), just east of the nearly abandoned town of Chalchuites. The lower slopes of the mountain are grassy, with some mesquite and juniper, but above 9000 feet there is a dense growth of oak, manzanita, and madrone. About the peak there was formerly a pine forest, and even a few firs, but it was cut many years ago and only stumps and a few saplings remain. Near Sombrerete, camp was established beside a stream three miles southwest of town, at 7700 feet, in a heavily-

grazed area overgrown with mesquite and prickly-pear; all records for Sombrerete were made within a mile of this camp.

We wish to express our appreciation to Alden H. Miller of the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology for permission to use many specimens for comparison, and to record here two specimens from that collection. Thomas R. Howell checked the subspecific identity of two species of warblers for us at the Dickey Collection of the University of California at Los Angeles. James H. Maysilles and Edwin Steiner were helpful traveling and camping companions. We appreciate the courtesy shown by officials of the Mexican government in granting us permission to collect.

†*Falco femoralis*. Aplomado Falcon. A single individual was seen pursuing a Red-tailed Hawk over a meadow near Coyotes on June 27.

†*Polyborus cheriway*. Caracara. One was seen beside the highway eight miles west of Lerdo on July 31.

\**Callipepla squamata squamata*. Scaled Quail. Fairly common near Sombrerete; an adult male was taken on July 19. This species has been recorded from all adjacent states (Friedmann, Griscom, and Moore, 1950:73).

†*Tringa melanoleucus*. Greater Yellow-legs. One was seen wading in a wet meadow near Coyotes on July 27.

†*Larus pipixcan*. Franklin Gull. Friedmann, Griscom, and Moore (*op. cit.*: 105) list this gull in México as "A transient, rarely alighting, great flocks passing overhead in late April, and again in August and September." It is of interest, therefore, to record an adult male taken on June 26, near Coyotes, as it was on the ground in a short-grass meadow surrounded by small pines. The testes were 4 mm. long; the nuptial plumage is complete except for the outermost primaries.

†\**Tyto alba*. Barn Owl. In Durango, one was seen by daylight on July 6, ten miles west of Lerdo. Very early the next morning, four were seen by the senior author while driving back from the hills about ten miles south of Lerdo. In Zacatecas, one was seen or heard each evening from July 19 to 23, near Sombrerete.

*Chordeiles minor henryi*. Nighthawk. Two breeding adults, male and female, from the pine forests of southern Durango, near the extreme southern edge of the range of the species, are less gray than any examples of *C. m. henryi* examined from Arizona and northwestern Chihuahua.

*Cypseloides niger borealis*. Black Swift. Since there are few records for this species from México the following observations in Durango seem worth recording: adult male taken from flock of four birds, July 25 near Mezquital; observed June 25 near Coyotes (one bird), July 24 six miles west of Durango City (flock of 20), July 24 near Mezquital (one bird).

†*Trogon mexicanus clarus*. Mexican Trogon. A single male was secured and several were heard calling in the fir forest on Cerro Huehuento on July 3. Although subspecific identification of males is impossible (see Griscom, 1932:57), a female in the collection of the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology from El Batel, Sinaloa, only 40 miles to the southwest, is clearly of the northern race *clarus*.

*Sayornis saya saya*. Say Phoebe. Although Miller (1906:168) records this species as breeding in Durango in May, the southern extent of its summer range given in the 1931 A. O. U. Check-list is Chihuahua and Sonora. Hellmayr (1927:59) does not mention the species as breeding on the Mexican mainland, while Davis (1945:277) suggests the possibility of its breeding in Veracruz. It is of interest to note, therefore, that on July 22 at least three nesting pairs were observed near Sombrerete. A juvenile, still being fed by the parent, was taken on that day and an adult female on the following day.

†*Corvus cryptoleucus*. White-necked Raven. On June 21 a few were seen about the irrigated areas near Lerdo and four more single birds were seen along the highway across the desert areas of eastern Durango and in the grasslands as far west as Tmalpan.

†*Sitta pygmaea chihuahuae*. Pigmy Nuthatch. An immature male was taken near Coyotes on July 28. There is another specimen in the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, taken near El Salto on March 19, 1950.

†*Telmatodytes palustris*. Long-billed Marsh Wren. In a cattail-tule marsh twelve miles northeast of Durango City, July 5 and 30, two males were singing.

*Salpinctes obsoletus*. Rock Wren. This species was common near Sombrerete where an adult male

was taken on July 13. A male in juvenal plumage, taken near Durango City, shows the dark-colored wings and gray (less buffy brown) back and pileum claimed by Ridgway (1904:648) for his race *notius* (= *latisfasciatus* Lichtenstein according to van Rossem, 1934:416). Comparison was made between a series of 110 juvenal-plumaged specimens of the race *obsoletus* from western North America, and five juvenal-plumaged specimens from Guerrero and Durango in the California Academy of Sciences and the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology collections, and each of the latter could easily be picked out. Whether a race which can be recognized only on the basis of juvenal plumage merits nomenclatorial recognition is open to debate.

\**Toxostoma curvirostre celsum*. Curve-billed Thrasher. Moore (1941:212 ff.) in his description of *T. c. celsum* made no comment on the subspecific identity of thrashers from Zacatecas although he indicated that the race *celsum* extended south "probably through Aguascalientes to northwestern Guanajuato and extreme northeastern Jalisco." Two adult males from near Sombrerete, taken on July 13 and 20, respectively, agree with his description of the race *celsum* and show no differences from southern Durango specimens.

†*Catharus occidentalis olivascens*. Nightingale Thrush. An adult male was taken on June 30 in the Quebrada del San Juan. Another was seen near the top of Cerro Prieto on July 10.

*Ridgwayia pinicola*. Aztec Thrush. Because of the rarity of this species in the northern part of its range, the taking of an adult male at San Luis on July 1 seems worth mentioning.

†*Vireo solitarius pinicolus*. Solitary Vireo. Although this species had previously been known from Durango, van Rossem (1934:467) recorded the race *pinicolus* south only to southern Chihuahua. Three adults taken near Coyotes on June 26, 28, and July 29 in hillside growths of oaks are clearly referable to this subspecies.

†*Vireo gilvus*. Warbling Vireo. One was seen on a rocky hillside sparsely scattered with pines and oaks on June 29 near Coyotes.

*Icteria virens auricollis*. Chat. A breeding male was taken, and several others were heard singing, in the Mezquital Valley on July 26. The specimen is slightly grayer dorsally, slightly darker on the pileum and ear coverts, and definitely longer-billed (culmen 16.5 mm.) than breeding material from southern Arizona and a bird from Guerrero taken on June 3, and contrasts strongly with a large series from California. It does not, however, differ in other measurements (wing 77, tail 80 mm.) from *auricollis*. Thomas R. Howell compared this specimen with the type of *I. v. tropicalis*. He found the latter to be much smaller than our specimen.

†*Dendroica graciae*. Grace Warbler. One was seen on June 23 and 24 in the oaks in Arroyo Mimbres.

*Geothlypis trichas chryseola*. Yellow-throat. Several were seen, and two singing males were taken, July 5 and 30, in a marsh twelve miles northeast of Durango City. The specimens differ from *chryseola* of southern Arizona in being slightly grayer on the belly and flanks, in having a narrower white frontal band which is more streaked with yellow, and in having a slightly heavier bill. Thomas R. Howell compared our specimens with two adult males of the race *riparia* (one the type). He concluded that the Durango specimens were nearer *G. t. chryseola* (see van Rossem, 1941:292, and Lea and Edwards, 1950:268).

†*Myioborus miniatus miniatus*. Red-bellied Redstart. Two singing males, one of which was collected, were seen in Quebrada del San Juan on July 1. On July 10 three singing males were seen near the top of Arro Prieto.

*Ergaticus ruber ruber*. Red Warbler. There are few records for this species in the northerly part of its range; in fact the only Durango record known to us is an old specimen in the British Museum mentioned by Sharpe (1885:406) and Ridgway (1902:760) from "Ciudad Durango" and probably actually taken high in the Sierra Madre to the west. Our records include two seen, and an immature taken, in the firs on Cerro Huehuento on July 2 and two seen there the next morning.

†*Icterus parisorum*. Scott Oriole. In Durango, one was noted on June 21 southwest of Yerbanis and one was seen on July 25, thirty miles south of Durango City at 6000 feet in scattered junipers and mesquite. In Zacatecas, a male was singing in scattered oaks at about 9700 feet on Cerro Pachon on July 14; at camp near Sombrerete one sang all morning every day from various bushes nearby and was often answered by another from a low hill two hundred yards to the north.

†*Tangavius aeneus*. Bronzed Cowbird. Two small flocks were seen near Mezquital on July 26. Earlier, a pair was seen on June 21 ten miles northeast of Durango City.

\**Guiraca caerulea eurhyncha*. Blue Grosbeak. An adult male of a mated pair was taken in scrub oaks beside open fields at 7800 feet on July 8, twenty-five miles west of Durango City. On July 16 an adult female of a mated pair was taken near Sombrerete. In addition, a few others were seen on the plains near Durango City. On the basis of comparative material examined we are inclined to concur with Amadon and Phillips (1947:580) regarding the inadvisability of recognizing *G. c. deltarhyncha* van Rossem.

*Carpodacus mexicanus*. House Finch. Moore (1939) does not list any specimens from Zacatecas. A single adult male, taken on July 23 at Sombrerete, is between the ranges of the races *coccineus*, *centralis*, and *potosinus*, as indicated by Moore (*op. cit.*: 182). In color it most closely approaches comparable specimens of *C. m. coccineus* and differs from a single male of *C. m. centralis* from Michoacán that was examined. The wing of the specimen from Zacatecas measures 81 mm., which is nearer to the averages of *C. m. potosinus* and *centralis* than to that of *coccineus*.

†*Volatinia jacarina*. Blue-black Grassquit. A pair was seen at close range in the brush fifteen miles north of Mezquital on July 25.

\**Spinus psaltria psaltria*. Arkansas Goldfinch. An adult male and female were taken on July 23 at Sombrerete.

†*Atlapetes pileatus dilutus*. Rufous-capped Sparrow. An adult female was taken at Quebrada del San Juan on July 1. This specimen, when compared with a large series of breeding adults of *A. p. pileatus* from Guerrero, is decidedly paler below. The wing measures 59 mm. which is close to the average for *A. p. dilutus* given by Sutton, Pettingill, and Lea (1942:202).

\**Pipilo fuscus*. Brown Towhee. Two adult males and an adult female were taken near Sombrerete on July 12 and 16. They are indistinguishable from a male taken five miles east of Cerro Prieto. Moore (1942:47) considered specimens from northern Durango as intermediate between the races *potosinus* and *perpallidus*. We find that these four birds from northern Zacatecas and southern Durango fall in the same category.

\**Spizella atrogularis atrogularis*. Black-chinned Sparrow. A few were seen every day at Sombrerete, July 13 to 24. An adult male was taken on July 17 and the following day a courting pair was collected.

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