

A BLACKISH RACE OF THE GRAY SEEDEATER OF NORTHERN SOUTH AMERICA

By ALDEN H. MILLER

The Gray Seedeater (*Sporophila intermedia*) occurs across northern South America from the Pacific slopes of Colombia east through Venezuela to the border area with Guiana and to Trinidad. De Schauensee in his review of the genus *Sporophila* (Proc. Acad. Nat. Sci. Phila., 114, 1952:153-196) has nicely clarified the characters of this species and particularly the separation of it on bill, foot, and mensural characters (pp. 163-164) from the very similar appearing *Sporophila schistacea* which has a geographic range extensively coincident with that of *intermedia*.

Geographic variation within the species *intermedia* has been described by Gilliard (Auk, 63, 1946:570-574) and by de Schauensee (*op. cit.* and Proc. Acad. Nat. Sci. Phila., 99, 1947:121). As a consequence four races have been proposed: *S. i. insularis* Gilliard of Trinidad, the nominate *S. i. intermedia* Cabanis of Venezuela and the northern coast of Colombia, *S. i. bogotensis* Gilliard of the Dagua Valley and upper Cauca Valley of Colombia, and *S. i. agustini* de Schauensee of the upper Magdalena Valley of Colombia. De Schauensee (*op. cit.*, 1952) does not support the separation of *insularis*, the sole distinguishing character claimed for it being the presence of whitish post-auricular patches in males; this is a character that is variable individually, as well as racially in the species, and no attempt has been made by me to evaluate the constancy of separation of *insularis* by this means. The white patches are usually absent in *S. i. intermedia*. *S. i. bogotensis* is a darker race than *S. i. intermedia*, and *agustini* is claimed to be paler than *S. i. intermedia* by de Schauensee (1952). Both *bogotensis* and *agustini* have well marked white neck patches. The material of *agustini* that I have seen is not paler than *S. i. intermedia*; however, the separation of this race is doubtless valid on the combination of characters originally ascribed to it by de Schauensee (1947).

The geographic variation across the east-west range of *Sporophila intermedia* known to this point may be summarized, then, as consisting of greater and more consistent development of white neck patches in males at the eastern and western ends of the range, increase in depth of gray in the western extremity in the mountains, and persistence of pale gray in the upper Magdalena Valley coupled with the presence of neck patches. The differentiation in values of the gray of males is generally slight but quite in keeping with that found in many geographic races of birds. Accordingly it was distinctly surprising to find that in the lower humid tropics on the Pacific coast of Colombia a strikingly blackish representative of the species occurs. This form is so much darker than most *bogotensis* that doubt was entertained for some time that it belonged to the same species. However, this Pacific tropical form has all the essential features of *Sporophila intermedia*, especially in contradistinction to *Sporophila schistacea* of this same district, namely, deep maxilla (4.0-4.5 mm.), wing less than 60 mm., dark-colored nails, and relatively long tarsus. Not only is this coastal race darker but it shows more patterning contrast about the head than do other members of the species. Moreover, the pale belly is set off more distinctly. This race may be known as

Sporophila intermedia anchicayae new subspecies

Type.—Adult male, no. 139077 Mus. Vert. Zool., taken on Río Anchicayá, 950 feet, Valle, Colombia, on April 25, 1958, by A. H. Miller; weight 12.0 gm.; testis 6 mm. long; original no. 9872.

Diagnosis.—Male differs from *S. i. bogotensis* in blackish rather than gray upper parts (Blackish Slate rather than Deep Neutral Gray of Ridgway). Light neck patches purer white. White and light gray of throat developed as chin stripe, extending along malar regions and joining medially to encircle



Fig. 1. *Sporophila intermedia anchicayae*. Drawing by Gene M. Christman.

gray chin area (see fig. 1). Belly and under tail coverts more extensively white and more sharply contrasted with dark neutral gray of breast. Rump area with a few white-tipped feathers rather than uniform gray.

Range.—Tropical Zone of the Pacific coast of Colombia. Thus far known only from the valley of the Río Anchicayá, where it ranges up to at least 1500 feet elevation.

This new seedeater was first encountered at the type locality which is approximately 40 kilometers southeast of Buenaventura on the Río Anchicayá. Here on April 25 in the cleared edge of the highway on a brushy knoll a male and female were taken in close proximity; probably they were a pair. The male was singing and had fully enlarged testes. The female had an ovum $1\frac{1}{2}$ mm. in diameter and was judged to be approaching breeding state; she obviously had not yet laid. Another adult male was taken at the 1500-foot level in the river valley on December 27; testis 6 mm., weight 11.4 gm. It was in a grassy tangle in an orchard. A fourth specimen, a female, probably of this form, was taken at 3200 feet in a clearing. Since the females of this species show little or no racial differentiation, this fourth bird cannot critically contribute to our knowledge of the range and characters of *anchicayae* although on the basis of geographic and zonal considerations it may best be referred to it.

The adult male from the 1500-foot level is slightly less dark than the type but it has a broader white collar and more white flecking on the rump. The bill color of the males shows some of the yellow characteristic of the species but in the type this is confined to the median area of the mandible and in the other adult male it is developed only on the mandible and in median longitudinal streaks on the maxilla. *Anchicayae* will probably prove to have a general reduction of yellow on the bill compared to other races; this character apparently has some individual, and perhaps age, variation. The female from the type locality has only a trace of yellow on the mandible. The female from 3200 feet, however, shows only slightly less yellow than the male from 1500 feet. Females of the species generally have less completely and consistently yellow bills than males.

The plumage of the topotypic female is a more vivid, intense green above and below than any females of *bogotensis* I have seen. The female from 3200 feet is grayer and does not show this difference. Apparently in this species grayer and more yellowish variants can occur in females of the same population. It is probable, however, that females of *anchicayae* at low zonal levels are darker and more greenish than in *bogotensis* although this is far from an established fact because of the limited material at hand.

Measurements of *anchicayae* do not seem to show any differences from those of the other races. For record purposes, in relation especially to species allocation, the dimensions of the specimens of *anchicayae* are:

	Wing	Tail	Maxillary depth at nostril	Tarsus
♂ type, 139077	55.0	47.8	4.0	15.2
♂ 139079	56.9	47.6	4.5	15.2
♀ topotype 139078	54.3	42.3	4.1	16.1
♀ 3200-foot level, 139080	55.6	47.4	4.2	15.3

The west slopes of the Andes east of Buenaventura rise rapidly and in the Dagua Valley near the crest a comparatively dry area occurs protected from the humid air masses of the coast by an intervening northwesterly directed spur ridge. This situation was clearly described by Chapman (Bull. Am. Mus. Nat. Hist., 36, 1917:21-24) from his early field work in this area. The Gray Seedeaters of this semiarid valley formed the basis for Gilliard's description of *bogotensis*, the type having been selected from Lomitas. This locality, although described as in the humid forest of the Subtropical Zone, is in fact not as humid as this would imply and is vastly less warm and moist than the tropical areas along the Río Anchicayá west of the spur ridge only 40 kilometers away in an air line.

For comparison I have five examples of nearly topotypical *bogotensis* which I took along the crest of the western Andes on the rim of the Dagua Valley. Also the specimens of *anchicayae* have been extensively compared with seedeaters in the collections of the United States National Museum and the American Museum of Natural History, including the type of *bogotensis*. Grateful acknowledgment is made of the courtesies extended by Herbert Friedmann and Dean Amadon who are in charge of these collections and to James Bond of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia for the loan of examples of western Colombian seedeaters.

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