

THE CONDOR

VOLUME 67

JANUARY-FEBRUARY, 1965

NUMBER 1

A NEW RACE OF THE SPOTTED NIGHTINGALE-THRUSH FROM OAXACA, MEXICO

By ALLAN R. PHILLIPS and WARREN ROOK

The long history of exploration in México shows few instances of ornithologists residing for long in any one part of the country. The few resident naturalists usually lived in the capital or in the state of Veracruz. Isolated workers have dwelt in Mazatlán (Sinaloa), Guanajuato, Temascaltepec (México), Chilpancingo (Guerrero), and Yucatán. An unusual concentration of ornithologists has favored southern Chiapas and nearby regions, especially adjacent Oaxaca. Here, after the classic work of Hernández, Deppe, and the younger Bullock, the already noted naturalist A. L. François Sumichrast settled down and married in the Hacienda Santa Efigenia, near Tapanatepec. He discovered several more novelties in these lowlands, including the Rosita Bunting (*Passerina rositae*) and the odd flycatcher *Deltarhynchus flammulatus*. He also collected higher up, taking the Ocellated Quail (*Cyrtonyx ocellatus*). The region's fame attracted additional ornithologists; W. W. Brown, Jr. (Bangs and Peters, 1928), Chester C. Lamb, W. J. Schaldach, Jr., and others worked there recently. Yet nobody found much that Sumichrast had overlooked. Thus Tapanatepec's novelties seemed exhausted.

Rook and Ronald J. Galley returned in 1963 to Rancho Sol y Luna, a major part of the old Hacienda. They hiked west and north for nine hours, packing their equipment up the canyons and pine-oak ridges past the twin lakes and the head of "El Novillero." Reaching the relatively level "La Cumbre," they camped by a spring from May 9 to 11. Then they dropped into an adjacent watered canyon with tree ferns and such cloud-forest birds as Black Chachalacas (*Penelopina nigra*), Quetzals (*Pharomachrus mocino*), and Emerald Toucanets (*Aulacorhynchus prasinus*). After camping in an upper branch of this canyon, they proceeded farther southeast to a second, so deep and steep that the sun filtered into it through the leaves for but a few hours per day. Here, from May 16 to 20, they found much the same birds and, in addition, a colony of the Spotted or Gould Nightingale-Thrush (*Catharus dryas*). This thrush, new to Oaxaca, had never been found so far west previously. It was not numerous, but a few were seen and heard daily in an area of about one and one-half kilometers. A total of four was taken. Search in other parts of this canyon was unsuccessful.

In Mexico City the authors and Robert W. Dickerman compared these four with four spring birds taken in 1960 and 1961 in eastern Chiapas (Phillips Collection). These were not only of recent vintage but had been compared to a copy of Ridgway (1912) within one to four months of the dates of collection. One male also had notes on the fresh colors of the soft parts. We at once (May 26, 1963) compared the whole lot to the same copy of Ridgway, thus avoiding the pitfalls of variation between different copies of this classic work and of the notoriously rapid fading of the colors of this thrush.

The Oaxacan birds prove to be quite distinct from even the least faded of the 1960-1961 series. Their bright colors are readily appreciated in Eckelberry's plate (frontispiece). They may be known as

***Catharus dryas harrisoni* new subspecies**

Type and paratypes.—Western Foundation of Vertebrate Zoology, nos. 11,037 (type), 11,035, 11,036, and 11,038; ♀, ♀, ♂, ♂, respectively, all from "Arroyo de los Pajareros," below "La Cumbre," Rancho Sol y Luna, west-northwest of Tapanatepec, Oaxaca, May 16–18, 1963. Collected by Warren Rook, original nos. 2592, 2580, 2564, and 2591.

Diagnosis.—The brightest race known of *Catharus dryas*. Nearly as large as *C. d. ovandensis* Brodkorb (1938) of southeastern Chiapas, but bill and eyelids (in both sexes in May) Brazil Red (capitalized color terms are from Ridgway, 1912); tarsi and toes usually English Red to Mars Orange (no. 11,036 ♂ is paler than the latter); anterior underparts near Light Cadmium, but somewhat approaching Deep Chrome; crissum also slightly brighter, near pale Apricot Yellow (except in no. 11,035 ♀, which is very worn and faded there); the yellowish tinge of the nape forms a more definite "collar." Back and rump not compared to topotypical *ovandensis*, but more olivaceous (less slaty) than birds of extreme eastern Chiapas (yet slatier than plate 2, fig. 2, of Salvin and Godman, 1879–1904). Chest spots, although of about the same color as in other populations, less conspicuous due to darker background and, on average, smaller in size.

Distribution.—Known only from the type locality.

Measurements.—Little importance should be attached to the measurements, since they were made by four different persons; Brodkorb does not specify which wing measurement he used.

Remarks.—We take very great pleasure in dedicating this handsome bird to Ed N. Harrison, ornithologist and oologist, in recognition of his unfailing help, friendship, and encouragement.

There is considerable variation, perhaps geographic, in *Catharus dryas* from easternmost Chiapas. Thus bills range from Orange Rufous to Mars Orange (or even from the latter toward Flame Scarlet or English Red). The tarsi may differ on outer and inner surfaces; colors visible are Mars Yellow, paler than Raw Sienna (♀), pale Yellow Ocher, and bright Tawny. The chest, to be sure, is near Light Cadmium in males, but it is either of a different depth of color (nearer Buff-Yellow) or approaches strongly another hue (Deep Chrome or Apricot Yellow); the lone female is a rather pale Apricot Yellow. The back and rump are near Dark Olive or varying thence toward Deep Olive; to us, they seem just intermediate between the two colors mentioned by Brodkorb, "buffy citrine-drab" and "slate-color." The complete absence of the olive-brown described by Blake (1953:430) indicates that Brodkorb probably errs in supposing that the upperparts do not "fox." Foxing is the general rule in all *Catharus* (including the northern thrushes, "*Hylocichla*") known to us; by no means is it a special case affecting only certain specimens, as might be inferred from Bond (1963:384). It cannot be ignored (see Phillips, 1962) as has so commonly been done.

The opposite extreme from *harrisoni*, among specimens seen by us, is a female from northeastern Guatemala (near Usumatlán, Zacapa, December 5, 1958), examined by Phillips on August 30, 1960, through the courtesy of the authorities of the Museum of Comparative Zoology. Admittedly the copy of Ridgway (1912) lent to him there may differ from others used, but it was obvious that this female was not really yellow at all. The breast was paler than Light Buff, and the chest, anal region, and crissum was between that color and Warm Buff (or perhaps a bit darker than Maize Yellow). The throat was whitish. The back was between Dark Grayish Olive and Olivaceous Black.

Catharus dryas seems to be a permanent resident in every region where it is found, although winter specimens are still scarce in collections. If the variations mentioned were partly due to its having a dull basic (winter) and bright alternate (nuptial) plumage, this would be exceptional in a thrush. Thrushes generally, even aberrant genera like *Sialia* and *Myadestes*, have no prealternate molt (prenuptial).

TABLE 1
MEASUREMENTS IN MILLIMETERS OF SOME RACES OF *Catharus dryas*

	Males		Females	
	Wing (chord)	Tail	Wing (chord)	Tail
<i>harrisoni</i> (Rook)	100, 103	77, 78	94, 96	75
<i>ovandensis</i> (ex Brodkorb, 1938)	103-108	77.5	100-102.5	74.5-76.5
Volcán Tacaná, Chiapas (Phillips)	100	77.7	93.6	70.7
Guatemala, unstated localities (ex Ridgway, 1907, and Brodkorb, 1938)	96-102	71-75.5	92-93	61-65
Comitán region, Chiapas (Phillips and Rook)	97-98*	72.8-79	91*	67*

* Another specimen from the Comitán region, marked "♀," wing 100, tail 73 mm., is omitted due to our doubts that it is correctly sexed.

In *Catharus* age and seasonal variations affect most prominently the colors of the soft parts, particularly the bill of *C. aurantiirostris*. These are quite uniform in freshly killed birds in late spring, as far as we are aware. In *Catharus dryas* the variation between populations is extraordinary. Nevertheless we doubt that the orange bill of *ovandensis* distinguishes that race from nominate *dryas* of Guatemala. The Guatemalan skins seen by Brodkorb were all over 9 years old (museum age), and most of them were far older. As noted earlier, fresh specimens from both the northern and southern parts of the México-Guatemala border also have the bill and eyelids orange, not "dull red" as in Brodkorb's older Guatemalan skins.

The underparts of *ovandensis* are presumably Apricot Yellow; Brodkorb records a Guatemalan skin (unstated age, sex, season, and locality) as being noted by Griscom, presumably when recently taken, as of that color, and claims no difference in this respect between *ovandensis* and *dryas*. But of course he could make no satisfactory comparisons with his material.

LITERATURE CITED

- Bangs, O., and Peters, J. L.
1928. A collection of birds from Oaxaca. Bull. Mus. Comp. Zool., 68:385-404.
- Blake, E. R.
1953. Birds of Mexico (Univ. Chicago Press, Chicago).
- Bond, G. M.
1963. Geographic variation in the thrush *Hylocichla ustulata*. Proc. U. S. Nat. Mus., 114: 373-387.
- Brodkorb, P.
1938. New birds from the District of Soconusco, Chiapas. Occas. Papers Mus. Zool., Univ. Mich. No. 369:1-7.
- Phillips, A. R.
1962. Notas sistemáticas sobre aves mexicanas. I. Anales Inst. Biol. Univ. Mex., 32:333-381.
- Ridgway, R.
1907. The birds of North and Middle America. U. S. Nat. Mus. Bull. 50, pt. 4:XXII + 1-973.
1912. Color standards and color nomenclature (Published by the author, Washington, D. C.).
- Salvin, O., and Godman, F. D.
1897-1904. Biología Centrali Americana. Aves. Vol. 4.

Western Foundation of Vertebrate Zoology, Los Angeles, California, February 24, 1964.