

Seventh in the Fuertes print series

The original watercolor was published as the frontispiece of *Bird-Lore*, Volume XIV, Number 5, September-October 1916. The text that accompanied it was in two parts, entitled "The Migration of North American Sparrows, Thirteenth Paper," compiled by W.W. Cooke, followed by "Notes on the Plumage of North American Sparrows, Twenty-ninth paper," by Frank M. Chapman. Both these papers have been substantially revised, updated, and expanded in the presentation herewith.

1 Worthen's Sparrow. *Spizella wortheni*. Some authorities consider this 5 1/2 inch denizen of dry brush country of northern Mexico a race of the Field Sparrow, thus proposing the scientific name *Spizella pusilla wortheni*, but such change has not yet been officially approved. The type specimen, collected in Silver City, New Mexico, in 1844, represents apparently the single undisputed record north of the border, and probably represented a now-extirpated population. Non-migratory.

Fuertes' painting shows the rather unstriking field marks. Compared to Field Sparrow it has a less extensive rusty crown, a more prominent eye-ring, a lack of the postocular streak, and grayer cheeks. The adult male has a prominent gray nape or collar and a gray forehead. Ligon (*New Mexico Birds*, 1961) considered it very difficult to separate in the field from a Chipping Sparrow. [!]. Chapman, with only a few specimens to measure, deemed the tail shorter than the Field's, and the wing-band less distinct.

2. Olive Sparrow. *Arremonops rufivirgatus*. Then called "Texas Sparrow." Another border species, found from the lower Rio Grande valley south on both coasts of Mexico to Yucatan and Chiapas with an isolated population in Costa Rica. A largish (6 inches) sparrow found typically in dry brushy lowlands and foothills ("bush-haunting"—F.M.C.).

Chapman writes that few birds show less changes of plumage. "The male resembles the female; there is practically no difference between the winter and the summer dress, and the post-juvinal bird of the year cannot be distinguished from its parents." As seen here, it is a rather plain, dull bird, identified by the olive coloration, two broad brown head stripes,

prominent eye-streak, pale lores, and at close range a bright yellow wing edge and white eye-ring. No wing bars. Non-migratory.

4. Green-tailed Towhee. *Chlorura* (then *Oreospiza*) *chlorura*. Another resident of dry brushy mountain slopes and high plateaus, frequenting chaparral, sage brush, manzanita, and open woodlands, breeding from Oregon, Idaho and Montana south to southern California and southeastern New Mexico. Winters at lower altitudes and south to central Mexico. A sporadic vagrant eastward from Quebec to Louisiana.

Chapman called this bird a "so-called Towhee," and much taxonomic brouhaha has been attached to the species since. More recent authorities (Sibley, 1955, Parkes, 1957) have presented strong arguments that this is indeed a towhee and belongs in the genus *Pipilo*.¹ Green-tailed Towhees are small (to 7 inches) rather mousy birds (they sometimes indulge in a chipmunk-like darting from cover to cover) olive above, with rufous cap, white lores and throat, black malar streak, gray below, with a yellow carpal edge. The sexes are alike, and "there is essentially no difference between the summer and winter plumages. In the young female (3) in first winter plumage, the chestnut crown cap is largely concealed by the grayish tips of the feathers and the back is grayer than in the adult." (F.M.C.).

—Robert Arbib

¹For a more complete discussion, see Norris, R.A. in Bent, A.C. 1968 *Life Histories of North American Cardinals, Grosbeaks, etc.*, U S Nat. Mus. Bull. 237. Part 1. 547-562.



Louis Agassiz Quates