

## Eighth in the Fuertes print series

[The original watercolor was published as the frontispiece of *Bird-Lore*, Volume XXIII, November-December 1921, No. 6. The text appeared in two parts. In an article entitled "The Migration of North American Birds, Second Series," by Harry N. C. Oberholser, range descriptions are followed by lengthy spring arrival tables. Following this, Frank M. Chapman, in "The Notes on the Plumage of North American Birds, Sixty-second Paper," describes the plumages illustrated by Fuertes. The texts of both, minus tables, are reprinted here.]

Chapman's notes on these two closely related blackbirds pertains mainly to the plumages shown in the Fuertes painting, and in one aspect at least, Fuertes is in rare error: the iris color of the female Brewer's is pale brown, not yellow.

In other aspects the two species are notably dissimilar. The Rusty is the more northern breeding species, its range from northernmost Alaska eastward almost entirely within Canada to Nova Scotia. Its migration and wintering range are entirely within the eastern and southern United States, with no overlap between breeding and wintering ranges. The Brewer's is the western species, breeding north only to 56°N. It has been moving eastward. Wintering grounds

overlap breeding grounds in western mid-United States latitudes, and extend southward to northern Guatemala.

The two species differ entirely in their preferred habitats, Rusty frequenting riverine or forest environments, nesting near or over water; it is non-colonial. Brewer's is more often found in farmland, parks, roadsides, and even beaches, and nests colonially. Occasional stray Brewer's appear on the East Coast, usually in autumn, and there are a dozen West Coast records for the Rusty, all in Washington (10) and Oregon (2).

Although both species are black (in the breeding-plumage male) slender

birds of medium length, with slightly rounded tails, close observation in good light may reveal the purple head sheen and greenish body gloss in the Brewer's. On average the Brewer's is slightly larger than the Rusty, with longer wings and tail, and a bill that is thicker at the base. In both species the males are slightly larger than the females: Brewer's: ♂♂ average 228.6 mm (9 inches) in length, ♀♀ 210.3 mm; Rusty: ♂♂ 219 mm (8 6 inches), ♀♀ 203 mm. Obviously there is much overlap. For detailed descriptions of plumages, not possible here, see Bent, A.C. ed., 1958. *Life Histories of North American Blackbirds, etc.*, Smithsonian Bull. 211.

—Robert Arbib

### BREWER BLACKBIRD

The Brewer Blackbird (*Euphagus cyanocephalus*) takes the place of the Rusty Blackbird in the western United States. It ranges in western North America from southwestern Canada to Guatemala. It breeds north to central Manitoba, central Alberta, and central British Columbia; west to southwestern British Columbia, western Oregon, and western California; south to northern Lower California, southern New Mexico, and central western Texas; and east to central Texas, western Kansas, eastern Nebraska, eastern Minnesota, and casually to Wisconsin. It winters north to southern British Columbia, southern Montana, and Kansas; east to Louisiana and Arkansas, and south through the western United States to southern Mexico and Guatemala. It migrates east to Iowa, and casually to Illinois; and occurs accidentally in southeastern Ontario and South Carolina.

### RUSTY BLACKBIRD

The Rusty Blackbird (*Euphagus carolinus*) occurs over the greater part of North America, exclusive of the western United States and the islands within the Arctic Circle. It breeds north to northern Ungava in Quebec, northern Ontario, central Keewatin, northern Mackenzie, and northern Alaska; west to western Alaska; south to southern Alaska, central Alberta, southern Wisconsin (casually), central New York, southern Maine, and New Brunswick; and east to Nova Scotia and Newfoundland. It winters north to Nebraska, Michigan, and southeastern New York, and south to the Gulf of Mexico, from Florida to eastern Texas. It occurs casually in migration

west to British Columbia, Montana, and Colorado, and accidentally in California, Lower California, and Greenland.

**Rusty Blackbird** (*Euphagus carolinus*, Figs. 1-4). The common name of this Blackbird is based on its winter plumage which is broadly tipped with rusty brown, largely concealing the black base of the feathers.

In nestling plumage the sexes are alike, both being dull slate-color slightly washed with rusty. The postjuvenile (first fall) molt is complete and by it the birds pass into the first winter or 'rusty' plumage. As shown by Figs. 3 and 4 the sexes are then superficially alike, but examination shows that the male is blacker than the female. The difference between them becomes more marked as the season advances and the rusty tips gradually wear off, until, in April, the male, without gaining new feathers, has become glossy black (Fig. 1), and the female (Fig. 2), slate-color with usually some trace of rusty.

**Brewer Blackbird** (*Euphagus cyanocephalus*, Figs. 5, 6). In Brewer's Blackbird the rusty tips, which so strongly characterize the winter plumage of the Rusty Blackbird, are too small to affect the appearance of the bird in nature, and at all seasons the male, after the postjuvenile molt, appears glossy black with the head and neck much bluer black than in the Rusty Blackbird.

Even in the winter female the rusty color is not sufficiently pronounced to create a marked difference between winter and summer birds, and at all seasons the female differs from that of the Rusty Blackbird, much as our plate indicates.



Louis Agassiz Puertes.