

FIRST RECORD OF THE WHITE-FLANKED ANTWRN (*MYRMOTHERULA AXILLARIS*) IN MEXICO

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Key words: White-flanked Antwren, *Myrmotherula axillaris*, distribution, new record, Mexico.

The White-flanked Antwren *Myrmotherula axillaris* has a wide distribution in the tropical zone, from northeastern Honduras south through Central America to South America, west of the Andes, to northwestern Ecuador and, east of the Andes, to northern Bolivia and southeastern Brazil (A.O.U. 1983). The northernmost record was a Honduran specimen deposited at Louisiana State University Museum of Zoology (LSUMZ # 99942; female, ovary small, body mass 6 g) collected by M.J. Marcus, at Río Mairin Tighni, 9 km SW Las Marias, Río Plátano, Depto. Gracias a Dios (40 m) on 30 January 1981 (also cf. Marcus 1983). The bird was collected in "the understory of very humid subtropical forest". The only other specimen for Honduras was collected about 150 km SE of Marcus' specimen, at the Río Segovia, Depto. Gracias a Dios, Honduras, along the Nicaraguan border, on 19 June 1887 by C. H. Townsend. This specimen was originally reported as *Myrmotherula fulviventris* by Ridgway (1888), but Monroe (1968) discovered it was in fact *M. axillaris*.

While examining specimens at the Western Foundation of Vertebrate Zoology (WVZ) collection, a mis-identified immature male White-flanked Antwren *Myrmotherula axillaris* (WVZ # 10755) was found among the series of Dot-winged Antwrens *Microrhopias quixensis*. The bird was collected at Río Lacantum, ca. 85.5 km WNW of Comitán, Chiapas, Mexico (near the Guatemalan border), on 26 March 1963 by Warren Rook. The WVZ specimen represents a range extension of 650 km WNW of the Río Plátano locality and the first record for

Mexico. Young individuals of *M. axillaris* have the wing coverts tipped with buff spots, which probably led the collector to the mis-identification.

In much of its range, *M. axillaris* is one of the most common antwrens (e.g., Hilty & Brown 1986, Ridgely & Gwynne 1989, Terborgh *et al.* 1990). In Costa Rica it is also common in the humid forest on the Caribbean slope, becoming rarer in drier areas south of Lago de Nicaragua (Stiles & Skutch 1989). In an inventory and collection of birds from a second-growth forest in southeastern Nicaragua *M. axillaris* was not reported, but *M. fulviventris* was reported as fairly common (Howell 1957). However, Howell (1971) reported that *M. axillaris* was as common as *M. fulviventris* in northeastern Nicaragua. Therefore, the existence of only a single specimen from Mexico, and none from Belize, Guatemala, and most of Honduras, is curious. Because the lowland forests of the Caribbean slope of northern Middle America have been sampled at many localities, the absence or rarity of *M. axillaris* seems unlikely to be a sampling artifact. Also, because lowland forest was virtually continuously distributed in this same region from eastern Honduras to Taumalipas, Mexico, explanations centering on habitat availability, at least at the crude scale of "lowland tropical forest", seem unlikely. Perhaps, its absence or rarity in this region is caused by subtle ecological differences in habitat suitability at the northern terminus of its distribution.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I thank L. Kiff and W. Wethje of the Western Foundation of Vertebrate Zoology and J. V. Remsen and S. W. Cardiff of the Museum of Natural

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Science, Louisiana State University, for use of specimens in their care. I also thank J.M. Bates, S.W. Cardiff, R.T. Chesser, J.V. Remsen and D.A. Wiedenfeld for comments on the manuscript.

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Accepted 14 May 1993.