

AN OLIVACEOUS FLYCATCHER IN CALIFORNIA

An Olivaceous Flycatcher *Myiarchus tuberculifer* was discovered in the extensive grove of old date palms at Furnace Creek Ranch in Death Valley National Monument, Inyo County, California, on the afternoon of 23 November 1968. Furnace Creek Ranch is an isolated oasis with abundant water and vegetation and is surrounded for many miles in all directions by dry rocky hills and sterile alkaline flats. As such, it concentrates wandering birds, and a number of "vagrants" have been found there in recent years.

This flycatcher was first noticed by Bruce Broadbooks, who was attracted by the combination of small size, comparable to that of a phoebe *Sayornis* sp., and light yellow underparts. By the time Ralph Mancke and the writer saw the bird a flash of rust in the tail and wings made it an obvious *Myiarchus*. It called repeatedly with a plaintive "peeur" note similar to that of Olivaceous Flycatchers in Arizona. This call, in combination with the medium gray throat, led us to identify it as an Olivaceous Flycatcher. While I was securing permission to collect the bird it was shown to Xenia and Pierre Devillers, and to Guy McCaskie. They concurred with the identification, primarily on the basis of the plaintive descending call, with which they were familiar from previous experiences in either Mexico or Arizona.

The bird was studied off and on during a period of about an hour as it moved among the fronds of the tall palms. The following description is drawn from my notes and those of GMcC and PD:

A small *Myiarchus*, clearly smaller than an Ash-throated Flycatcher *M. cinerascens*, for it was hardly larger than the accompanying House Finches *Carpodacus mexicanus*. Upper parts brownish or brownish-olive; the top of the head appeared a little darker than the rest of the upper parts. Throat and breast mouse gray, rather dark, contrasting sharply with the fairly bright yellow belly and crissum. A trace of rusty color was visible in the wings and tail. Bill black and small for a *Myiarchus*. When the bird was collected it was noted that the mouth lining was yellowish orange or buffy orange.

The specimen was stored in a freezer in the Death Valley Museum at Furnace Creek Ranch for about a month, then taken to the Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History, where it is # 66519. When prepared it was found to be a male with little fat and small testes. The identification was confirmed by Dr. James Northern, who compared it with the extensive material from North and Central America deposited in the Los Angeles County Museum.

The species is widespread in Mexico, Central America, and parts of South America. In the United States it is a summer visitor from southeastern Arizona (Baboquivari Mountains on the west) to southwestern New Mexico (San Luis Mountains) (A.O.U. Check-list, 1957). It has been recorded east to western Texas (Chisos Mountains) (Wauer, pers. comm. to GMcC), and west to Sells, Pima County, Arizona (Phillips et al., *The Birds of Arizona*, 1964). A straggler was collected in Bent County, Colorado, on 11 May 1883 (Thorne, *Auk* 6:276, 1889). In Arizona it has been recorded as early as 31 March and as late as 13 October (Phillips et al., op. cit.); the other records within the United States fall between these extremes. The record from Furnace Creek Ranch is the first for California,

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and is more than a month later than the previous latest date for the United States.
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[At the request of the editors, Dr. J. Northern kindly agreed to re-examine and describe the tail pattern of the specimen to provide further printed support for its identification. He indicated (pers. comm.) that each rectrix was mostly dark with only a narrow, though very definite, rufous edging, 1.0 to 1.5 mm in width, on the outer vane, and a very slight inconspicuous buffy edging on the inner vane; the outer rectrix had no pale edgings.

This tail pattern is characteristic of *M. tuberculifer* (Ridgway, Birds of North and Middle America, part 4, p. 642, 1907) and clearly eliminates Nutting's Flycatcher *M. nuttingi*, the only other North American *Myiarchus* likely to straggle to California that has the combination of orange mouth lining, whistled call, and small size. Indeed, *M. nuttingi*, which has wandered to Arizona and northern Baja California, has essentially rufous rectrices, with only a narrow central dark stripe (Lanyon, Condor 63:426, 1961); besides, *nuttingi* has a shorter less plaintive whistle. The orange mouth lining alone was sufficient to eliminate Ash-throated Flycatcher *M. cinerascens* and Wied's Crested Flycatcher *M. tyrannulus*: the latter, as well as Great Crested Flycatcher *M. crinitus*, is also much larger. Note that the tail pattern also eliminates the totally unlikely *M. yucatanicus* (Lanyon, American Museum Novitates 2229: 3, 1965).

Dr. Northern indicated that the specimen had not been racially identified. On the basis of "geographic probability" the northwestern form *olivascens* seems likely, but it should be noted that a Baja California specimen, admittedly from the extreme south, was referred to *M. t. tresmariae* (Phillips, Auk 66:92, 1949)
-PD]