

## AN AZTEC THRUSH IN ARIZONA

DOUGLAS W. DANFORTH, Box 232, Bisbee, Arizona 85603

In the morning of 30 May 1978 I found an Aztec Thrush (*Ridgwayia pinicola*) at 1700 m feeding on a wet dirt road at the bottom of Huachuca Canyon, Huachuca Mountains, Cochise County, Arizona. My field notes describe the bird thus:

"Sooty brown head, back, upper breast, and wings. Belly and lower breast white. Breast has dark spots clustered along the cline between the brown hood and white breast. Face with a hint of light malar streak and definite light stripe above the eye. Wings with white spots in primaries and secondaries. Tail short and dark with white spots at tip and white oval spots at the upper base next the rump. A black vertical patch from the legs up to the side of the rump under the wings. Beak dark, legs and feet pink."

The bird fed robin-like in wet shady areas under sycamores (*Platanus wrightii*), walnut (*Juglans major*) and evergreen oaks (*Quercus emoryi*, *Quercus arizonica*, *Quercus hypoleucoides*), turning over leaves and pecking in damp areas. Upon finding what appeared to be large insect larvae, it would sometimes fly into a tree to eat its meal, then drop down and resume feeding. It occasionally and unsuccessfully darted after dragonflies. When not feeding it usually sat motionless in a tree or stood quietly on the ground in the leafy litter by a large rock or tree trunk.

At first it was quite tame and fed almost constantly, which indicated to me that it had just arrived. After a few days, no doubt partially because of the estimated 300 to 400 people who came to see it, the thrush became increasingly hard to find. It fed only in the early morning and late afternoon, spending the rest of the day in a tree. Had it not been for its call note, a raspy and buzzy "zrip," the thrush would have been hard to find because it blended so well with the oak branches.



Figure 1. Aztec Thrush (*Ridgwayia pinicola*), Huachuca Canyon, Cochise Co., Arizona, 30 May 1978.

Photo by George Beringer

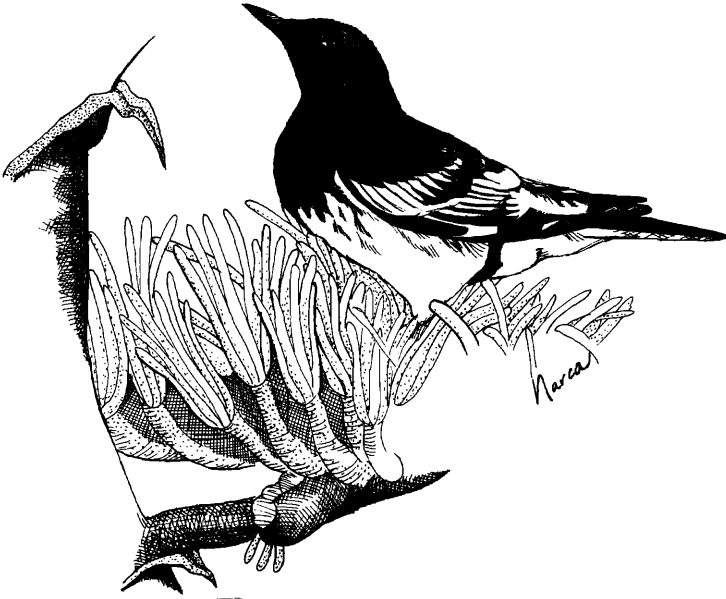
## NOTES

The bird disdained sunny areas. A seep that it used in the morning was never used in the full sun of the afternoon. Other seeps always shaded were used at any time of the day when it was feeding. It fed only in wet streamsidess and seeps. The bird was not seen after 12-13 June, when public access to Huachuca Canyon was barred by the U.S. Army at Fort Huachuca due to the fire hazard. The thrush was not to be found when the restriction was lifted in July.

Photographs of the bird taken by Charles W. McMoran and George Beringer are on file in the Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, University of Arizona, Tucson (UA Bird Collection 13651; Figure 1; *Am. Birds* 32:1042, 1978). This is the second record of Aztec Thrush for Arizona, and the third for the United States. The first Aztec Thrush recorded in the United States was an immature at Big Bend National Park, Texas, 21 August 1977 (Wolf, *Am. Birds* 32:156-157, 1978). The first Arizona record was a female in Madera Canyon on 20 May 1978 (Witzeman et al., *Am. Birds* 32:1042, 1978). This endemic Mexican species is known to range as far north in the Sierra Madre Occidental as southwestern Chihuahua, about 750 km south of Huachuca Canyon (Miller et al., *Pac. Coast Avif.* 33, 1957).

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*Sketch by Narca Moore*