

NEW BIRDS FOR THE STATE OF MICHOACAN, MEXICO

BY GEORGE MIKSCH SUTTON

FROM mid-December, 1948, to the end of March, 1949, Roger P. Hurd, of Millerton, Pennsylvania, and I visited several parts of Texas and México studying birds. From December 19 to January 6 we journeyed down the Texas side of the Rio Grande from Laredo to Brownsville. From January 6 to 29 we were in Tamaulipas—for several days at the Mesa de Llera, on the main highway just south of Victoria, and for about two weeks at Pano Ayuctle (Pumpkin Ford) on the Río Sabinas, not far from the hill village of Gómez Farías. Leaving Tamaulipas on January 29, we went to Lake Pátzcuaro, Michoacán. Our route took us through the cities of Querétaro, Celaya, Salamanca, and Morelia.

We remained in Michoacán from February 2 to March 10, working (1) along the Guadalajara highway about 11 kilometers west of the village of Quiroga, in pine forest at about 7500 feet elevation, February 2 and 3; (2) along the Tacámbaro highway 9 kilometers south of the city of Pátzcuaro, in oak-pine forest at about 8000 feet elevation, February 4 to 18; (3) about the village of Erongarícuaro, on the shore of Lake Pátzcuaro, February 19 and 20; (4) near the Estación Limnológica at the edge of the city of Pátzcuaro, February 21 to 23; (5) again along the Guadalajara highway 11 kilometers west of Quiroga, February 24 to 28; (6) along the Tacámbaro highway 29 kilometers south of Pátzcuaro, among firs and pines at about 10,000 feet elevation, February 28 to March 4; and (7) near the village of Chupio, along the Río de la Alberca, about 12 kilometers south of the city of Tecámbaro, March 5 to 9.

All but the last of the above-named localities were in or at the edge of the Pátzcuaro basin, but the Río de la Alberca is a tributary of the Mexcala (Balsas), and the country about Chupio was unlike any I had seen previously in México. Our campsite was near the point at which the Río de la Alberca, a small, swift stream, plunged into a deep gorge, there to become invisible for several hundred yards. Trees grew along the river proper, but back from the precipitous banks the ground was dry, rocky, and thinly covered with grass and shrubbery. Upstream a quarter of a mile, we ascended a dry tributary gorge to the level of the oaks and pines. Many of the lowland birds were wholly unfamiliar to me—among them a conspicuous, duet-singing, black-chested finch, which proved to be *Aimophila humeralis*; a hummingbird with boldly white under parts—*Amazilia violiceps*; another hummingbird, *Amazilia beryllina*, a green-throated species, which swarmed about certain blossoming trees; a whip-poor-will which we never heard calling, even on moon-

lit nights—*Caprimulgus ridgwayi*; and that beautiful fringillid, Leclancher's Bunting (*Passerina leclancheri*). Collecting was difficult not only because the dry ground everywhere was very slippery, but also because so many birds lived exclusively in the trees above the deep, dangerous gorge.

On March 10 we left Michoacán, driving by way of Toluca to Mexico City, where we remained two days. On March 13 we ascended almost to snowline on Popocatepetl, remaining there overnight. On March 14 we drove northward as far as Jacala, Hidalgo, where we camped two days. Arriving once more at the Río Sabinas, in Tamaulipas, on March 17, we climbed afoot to the Rancho del Cielo (elevation 3300 feet), where we were the guests of Mr. Frank Harrison. On March 24 we drove north to Linares, Nuevo León. From March 25 to 28 we stayed at the Mesa de Chipinque, near Monterrey, Nuevo León. We crossed the border at Reynosa, Tamaulipas, March 30.

Dr. Ernest P. Edwards has made an intensive study of the birds of the Lake Pátzcuaro basin in recent years (see Edwards and Lea, 1950. "Notes on Birds of the Lake Pátzcuaro Region, Michoacán, México," *Condor*, 52: 260-271). I have obtained his entire collection from that region—several hundred specimens in all. His survey has given him an acquaintance with the birds of the State of Michoacán, and I had his provisional state-list with me in the field, one of my purposes being to obtain, whenever possible, species not listed by him. Most of the following birds have not, so far as we know, been reported hitherto from Michoacán.

Asio otus wilsonianus. American Long-eared Owl.

Just after nightfall on February 11 I collected a female Long-eared Owl not far from the Tacámbaro highway, 9 kilometers south of Pátzcuaro. It was very fat. In its stomach were some short fur and small mammalian bones. A largish owl which I saw the following night along the old Pátzcuaro trail near camp probably was of the same species.

Aegolius acadicus acadicus. Acadian Saw-whet Owl.

In broad daylight on February 7, Roger Hurd and I flushed a Saw-whet Owl from a thicket of small oaks growing on a slope at the edge of the Tacámbaro highway, 9 kilometers south of Pátzcuaro. To our surprise the bird flew into the open and alighted on a rock. It proved to be a female. It was not fat. Its stomach was empty. Incoming white or white-edged belly feathers, many of which were still partly sheathed at the base, were of the first winter plumage; the fully developed buffy brown feathers of the under parts were of the outgoing immature plumage. The specimen (GMS 10737) represents the nominate race.

Bombycilla cedrorum. Cedar Waxwing.

Recorded along the Tacámbaro highway 9 kilometers south of Pátzcuaro as follows: a flock of about 25, flying over, February 8; a small flock in an oak, February 10; a single bird, flying over, February 11; and a small flock, flying over, February 13. Recorded near the Limnological Station at the edge of the city of Pátzcuaro as follows: a

small flock in the top of a willow near the main road, February 21; a few birds flying along the lake shore, February 22; and a small flock in a tree on the Station grounds, February 23. I was able to preserve a specimen (sex ?) which I found dead at the side of a dirt road on February 23. The secondaries were without waxy tips.

Vermivora crissalis. Colima Warbler.

Edwards informs me that on March 18, 1948, in mixed woods 11 kilometers west of Quiroga, Paul S. Martin saw two of these birds. I collected a male among shrubbery at the edge of pine-oak woods, 29 kilometers south of Pátzcuaro, a quarter of a mile from the Tacámbaro highway, March 2, 1949. The testes of this specimen were very slightly, if at all, enlarged.

Icterus abeillei. Abeillé's Oriole.

This handsome oriole was fairly common among the firs near our camp 29 kilometers south of Pátzcuaro in late February and early March. It may also have been common among the oaks and pines 9 kilometers south of Pátzcuaro, February 4-18, but during that period I was not familiar with the various plumages of the species and was, in consequence, confused by many of the female and subadult orioles which I did see. On February 17 I collected a subadult male *I. abeillei* (testes unenlarged) which was female-like in general appearance save for the narrow jet black throat-patch and a glossy black patch at either side of the chest. Among firs, giant flowering *Salvia*, and astoundingly tall thistles 29 kilometers south of Pátzcuaro, I took the following specimens: a subadult male with narrow black throat-patch but no black on the sides of the chest, February 18; an adult female, with a suggestion of black in the middle lower throat, March 2; and a fully adult male, March 3. All of these specimens had a pitch-like substance on their toes. On March 4, I was surprised to encounter among the firs several roving flocks composed largely of adult males. One bird which I watched for some time pounded with its bill a good-sized object held in one foot in the manner of a jay or a titmouse.

Piranga ludoviciana. Western Tanager.

We recorded this species near camp along the Tacámbaro highway 9 kilometers south of Pátzcuaro on February 10 (one bird) and February 13 (one bird), and along the Río de la Alberca, near Chupio, on March 5 (two birds), March 6 (several birds, one female of which I collected), March 7 (two birds), and March 9 (several birds). This species has been reported from Michoacán, but no specimen has heretofore been collected.

Chondestes grammacus. Lark Sparrow.

We noted this species as follows: a few along the highway not far from Morelia, February 2; several near the city of Pátzcuaro, February 3; several along the Tacámbaro highway 9 kilometers south of Pátzcuaro, February 9 and 10; one along the Tacámbaro highway about 10 kilometers south of Pátzcuaro, February 11; and several along the Río de la Alberca, near Chupio, March 8. A male (wing, 90 mm., tail, 73) taken March 8 is referable to *C. g. grammacus*. The general tone of the upper parts is darker than in a considerable series of *C. g. strigatus* at hand, and the chestnut markings of the head are fully as dark as those of the Michigan and West Virginia specimens in my collection. The Lark Sparrow has not, apparently, heretofore been collected in Michoacán.