

GENERAL NOTES

On the validity of some supposed "first state records" from Yucatán.—In a paper presenting miscellaneous "noteworthy records of birds from the Republic of Mexico," Thompson (Wilson Bull., 74: 173–176, 1962) included a number of specimens collected by George F. Gaumer, now in the University of Kansas Museum of Natural History. These were listed with no qualifying remarks whatsoever, mostly prefaced by the asterisk used by Thompson to indicate "first occurrences in Mexican states."

Thompson may not have been aware that the data on Gaumer specimens are notoriously unreliable. Gaumer was a physician who resided in Yucatán during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Although a tireless collector, he was careless and inconsistent about labeling his specimens. Many were apparently labeled from memory months and even years after collecting (Paynter, Peabody Mus. Nat. Hist. Bull., 9: 79 [and elsewhere], 1955). Many of Gaumer's specimens labeled "Cozumel Island" represent mainland species not otherwise known from the island, and it is now the custom among students of Mexican birds to disregard records from Cozumel and other islands in the Yucatán region that are based *solely* on Gaumer specimens (Paynter, op. cit.; Bond, 6th Suppl. Check-list Bds. West Indies (1956): 4–5, 1961; Parkes and Phillips, Condor, 69: 78, 1967).

Like most Gaumer specimens, those at the University of Kansas bear only the Museum's labels. This is not necessarily an indication that an original Gaumer label has been removed. Gaumer was apparently in the habit of sending off boxes of *unlabeled* specimens to various museums, where "Yucatan" labels would be attached. Most of the Kansas specimens are simply labeled "Yucatan," and Thompson has taken this to mean the *state* of Yucatán, which occupies only the northernmost third of the Yucatán Peninsula. In Gaumer's day the name "Yucatán" encompassed the entire area now divided among the states of Yucatán and Campeche and the territory of Quintana Roo. There is no justification for assuming that old "Yucatán" specimens necessarily constitute records for the area included in the modern state of that name.

Individual records in Thompson's paper based on Gaumer specimens are discussed below.

Sharp-shinned Hawk (*Accipiter striatus velox*).—Two specimens labeled Cozumel Island, considered by Thompson to be the first record from Quintana Roo. This species is apparently a rare migrant in the Yucatán area (Paynter, op. cit.: 58) and in the West Indies (Bond, Birds of the West Indies, 56, 1960), so a record from Cozumel is at least plausible. The species should not, however, be added to the Cozumel and Quintana Roo lists on the sole basis of these Gaumer specimens.

Lineated Woodpecker (*Dryocopus lineatus similis*).—Two specimens alleged to have been collected on Cozumel Island. This is a most implausible record. No other visitor to the island has reported this large, noisy, conspicuous woodpecker. During three collecting trips to Cozumel, neither I nor any of my field companions (A. R. Phillips, R. W. Dickerman, Juan Nava S.) saw either this species or any evidence of the diggings of a woodpecker any larger than the resident *Centurus*. The Lineated Woodpecker should be added to the list of "land birds apart from what are certainly North American migrants" that are known from Cozumel only from dubious Gaumer specimens, as published by Bond (Caribbean J. Sci., 1: 41–42, 1961).

Fork-tailed Flycatcher (*Muscivora tyrannus*).—One specimen listed as the "first record" from the state of Yucatán. The species has been reported from Campeche and Quintana Roo; although its occasional occurrence in what is now the state of Yucatán

would not be unlikely, it should not be so recorded on the basis of a Gaumer "Yucatan" specimen.

Western Kingbird (*Tyrannus verticalis*).—One specimen from "Yucatan." This species has not been reported from any locality in the Yucatán Peninsula, or, for that matter, anywhere in Caribbean México south of San Luis Potosí. This specimen is not an acceptable basis for the inclusion of the Western Kingbird in the list of birds of the Peninsula.

Common Tody-Flycatcher (*Todirostrum cinereum finitimum*).—This "Yucatan" specimen may or may not be authentic, but is of no importance. Paynter (op. cit.: 201) recorded the species from Campeche and Quintana Roo. Dale A. Zimmerman saw a singing male at Sisal, Yucatán on 9 May 1956. This is the earliest authentic record known to me from the state of Yucatán, but numerous individuals have been seen and several collected since that time. William H. Buskirk of Louisiana State University estimated at 48 the number of Tody-Flycatchers in a narrow strip of coastal scrub, some 2½ km long, near Progreso on 21 August 1967.

Violet-green Swallow (*Tachycineta thalassina lepida*).—There is no other report of this species from anywhere in the Yucatán Peninsula, or, to the best of my knowledge, anywhere in the Caribbean lowlands of México. It is therefore a temptation to dismiss this record out of hand. However, the specimen is the *only* mainland one among the Gaumer specimens listed by Thompson that bears any data more precise than simply "Yucatan." According to the label, the bird was taken in 1914 at the "Port of Silam" [= Dzilam Puerto]. Even with a specified locality and year, however, some doubt must linger about the authenticity of a unique Gaumer record such as this one. I would recommend that the Violet-green Swallow be placed on the hypothetical list for the Yucatán Peninsula.

Orange-crowned Warbler (*Vermivora celata orestera*).—There is no other published record of this species from the Yucatán Peninsula, and the very fact that the one Gaumer "Yucatan" specimen represents the Rocky Mountain subspecies would ordinarily be enough to discredit the record. However, on 8 November 1963, an Orange-crowned Warbler was netted in the coastal scrub near Progreso by Phillips, Dickerman, and the writer. To our surprise, this bird was, indeed, referable to *orestera*. A second specimen, netted in the same area on 23 January 1965, is also nearest *orestera*, although approaching *celata* in the color of the interscapular area (A. R. Phillips, in litt.). It is possible, therefore, that Gaumer's specimen is authentic, but it is fortunate that examples with full data exist to substantiate the occurrence of this western form in Yucatán.

Nashville Warbler (*Vermivora ruficapilla ruficapilla*).—One specimen from "Yucatan." Paynter (op. cit.) did not list this species at all from the Peninsula, but Miller et al. (Pacific Coast Avifauna 33: 240, 1957) record the nominate race from Campeche without further details. It is conceivable that the species might reach Yucatán, but the one Gaumer specimen should not be used as the basis for a definite statement.

Northern Waterthrush (*Seiurus noveboracensis noveboracensis*).—This species is a common and well-known migrant and winter visitor throughout the Yucatán Peninsula and adjacent islands. Thompson lists one "Yucatan" specimen identified as the "first record" for the state of Yucatán of the nominate race, which Paynter (op. cit.: 254) reported only from Banco Chinchorro and Cozumel Island, Quintana Roo. Paynter referred all of his own mainland and island specimens (as well as, tentatively, his sight records from additional islands) to *S. n. notabilis*. However, I agree fully with Eaton (Auk, 74: 229-239, 1957) that the variations in color and size exhibited by this species cannot be utilized in any meaningful definition of geographic races. Having

seen for myself the series of breeding birds upon which Eaton's conclusions were based, I must reject Monroe's rather tentative demurrer (Amer. Ornithol. Union Monogr., 7: 335-336, 1968) to the effect that "three races seem to be recognizable." Monroe did not admit "*uliginosus*" of Newfoundland, which, as Eaton pointed out, represents clinal extremes in both color and size, and is one of the few discrete populations that approach definability. Specimens I collected on 4 and 18 November 1965 on Cozumel Island represent virtually the extremes in whiteness and yellowness of underparts within this species, but I attach no taxonomic significance to this, and use the binomial for all Northern Waterthrushes.

Wilson's Warbler (*Wilsonia pusilla pileolata*).—This species is such an abundant migrant and winter visitor throughout most of México that its apparent total absence from the Yucatán Peninsula has been all the more conspicuous. In the face of the lack of any authentic specimens, the fact that no less than four Gaumer specimens bear "Yucatan" labels would be enough to suggest the improbability of their supposed origin. Nevertheless, it is likely that the Wilson's Warbler is at least a rare transient in the Yucatán Peninsula. Specimens have been collected in British Honduras, at the southeastern base of the Peninsula (Russell, Amer. Ornithol. Union Monogr., 1: 159-160, 1964). I have received from William H. Buskirk a convincing account of sight records of single birds seen 13 and 14 September 1967 at Puerto de San Felipe, near Río Lagartos, Yucatán. The Gaumer specimens are referable to *W. p. pileolata*, whereas Russell (loc. cit.) identified British Honduras specimens as *W. p. pusilla*. Mr. Buskirk's sight record is, of course, unidentifiable subspecifically. I believe the *species* can safely be admitted to the list of birds of the Yucatán Peninsula, but the true status of the subspecies occurring there must await collection of specimens of more certain origin than those of Gaumer.

Baltimore Oriole (*Icterus galbula*).—This species has been recorded from Campeche and Quintana Roo, and could conceivably occur on migration within what is now the state of Yucatán, but the single Gaumer "Yucatan" specimen cannot substantiate such occurrence.

Montezuma Oropendola (*Gymnostinops montezuma*).—The attribution of this large rain forest species to the arid state of Yucatán on the basis of a Gaumer "Yucatan" specimen is perhaps the most implausible of Thompson's "first records." This oropendola is known from suitable habitat in Campeche and Quintana Roo, in the southern part of the Peninsula.

Western Tanager (*Piranga ludoviciana*).—There are authentic records of this western species on the Caribbean slope of México, but none from the Yucatán Peninsula. The pair of birds in the Gaumer collection should not form the basis for a statement of occurrence of this species either in the Peninsula or in the state of Yucatán.

Black-headed Grosbeak (*Pheucticus melanocephalus melanocephalus*).—The pair in the Gaumer collection, if authentic, would represent not only the first record for the state and peninsula of Yucatán, but the entire Caribbean lowlands of México as well. The Gaumer specimens do not provide adequate proof of such occurrence.

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Mengel. My field work in Mexico was supported by the Edward O'Neil Fund of Carnegie Museum and the Frank M. Chapman Memorial Fund of the American Museum of Natural History. Permits to collect birds in México were obtained through the kindness of Rodolfo Hernández Corzo of the Departamento de Conservación de la Fauna Silvestre.—KENNETH C. PARKES, *Carnegie Museum, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, 5 December 1968.*

High density Mallard nesting on a South Dakota island.—In May 1967, commercial fishermen reported large numbers of Mallards (*Anas platyrhynchos*) nesting on a 19-acre island located in the southeastern portion of 4,360-acre Lake Albert in Kingsbury and Hamlin Counties, eastern South Dakota. We visited the island on 18 and 27 May 1967 and confirmed the presence of numerous nesting Mallard hens.

Lake Albert is a large, open-water lake which supports fish populations. Emergent aquatic vegetation is scarce, and is confined to a few protected shore areas. The island lies about 450 yards northwest of the southeast shore of the lake. On the western half of the island is a 9-acre flat, while the eastern half contains a slightly sloping open area of about 2 acres surrounded by trees and shrubs. The 9-acre flat was dominated by a dense growth of tall nettles (*Urtica procera*) about 6 to 18 inches high during May. Patches of figwort (*Scrophularia* sp.), snowberry (*Symphoricarpos occidentalis*), wild black current (*Ribes americanum*), Missouri gooseberry (*R. missourienses*), chokecherry (*Prunus virginiana*), and rose (*Rosa* sp.), also grow on the 9-acre flat and other portions of the island. Indian hemp (*Apocynum sibiricum*), common milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*), and sunflower (*Helianthus annuus*) are also found in open areas, while bluegrass (*Poa* sp.) was common in the more wooded eastern portion of the island. The entire island is ringed by trees, including box-elder (*Acer negundo*), American elm (*Ulmus americana*), hackberry (*Celtis occidentalis*), green ash (*Fraxinus pennsylvanica*), and willow (*Salix* sp.).

In 1967 and 1968 we searched approximately 50 per cent of the 9-acre flat after preliminary investigation disclosed that nearly all nests were confined to this area. In 1967, 39 Mallard nests were found, including 36 active and 3 abandoned. In addition, three hens were flushed from cover and their nests were not located. The same area was searched on 27 May 1968; 28 active nests were found, two hens were flushed from cover and their nests were not located. Of 67 nests observed during the two years, placement in various cover types was as follows: tall nettle, 91 per cent; gooseberry, 5 per cent; snowberry, 3 per cent; and bluegrass, 1 per cent. Based upon our sample of about 50 per cent of the preferred nesting cover, we estimated that there was a minimum of 78 and 60 nests in 1967 and 1968, respectively on the island.

Within the area sampled in 1967, the average distance between nests was 34 feet (range 7–150 feet). Measurements were not made in 1968. Clutch sizes averaged 10.4 eggs in 1967 and 8.8 eggs in 1968. Clutch sizes ranged from 6 eggs to 18 during both years with larger clutches more common in 1967 when a higher nest density was found. In 1967, six clutches contained 14 or more eggs while only one clutch contained 14 or more eggs in 1968.

No evidence of activity by egg predators was observed during the two years, except for the occurrence of a large garter snake (*Thamnophis* sp.) in 1967. Of 67 nests observed, none had been destroyed by predators although three nests had been abandoned. A Great Horned Owl (*Bubo virginianus*) nest containing two young was on the island in 1967; however, there was no evidence that the owls had been preying on Mallards.

During our visits to the island, pairs were continually observed moving between the