

ZOOLOGISCHE MEDEDELINGEN

UITGEGEVEN DOOR HET

RIJKSMUSEUM VAN NATUURLIJKE HISTORIE TE LEIDEN
(MINISTERIE VAN CULTUUR, RECREATIE EN MAATSCHAPPELIJK WERK)

Deel 44 no. 16

12 februari 1970

ON SOME BIRDS FROM SOUTHERN MEXICO

by

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With one text-figure

In the years 1962/64 our museum purchased from Mr. Otto Epping, now of Pittsburgh, U.S.A., a collection of 700 bird-specimens from southern Mexico (mainly from Vera Cruz and Oaxaca, a few specimens from Puebla). As our museum was poorly provided with material from Mexico, this was a very welcome addition to our collections. Mexico being now ornithologically well-known, there would be little point in giving a complete list of the species received, but there are a few rare and little-known species included and some others are of faunistic interest as they extend the ranges as hitherto known of the species or subspecies they belong to. In the present paper, the species which for the reasons given above appear to be of interest are listed, and when the occasion demands discussed.

The localities where Mr. Epping collected are indicated on the accompanying map (fig. 1). Measurements are in millimetres. Of the numbers, the one before the stripe is the collector's number, the one behind the stripe is the number under which the specimen is registered in our collection. My work on this collection was much facilitated by the "Distributional Check-List of the Birds of Mexico" (see references under Friedmann and Miller); when in the text reference is made to "the Check-List", this work is meant.

Podiceps nigricollis californicus Heermann

♂, Temascal, Oaxaca, 19.XII.1962, gonads 5×3 (442/34429). Wing 132, entire culmen $28\frac{1}{2}$, exposed culmen $22\frac{1}{2}$; light moult of body feathers on the back; stomach empty.

Apparently not previously recorded from Oaxaca, though known from Vera Cruz.

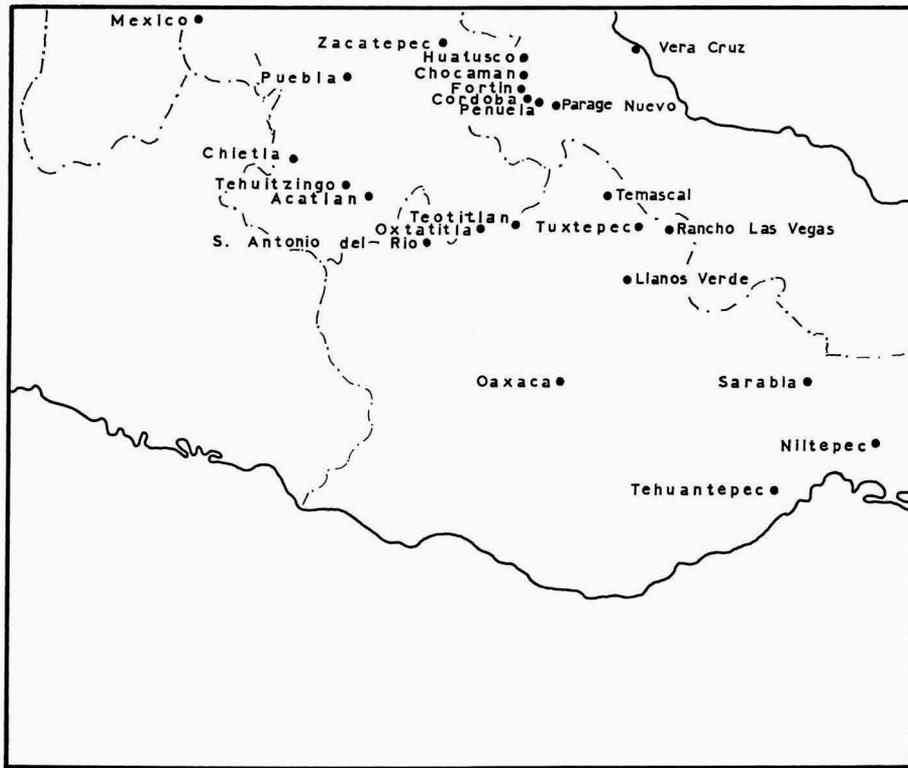


Fig. 1. Map of the collecting area.

***Podilymbus podiceps podiceps* (Linnaeus)**

♂, Temascal, Oaxaca, 9.XI.1962, gonads 8×4 (306/34001). Wing 130; light moult, especially of the head; stomach contents algae.

The large wing indicates that this specimen belongs to the nominate race rather than to *antillarum*, for which Hellmayr & Conover (1948: 37) give as wing-length: ♂ 120-128, ♀ 112-118. Good comparative measurements have not been published and Hellmayr & Conover (l.c.) regard *antillarum* as a doubtful race. I am not aware of previous records of this species from Oaxaca.

***Egretta alba egretta* (Gmelin)**

♂, Temascal, Oaxaca, 27.I.1963, gonads 10×4 (575/34434). Stomach contents small fishes.

Not previously recorded from Oaxaca.

Elanus caeruleus leucurus (Vieillot)

♂, Rancho Las Vegas, near Loma Bonita, Oaxaca, 21.VIII.1963, gonads 6×3 (893/34933). This bird is in full moult of wings, tail and body-feathers; the stomach contained a vole and a lizard.

The American representative of the genus *Elanus* is usually treated as a separate species, but I agree with Rensch (1931: 515) and Parkes (1958) that there is every reason to include it in the species *E. caeruleus*. The North American populations of *Elanus* are generally accepted as representing a separate subspecies, *majusculus*, distinguished from South American *leucurus* by larger size, but the rather small size of this bird (although it is moulting, wing and tail could be measured satisfactorily), caused me to go into this matter. In the original description of *majusculus*, Bangs & Penard (1920) gave as measurements of *leucurus* (14): wing 290-310 (300.8), tail 149-177 (162.1), and for *majusculus* (25): wing 300-325 (315.9), tail 170-188 (178.8).

Measurements of material in our collection are as follows:

sex	locality	wing	tail
?	California	306	175
?	Mexico	317	172
♂	Loma Bonita, Mexico	305	167
♀	Laguna di Val, Venezuela	314	171
♂	Caracas	307	165
♂ juv.	Caracas	298	167
♂	Paramaribo, Suriname	306	175 very worn
♂	Zanderij, Suriname	296	161
♂	Zanderij, Suriname	290	159
♀	Zanderij, Suriname	312	165
♀	Zanderij, Suriname	298	173
♂	Peperpot, Suriname	303	155 very worn
♂	Peperpot, Suriname	306	169
♀	Commetewane, Suriname	303	170
?	Colonie Helvetia, Argentine	304	161
♂	Santiago, Chile	304	159
♂	Santiago, Chile	308	159

Even the figures given by Bangs & Penard show that not more than about 50% of each subspecies would be separable, a figure that is generally regarded as too low for nomenclatural recognition. My modest series of South American specimens brings the maximum wing-length for *leucurus* to 314, and only three of the thirteen specimens could, on the basis of the figures given by Bangs & Penard, be separated on wing-length, though tail-length, always an unreliable character because of differences in preparation and measuring, scores somewhat better. Bangs & Penard suggested the existence

of a size-gradient, going from north to south, with the northern birds largest, the southern smallest, but my three southern birds (from Chile and the Argentine) are not very small and Steinbacher (1962: 44) listed a bird from Paraguay (the type locality of *leucurus*) with a wing of 315. This additional material shows that *majusculus* is even less differentiated than its authors thought, and I fail to see how it can possibly be upheld.

Busarellus nigricollis nigricollis (Latham)

♀, Rancho Las Vegas, Oaxaca, 10.VIII.1963 (891/34930). Stomach contents fish and lizards.

A new record for Oaxaca.

Crocethia alba (Pallas)

♀?, Isla de Amor, Vera Cruz (town), 24.V.1963 (794/34438).

An interesting late date; the Check-List (1950: 99) gives as extreme dates August-19 May.

Bolborhynchus lineola lineola (Cassin)

3 ♂, Fortin, Vera Cruz, 4, 21 and 22.II.1963 (611/34441; 638/34442 and 643/34443).

Apparently a rare bird in Mexico; according to the Check-List (1950: 127): "... very rare and little known, México: Taken on only six occasions in México, in Veracruz, Guerrero, and Chiapas". I note, however, that Davis (1945) found it "moderately common" on the Rio Banderillo.

Coccyzus americanus (Linnaeus)

2 ♂, 5 ♀, Fortin, Vera Cruz, 15.IX.1962-1.VI.1963 (15/34046, 168/34048, 694/34448, 695/34449, 743/34450, 769/34451, 798/34452).

Measurements:

sex	date	wing	tail	tarsus	entire culmen	exposed culmen
♂ (695)	24.IV.1963	143	138	25¼	32	26
♂ (798)	1.VI.1963	144	138	24	32½	24
♀ (743)	3.V.1963	144	145	23½	33	28
♀ (168)	22.X.1962	147	146	25½	31	24
♀ (769)	16.V.1963	147	149	25	30¼	24¾
♀ (15)	15.IX.1962	148	146	26	32	25
♀ (694)	24.IV.1963	150	146	23	30½	26

In all available literature, two subspecies are recognised, *americanus* and *occidentalis*. The difference between these subspecies is limited to a difference in average measurements (cf. Ridgway, 1916: 12-19). Ridgway recorded for *americanus* a wing length of: ♂ 135-154 (143.6), ♀ 138½-151 (146.4),

and for *occidentalis*: ♂ 143½-154½ (149.6), ♀ 144-156½ (150.1). None of my specimens can be subspecifically identified on the basis of these measurements, and more generally I see no purpose in recognising races that can be identified in only a minority of individuals. Therefore I treat *occidentalis* as a synonym of *americanus*.

Of my specimens three: ♂ (695), collected 24 April, ♀ (743), collected 3 May, and ♀ (769), collected 16 May, are indicated as having had a breeding-patch. The gonads of the birds collected in spring were large. This is interesting as no certain breeding has been recorded so far south.

Caprimulgus salvini salvini Hartert

♂, Fortin, Vera Cruz, 25.IV.1963 (703/34458).

A rare species that is new to our collection. Lowery & Dalquest (1951:580) obtained one specimen at Potrero Viejo, near Fortin, and mentioned that there was only one previous record for Vera Cruz (by Baird, Brewer & Ridgway, 1874: 409), based on two specimens collected before March 1863 (cf. Deignan, 1961: 163).

Chloroceryle amazona (Latham)

♀, Rancho Las Vegas, Oaxaca, 10.VIII.1963 (880/34946).

Measurements of *Chloroceryle amazona*

Males	Wing	Tail	Wing - Tail	Tail - Wing
Suriname	137	80	57	58.4%
Suriname	138	74	64	53.6
Sta Catharina, Brazil	140	87	53	62.1
" " "	143	90	53	62.9
Females				
Oaxaca	142	76	66	53.5
British Guiana	136	74½	61½	54.8
Suriname	132½	75	57½	56.6
Sta Catharina, Brazil	142	85	57	59.9
Mariquita, Brazil	130	81	49	57.7

Both Peters (1945) and the editors of the Check-List recognise *C. amazona mexicana* Brodkorb (1940). The subspecies *mexicana* was described as being: "Similar to *Chloroceryle amazona amazona* (Latham), of South America, but with longer wing and shorter tail, with the proportionate difference between the two greater; reduced or absent white supraloral streak, which in South American birds is usually well marked and extends from bill to eye. Wing, ♂ 137.5-141.5 mm (♀ 138-147); tail, ♂ 77-79 mm. (♀ 76-83). Difference between wing and tail lengths, ♂ 60-63 mm.

(♀ 59-65.5). Proportion of $\frac{\text{tail}}{\text{wing}}$; ♂ 55-56% (♀ 53.9-57.6%)”.

My material, although scant, does not support Brodkorb's contentions. For easy reference I tabulate the measurements of the specimens in our collection in the same way as he has done (Brodkorb, 1940: 545), so that a direct comparison can be made.

Tyrannus melancholicus chloronotus Berlepsch

♂, Temascal, Oaxaca, 31.X.1962 (257/34104); ♂, Mixteguilla, Rio Tehuantepec, Oaxaca, 20.IX.1962 (37/34101); ♀, Rio Tonto, Temascal, 2.X.1962 (95/34102); ♀, Temascal, 31.X.1962 (256/34103).

Compared with some specimens from Trinidad and Tobago (the material recorded by Junge & Mees, 1958: 100) the Mexican birds differ merely by their slightly larger bills; the difference is too slight to be expressed in nomenclature.

Myiarchus crinitus (Linnaeus)

3 ♂, Fortin, Vera Cruz, 28.IX.1962, 26.IV and 6.V.1963 (66/34120, 709/34514, 753/34515). Weights of two specimens 35.7, 40 g.

These birds have large bills, larger than some specimens from New York and Massachusetts in our collections, and even slightly larger than one from Florida. They are therefore referable to the nominate race, and not to the small-billed northern subspecies *boreus*. The nominate race is little known in Mexico (Check-List, 1957: 77), but already known from Vera Cruz. Although the difference in bill-length is real, it is unlikely that a division in subspecies is useful, and *boreus* is not recognised by Hellmayr (1727: 159).

Myiarchus cinerascens subsp.

♂, ♀, Teotitlan de Camino, Oaxaca, 25.IX.1962 (46/34116, 47/34117).

Measurements of ♂: wing 96, tail 90, tarsus $23\frac{3}{4}$, entire culmen $20\frac{3}{4}$, exposed culmen $15\frac{3}{4}$; ♀: wing 89, tail 87, tarsus $20\frac{1}{2}$, entire culmen $20\frac{1}{2}$, exposed culmen 15.

The bills of these specimens, adult birds, are remarkably small, for which reason I have to leave their subspecific identity undetermined.

Nuttallornis borealis (Swainson)

Sex?, Teotitlan de Camino, Oaxaca, 25.IX.1962 (45/34121).

In the Check-List (1957: 82), only a single record from Oaxaca is given (30 May).

Troglodytes aedon intermedius Cabanis

♂, Fortin, Vera Cruz, 25.IV.1963 (701/34503). Wing 50, tail 38, tarsus 16, entire culmen $15\frac{3}{4}$, exposed culmen 12.

This specimen was identified for me by Dr. Paynter, who wrote (15.III.1967): "The wren, *Troglodytes aedon intermedius*, is rather far north for this race. It is quite light in color, but birds of the spring usually are light and quite distinct from fall or winter birds. Its size shows that it is not *T. a. aedon* or *T. a. parkmanii*, which the coloration suggests on first glance". This subspecies was not yet known from the State of Vera Cruz.

Parus wollweberi subsp.

♂, Llanos Verde, Oaxaca, 20.V.1963 (791/34539).

This species has been recorded from southern Oaxaca, in the Sierra Madre del Sur, but the present specimen appears to constitute the first record for the northern part of the state.

Van Rossem (1947: 81) has commented upon the poor condition of the type in Darmstadt, now destroyed. He mentioned that on the attached green tag was printed: "Meise Parus Wollweberi Westerm[an] Mexico", and that: "There was no other bridled titmouse in the collection or in the catalogue and undoubtedly this specimen is the type". However, in assuming that the species was based on only a single specimen, van Rossem was fortunately mistaken, as Westerman (1851) expressly stated that Dr. Kaup of Darmstadt had received a large series; I quote the relevant passage: "Deze soort wordt in de dennenbosschen van het hoogere gedeelte van Mexico gevonden, van waar Dr. Kaup te Darmstadt onlangs een aanzienlijk getal voorwerpen ontving. Door hem en Prins Ch. L. Bonaparte als een nieuwe soort bepaald, werd zij door laatstgenoemde onder bovenstaanden naam in eene mededeeling aan de Parijsche Akademie aangevoerd". From this it is evident that the bird described and figured by Westerman is a syntype. The specimen is now in our collection; it is remarkable for having practically no black on the forehead (see also Westerman's plate). The recent specimen from Oaxaca differs strikingly in having a large black band across the forehead, and therefore fits the description of *caliginosus*. I find it difficult to believe that the two specimens would belong to the same subspecies (cf. Snow, 1967), but lacking sufficient comparative material, am unable to investigate this matter, and therefore do not apply a trinomial to the Oaxaca specimen.

Phlogothraupis sanguinolenta sanguinolenta (Lesson)

♀, Fortin, Vera Cruz, 24.IV.1963 (718/34660).

Lowery & Dalquest (1951) knew this species from the extreme south of Vera Cruz only.

Vermivora celata subsp.

Sex?, road Tuxtepec-Oaxaca, 2900 m, 24.I.196 (571/34552).

The altitude at which this specimen was taken surpasses by several hundred metres the upper limit of distribution as previously recorded. The large size: wing 64, tail $46\frac{1}{2}$, tarsus $17\frac{1}{2}$, entire culmen $12\frac{1}{4}$, exposed culmen 10, weight 8.2 g, indicates that the bird belongs to the race *orestera* Oberholser, if valid.

Psilorhinus morio fuliginosus (Lesson)

♂, Sarabia, Oaxaca, 18.IX.1963 (68/34258). Also ten specimens from Fortin and one from Córdoba.

The record from Sarabia is interesting inasmuch as in Oaxaca records of the species were hitherto confined to the north, but not unexpected as the race is known to range through Vera Cruz into Tabasco.

Oryzoborus funereus Sclater

♂, ♀, Rancho Las Vegas, Oaxaca, 23.IX.1963 (907/35082). 908/35083).

An uncommon species, new to our collection. Some old specimens from Costa Rica kept under this name in our collection, were found to be *Sporophila americana corvina*.

Atlapetes albinucha (Lafresnaye & d'Orbigny)

♂, Huatusco, Vera Cruz, 25.VII.1963 (869/35056).

An interesting and generally somewhat scarce species.

Pheucticus chrysopeplus chrysopeplus (Vigors)

♂, Teotitlan de Camino, Oaxaca, 25.IX.1962 (54/34297). Wing 117, tail 93, tarsus 25, culmen $26\frac{1}{2}$.

I am not aware of any previous records of this species from Oaxaca. The nearest localities from where the species was hitherto known are Chietla, Tehuitzingo and Ataclán, in Puebla. Chietla is the type-locality of *P. c. rarissimus* Meise, but my specimen does not show the main character ascribed to that race, large size (cf. Meise, 1938). The authors of the Check-List apparently do not recognise *rarissimus*.

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