

AN UNRECOGNIZED SUBSPECIES OF MELANERPES ERYTHROCEPHALUS.

BY HARRY C. OBERHOLSER.

There is in the west central United States and adjacent portion of Canada an unrecognized subspecies of *Melanerpes erythrocephalus*. Mr. Ridgway, years ago, called attention¹ to the difference in size and color between specimens of this species from the eastern United States and those from the region of the Great Plains and the Rocky Mountains, but made no subspecific separation on account of the more or less intermediate character of the birds from the Mississippi valley. A recanvass of the matter, however, shows that the bird from the Great Plains and the Rocky Mountains is subspecifically distinct and therefore deserves recognition in nomenclature. It has an available name, however, as we shall explain, and should stand as *MELANERPES ERYTHROCEPHALUS ERYTHROPHTHALMUS*, *subsp. restit.*

Melanerpes erythrophthalmus Silloway, Bull. Fergus County Free High School, No. 1, 1903, p. 36.

Chars. subsp.—Similar to *Melanerpes erythrocephalus erythrocephalus*, but decidedly larger; abdomen more strongly tinged with yellow, and more often with red.

Measurements.—Male:² wing, 142-149.5 (average, 145.6) mm.; tail, 72.5-81 (77.1); exposed culmen, 26.5-28; tarsus, 22.5-24.5 (23.5); middle toe without claw, 17.5-19 (18.2).

Female:³ wing, 140-144 (average, 142.6) mm.; tail, 74-84.5 (78.1); exposed culmen, 27-30 (27.8); tarsus, 20.5-24 (22.2); middle toe without claw, 18-19 (18.4).

Type locality.—Lewistown, Fergus County, Montana.

Geographic distribution.—West central United States and adjacent portion of Canada. Breeds north to southern Manitoba, southern Saskatchewan, and southeastern British Columbia; west to southeastern British Columbia, central Montana, central Wyoming, and central Colorado; south to northern New Mexico, northwestern Texas, and southern Oklahoma; and east to central Oklahoma, central Nebraska and eastern North Dakota. Casual in northern Utah and southeastern Arizona.

Remarks.—Size is the best and most reliable character for distinguishing this subspecies. The following measurements of *Melanerpes erythrocephalus erythrocephalus* from the central eastern United

States will facilitate comparison with those of *Melanerpes erythrocephalus erythrophthalmus* given above:

Male:⁴ wing, 134.5-145 (average, 138.1) mm.; tail, 70.75-77 (73.2); exposed culmen, 25-29 (26.4); tarsus, 22-23.5 (22.6); middle toe without claw, 17-18 (17.4).

Female:⁵ wing 133.5-138.5 (average, 135.6) mm.; tail, 72.5-77 (74.5); exposed culmen, 25-26 (25.4); tarsus, 21-22 (21.7); middle toe without claw, 17-18 (17.4).

The color differences between these two races of the red-headed woodpecker, while of value in subspecific characterization, are not constant enough to be of much use in the identification of individual specimens. The depth of the yellow tinge on the abdomen, while appreciable in a series, is in individual specimens often the same in both forms, while a more or less evident tinge of red on the abdomen is present in only 20 of 31 adult specimens of *Melanerpes erythrocephalus erythrophthalmus*; while of 40 examples of *Melanerpes erythrocephalus erythrocephalus* from the eastern United States, 9 show more or less evidence of red. In fact, one example from Fort Meade, Florida (No. 78253, U.S. Nat. Mus.), taken in June, 1879, has as much red on the abdomen as any western bird that we have examined.

Mr. Ridgway suggested⁶ that if a Great Plains race of this species were to be separated, the Mississippi Valley bird should be treated likewise because of its similarity in color to the birds from the Great Plains and its corresponding difference from those of the eastern United States. As we have shown above, the differences in color between the eastern and the farthest western birds is scarcely constant enough to serve for their recognition in absence of any other character; furthermore, of 31 adults from the Mississippi Valley, only 17 have any red tinge on the abdomen, though practically all have a more or less strong buffy suffusion. This, in view of the fact that about one-fourth of the eastern birds have at least an indication of red on the abdomen, shows clearly that there is here no color difference by any means constant enough for the subspecific separation of the Mississippi Valley birds from those of the eastern United States, or from those of the Great Plains. As will be seen, however, they are, in this average color character of red on the abdomen, somewhat nearer *Melanerpes*

¹Bull. U.S. Nat. Mus., No. 50, pt. VI, 1914, p. 43.

²Ten specimens, from Colorado, Wyoming, and South Dakota, measured by Mr. J. H. Riley.

³Six specimens, from Colorado, Wyoming, and Oklahoma, measured by Mr. J. H. Riley.

⁴Ten specimens, measured by Mr. J. H. Riley.

⁵Five specimens, measured by Mr. J. H. Riley.

⁶Bull. U. S. Nat. Mus., No. 50, pt. VI, 1914, p. 43.

erythrocephalus erythrophthalmus; but since they are practically the same in size⁷ as typical *Melanerpes erythrocephalus erythrocephalus*, they are to be referred to that form.

Birds from Mount Scott, in south central Oklahoma, belong undoubtedly to the western race, as do also birds from central New Mexico, and breeding birds from the Panhandle of northwestern Texas.

Red-headed woodpeckers from Minnesota are rather large and frequently have red on the abdomen, but appear to be, as a whole, nearer the eastern form. All the specimens from Texas examined, except those from the northwestern portion, belong to the typical eastern bird.

By the segregation of the present subspecies the range of *Melanerpes erythrocephalus erythrocephalus* becomes restricted to the following area:

Eastern United States and southeastern Canada: north to New Brunswick, southern Quebec, and southern Ontario; west to Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, Arkansas, and central Texas; south to southeastern Texas, southern Louisiana, and southern Florida; and east to the Atlantic coast of the United States and New Brunswick. Casual in Nova Scotia.

The technical name to be used for the western red-headed woodpecker involves an interesting complication. In an annotated list of the birds of Fergus County, Montana, Prof. P. M. Silloway enters this species as follows:⁸

"406. RED-HEADED WOODPECKER, *Melanerpes erythrophthalmus*.

This handsome woodpecker occurs sparingly in the wooded coulees near Lewistown, which is certainly near the western limit of its distribution. On several occasions I have seen it along Big Casino, where it breeds. On June 9, 1903, I noted the presence of the red-headed woodpecker at Cottonwood. Dr. J. A. Allen states that the red-headed woodpecker was abundant everywhere from the Missouri to the Yellowstone, far outnumbering all the other Picidae together. It is migratory in this portion of its range, making its appearance about the middle of May, and beginning to nest early in June.

Distinguishing features: Head, neck, and upper part of body crimson; middle of back across, bluish-black; other parts white; length 9-10 inches."

The name *Melanerpes erythrophthalmus* is apparently a lapsus calami for *Melanerpes erythrocephalus*, and there is no other evidence that the author intended to describe a new species or subspecies. The name *Melanerpes erythrophthalmus* does not occur

in the index, but the species is duly entered there⁹ as *Melanerpes erythrocephalus*. If no description had been given, the name *Melanerpes erythrophthalmus* could have been regarded as a nomen nudum; but it is validated by the addition of the perfectly recognizable description, for it certainly can not be called a typographical error; therefore, according to the rules of nomenclature, it must be applied to the form of red-headed woodpecker occurring in its locality, now that this is found to be different from typical *Melanerpes erythrocephalus*. Its type locality is, of course, Fergus County, Montana; furthermore, since Lewistown is the first definite place mentioned we may legitimately select this as the restricted type locality. The original description of *Melanerpes erythrocephalus*¹⁰ was based on the bird of South Carolina, so that this name is, of course, properly applicable to the eastern race.

The specimens of this newly recognized race examined are principally in the United States National Museum, including the collection of the Biological Survey, but additional examples seen are in the Museum of Comparative Zoölogy, the American Museum of Natural History, and the Field Museum of Natural History. The writer is further indebted to Mr. Charles B. Cory for data in regard to specimens in the collections under his charge. The 46 specimens of *Melanerpes erythrocephalus erythrophthalmus* examined are from the localities given in the subjoined list.

Colorado.—Denver (June 5, 1874); Bear Creek (June 7, 1873); Pueblo (July 23, 25, and 28, 1874); Fort Lyon (May 16 and 19, 1883); North Fork of South Platte River (July 12, --); Kettle Creek (August 6, --); Huntsville, August 7, --).

Kansas.—Hart's Hill, east of Fort Riley (June 13, 1856).

Montana.—Custer's Creek (August 1, 1873); near old Fort Sarpy (August 9, 1873); Big Bend of Musselshell River (August 24, 1873); Sun River (September 5, 1867); 5 miles southeast of Ekalaka (May 31, 1916); Crow Agency (August 5 and 6, 1916); Little Missouri River, 8 miles north of Capitol (June 3, 1916); Pilgrim Creek, 8 miles northeast of Broadus (June 12, 1916); Darnall's Ranch, Dawson County, 30 miles south of Glasgow (June 28, 1910; July 1, 1910); Zortman (July 28, 1910).

Nebraska.—Valentine (September 8, 1891).

New Mexico.—Bear Canyon, Raton Range (September 10, 1903).

North Dakota.—Valley City (June 25, 1912);

⁷ Cf. Ridgway, Bull. U. S. Nat. Mus., No. 50, pt. VI, 1914, p. 43.

⁸ Bull. Fergus County Free High School, No. 1, 1903, p. 36.

⁹ Ibid., p. 75.

¹⁰ [Picus] *Erythrocephalus* Linnaeus, Syst. Nat., ed. 10, I, 1758, p. 113 (southern South Carolina: based on Catesby, Nat. Hist. Car., Florida, Bahama Is., J, 1743, p. 20, pl. XX.)

Medora (June 16, 1913); Cannonball (August 16, 1915).

Oklahoma.—Kiowa Agency, 17 miles southeast of Fort Cobb (April 1, 1868); Mount Scott P.O. (March 26 and 27, 1904).

South Dakota.—Custer County (July 7, 1894);

Corral Draw, Pine Ridge Indian Reservation (May 16, 1894).

Texas.—Vernon (April 30, 1894).

Wyoming.—Deer Creek (May 21, 1877); Fort Laramie (May, 1864; May, 31, 1878); Black Hills (August 3, 1856); Saratoga (June 4, 1911); Greybull (June 8, 1910).

NOTES ON SOME OF THE FISHES OF ALBERTA AND ADJACENT WATERS.

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Owing to the fact that ichthyology has never apparently appealed to amateur naturalists to any great extent, the general knowledge respecting our fishes is infinitely less than that concerning our birds, mammals, flora and at least two orders of insects. This surely should not be in a country like Canada, blessed with fresh water fishes to the extent that they constitute a very important factor in the economic wealth; not to mention the sport and outdoor recreation they provide to a very large number of enthusiastic fishermen. In spite of their enthusiasm, however, I find that most sportsmen are lamentably ignorant concerning their catches, and in speaking of trout for instance, either generalize in calling everything "speckled-trout," or go to the other extreme and specify "Brook trout" or "Rainbow trout," neither of which species occurs in this section of Canada—unless of course the imported "Brook trout" of the Mountains Park be included.

While disclaiming any specialized learning in the science of ichthyology, I contribute the following notes for the purpose of correcting errors in the recorded range in the case of three well known fishes, and I hope clearing up a few mistaken ideas in the minds of some who may know even less than myself upon the subject.

The list is arranged according to the "Check List of the Fishes of the Dominion of Canada and Newfoundland," which laudable work will be hereinafter alluded to as the "Government Check List."

ACIPENSERIDAE.

41. *Acipenser transmontanus* Richardson. White Sturgeon.

Sturgeon are but rarely captured in Alberta. Three or four years ago, however, a very fine specimen was taken in the C.P.R. dam (Bow river) at Bassano, and since the Bow and Belly rivers join to become the South Saskatchewan river, and *transmontanus* is recorded from the latter waterway, the Bassano fish must presumably be referred to that species. On the other hand *A. rubicundus* (Lake sturgeon) is also recorded from "Lake of

the Woods and Prairie Provinces" so it is clearly unsafe to jump to conclusions.

HYODONTIDAE.

52. *Hyodon chrysopsis* Richardson. Western Goldeye.

While the Government Check List gives "Provinces of Manitoba and Saskatchewan" as the range of this fish, it is certainly common in Alberta in the Red Deer river. It was also one of the fishes recorded by Mr. Fletcher's survey party, 1916, "Peace river." I do not doubt but that it is common in both branches of the Saskatchewan river.

Goldeyes usually average rather less than one pound, but they are frequently taken up to 18 ounces. I was informed of a specimen fish taken at the junction of the Blindman river and Red Deer river two years ago, the weight given being two pounds. This fish rises nicely to artificial flies, and on a light rod puts up an excellent fight. It is an insect feeder, "whirl a gig" beetles forming an important item of its diet. Under normal water conditions Goldeyes feed all over the river, but in times of flood seek the less muddy water in the mouths of tributary rivers and creeks, when they can be taken in numbers with various baits such as worms, grasshoppers, meat, etc.

In Manitoba there is a small industry in kippering Goldeyes, and both from an economic and sporting point of view an increase rather than diminution of these fishes is desirable.

SALMONIDAE.

67. *Coregonus williamsoni* Girard. Rocky Mountain Whitefish.

This fish occurs throughout Alberta and British Columbia in rivers and lakes, but I have no first hand knowledge concerning it. In the interesting and useful little booklet, "Classified Guide to Fish and Their Habitat in Rocky Mountains Park" by Mr. S. C. Vick, published by the Dominion Parks Branch, Department of the Interior, 1913, the author states that *C. williamsoni* "is found in almost all the park lakes and streams," and both in the text,



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