

also had, like the Terns, a most favorable and successful breeding season.

In late advices from Mr. Sandsbury (October 2) he informs me that on this date the Terns had diminished about one half, and that almost every day large flocks could be seen going high up in the air and after circling coming down again, these actions being preparatory to setting out on their southern migration. This shows that the birds are remaining later than usual this season.

In advices from Penikese Island, Massachusetts, I learn that there were but few Terns remaining after September 1, and by the 17th, they had all departed.

The little beach mouse (*Microtus breweri*) has again become very abundant on Muskeget Island proper. The remnant which was preserved on South Point Island, some years ago, can now pass uninterruptedly over the newly formed beach which connects the two. On July 27, 1896, I took an adult male which was in the process of shedding its coat.



## CRITICAL NOTES ON THE GENUS *AURIPARUS*.

BY HARRY C. OBERHOLSER.

PROFESSOR BAIRD, with his usual astuteness, was apparently the first to notice the considerable difference existing between the Verdins of Texas and those of Lower California.<sup>1</sup> He mentioned their contrasting points but did not regard these characters as of distinctive value. Mr. Walter E. Bryant,<sup>2</sup> in his remarks upon the genus, subspecifically separated the western form and bestowed upon it the name *Auriparus flaviceps ornatus*. Mr. Bryant was possibly not correct in supposing that the type of Sundevall's

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<sup>1</sup> Review of American Birds, I, Aug., 1864, 85.

<sup>2</sup> Zoe, I, 1890, 149.

*Ægithalus flaviceps* came from Mexico,<sup>1</sup> although quite right in considering that Lawrence's *Conirostrum ornatum* from Texas is the same form.<sup>2</sup> Since *Conirostrum ornatum* is thus made a synonym of *Ægithalus flaviceps*, or as it is now known, *Auriparus flaviceps*, the term *ornatus*, if employed in the genus *Auriparus*, becomes manifestly untenable. Consequently if there be no other name available, and assuming, of course, the validity of this form, the *Auriparus flaviceps ornatus* of Bryant will require to be rechristened. And this seems to be the necessity, for apparently the only remaining synonym is *Parus flavifrons* of Gray,<sup>3</sup> which, though attributed by him to Sundevall, is quite evidently a mis-citation of the latter's *Ægithalus flaviceps*, and is consequently an undoubted *nomen nudum*. Furthermore, it is probably applicable entirely to the eastern race, as 'Rio Grande' is the only locality assigned.

The subspecies inhabiting Lower California may therefore be called

#### *Auriparus flaviceps lamprocephalus*, nobis.

CHARS. SUBSP. — *A. flavicepsi affinis, sed cauda multo brevior, necnon alis brevioribus; capite flavo paululum clariore.*

Al., 48-52 (50.1) mm.; caud., 41-43.5 (42.2) mm.; culm. exp., 8.5-9.5 (9.) mm.; tars., 14-15 (14.7) mm.

*Habitat.* — California inferior australis.

*Description.* — *Type*, male adult, No. 117551, U. S. Nat. Mus.; Cape St. Lucas, Lower California, April 7, 1889; C. H. Townsend. Upper parts, excepting head, dull smoke gray, washed with olive yellowish, most conspicuously so on the rump. Wings and tail fuscous, the wing-coverts, tertials, and narrow edgings to quills and rectrices paler than the rest; bend of wing rich burnt sienna. Head all around deep gamboge yellow, shaded on occiput and sides of head with olivaceous, the crown and throat being almost immaculate. Remainder of lower parts dull white, with a slight wash of yellow, this most evident on the breast and anal region.

*Young*, sex unknown, No. 16962, U. S. Nat. Mus.; Cape St. Lucas, Lower California; J. Xantus. Above pale grayish brown, the rump strongly

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<sup>1</sup> In the original description, verified for me by Mr. Witmer Stone, Sundevall states that his type came from 'Sitka or California.' (Öfversigt Vet. Ak. Förh., VII, 1850, 129, note.) Its measurements refer it to the more eastern race.

<sup>2</sup> Ann. N. Y. Lyc. Nat. Hist., 1851, 113.

<sup>3</sup> Hand-List Birds Brit. Mus., I, 1869, 234.

tinged with tawny olive, the head washed with olive yellow; a few wholly yellow feathers on the crown. Wings and tail light brown, of a shade approaching broccoli brown, the feathers nearly all narrowly margined with paler; bend of wing burnt sienna. Sides of head like the back, but mixed with many feathers of the new plumage; lower parts soiled white, slightly suffused with dull yellow on the breast, and with a few bright yellow feathers visible on the chin and throat.

This form is distinguished from true *flaviceps* by its very much shorter tail, somewhat shorter wing, and by the brighter tint of the yellow of the head, particularly that on the forehead and anterior portion of the crown. This clearness of the yellow of the head, though not entirely constant, is apparently an excellent average character.

In two of the five adult males examined there is a noticeable rufous patch on the forepart of the crown, and in one of these two birds it is quite well defined. In the three other specimens, including the type, the bases of the feathers on this part of the crown show more or less of rufous, which, however, does not appear unless the plumage be disturbed. The type and one of the others are quite strongly tinged with yellow on the body, both above and below; while in the remaining three this color is, except on the rump, barely evident posterior to the head and throat. The general tone of the plumage above, exclusive of the head, is very uniform in three of the specimens; somewhat darker in one of the others, and slightly browner in the remaining example. A young bird in the U. S. National Museum collection, supposed to be from Santa Margarita Island, Lower California, is darker above than the specimen here described, but is not otherwise importantly dissimilar. As this bird was skinned from alcohol its different color may be due to the chemical action of the preservative.

Mr. Bryant included southern Arizona and southern California in the range of his western race (*loc. cit.*), but with the series of Arizona and Texas specimens now available (some 65 in all) it seems impossible satisfactorily to separate the birds from these localities. It is true that the birds from Texas are slightly larger, and, even in very young plumage, appear to average rather darker than those from Arizona, but the difference is very slight and inconstant.

While most of the Arizona breeding birds, with some of the winter ones, are a little paler than Texas examples, many of the winter specimens from the former locality are fully as dark as Texas birds of the same season. Unfortunately there is not at hand a series of California specimens, but two birds from Fort Yuma, and one from the Colorado Desert, San Diego County, California, are not appreciably different, either in size or color, from specimens taken in southeastern Arizona. So far as *lamprocephalus* is concerned, the color of the upper parts exclusive of the head is about as dark as that of Texas birds of the corresponding season. No specimens from the upper half of Lower California have been examined, by reason of which it is impossible at present to determine how far to the northward the range of the Cape form should be extended.

True *Auriparus flaviceps*, whose range may be considered to extend from Texas to California, exhibits very much individual as well as seasonal variation. In the general color of the upper parts there exists usually much difference, even in specimens of the same season from a particular locality, so that this character becomes valueless as a basis of comparison. Summer birds are, on the whole, paler than those of any other season, but there occur some winter specimens which are fully as light in color as are those taken in the breeding season. The upper parts range in color from dull smoke gray to hair brown; and the under surface from grayish white to creamy or brownish white, in some specimens the median portions being tinged with the yellow of the head. Taking into consideration only the adult males, as has been here done in the diagnosis, it is found that considerable difference exists in the shade and extent of the yellow of the head and throat. In most cases there is little or no indication of a rufous frontal patch, though it usually is present to a greater or less degree, but visible only on disturbing the feathers. In some specimens, however, it is very strongly marked.

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MEASUREMENTS OF SPECIMENS OF *Auriparus flaviceps lamprocephalus.*

U. S. N. M. No.	Sex.	Locality.	Wing.	Tail.	Exposed Culmen.	Tarsus.	Middle Toe with Claw.
12968	♂	Cape St. Lucas, L. Calif.	48	41	9	15	13
12967	♂	" " "	49	42	8.5	14.5	12
117551	♂	" " "	52	43.5	9.5	15	12
117552	♂	" " "	51.5	43	9	15	12
117580	♂	Conception Bay, "	50	41.5	9	14	12
Average . . . . .			50.1	42.2	9	14.7	12.2

MEASUREMENTS OF *Auriparus flaviceps* FROM TEXAS.

Average of five males . . . . .	54.4	49.5	8.8	15.5	12.4
Maximum . . . . .	55	51	9	16	13
Minimum . . . . .	54	47.5	8.5	15	12

MEASUREMENTS OF *Auriparus flaviceps* FROM ARIZONA.

Average of ten males . . . . .	52.9	48.2	8.1	15.3	12.2
Maximum . . . . .	54.5	50	8.5	16	12.5
Minimum . . . . .	51.5	47	7.5	15	12