

# POSTILLA

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**Yale** PEABODY MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

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# Postilla

YALE PEABODY MUSEUM

OF NATURAL HISTORY

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## A SMALL COLLECTION OF BIRDS FROM ARGENTINE TIERRA DEL FUEGO

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In the spring of 1948, Mr. Stephen Sanford generously suggested that a representative of the Peabody Museum of Yale accompany his party on a brief visit to Tierra del Fuego for collecting purposes. Unfortunately the group was somewhat delayed in arrival due to difficulties with weather and planes, but in mid-April they arrived at Rio Grande on the east coast. Mr. Sanford was accompanied by his wife, Mr. Van Campen Heilner and Mr. Migdalski. The first part of their stay was at Estancia "Sara" near Rio Grande where the country was very open and treeless, but Mr. Migdalski was later able to go farther north to the Estancia of the Bridges family where there were trees in some number. During his actual collecting time April 27th to May 20th, Mr. Migdalski was able to collect 78 specimens of 35 species, a difficult assignment due to the severe autumnal weather and many of the species having already migrated north. One advantage, however, was the fact that all the birds were in fresh plumage, although an additional difficulty was the heavy deposit of fat which all specimens carried. Some species showed definite gonadal enlargement, presumably correlated with the migratory season, and heavy fat deposition.

The grateful thanks of the Museum must go to Mr. and Mrs. Sanford for assisting so generously in securing this valuable material, as well as to the authorities of the American Museum of Natural History and the Museum of Comparative Zoology for permission to examine specimens in their care. Color notes are by Mr. Migdalski.

### List of the Species

#### *Phalacrocoracidae*

*Phalacrocorax brasilianus brasilianus* (Gmelin): Brazilian Cormorant.

A female cormorant was shot on May 16. Mr. Migdalski has noted the soft parts as: "iris brown; eyelids yellow; bill, upper mandible dorsally brown, laterally greenish-yellow, lower mandible greenish-yellow, skin of throat yellow; legs black."

This bird is in immature plumage. It measures: wing 226 mm., tail 149 mm., culmen 44 mm.

#### *Ardeidae*

*Nycticorax nycticorax obscurus* Bonaparte: Chilean Night Heron.

A male taken May 20 is of this dark-bellied form. Soft parts: "iris red; ocular skin greenish-yellow; bill, upper mandible brownish-black, yellowish-green at the base, lower mandible distally for 1/3 of the length brownish-black, remainder yellowish-green; legs, suffrago, posterior tibio-tarsus, anterior tibio-tarsus greenish-black; feet black, pads yellow." Wing: 349.

#### *Threskiornithidae*

*Theristicus caudatus melanopis* (Gmelin): Black-faced Ibis.

A single female of the ibis of Tierra del Fuego was collected

April 29. Soft parts: "iris red; bill and facial skin black; legs purplish-red."

*Anatidae*

*Cygnus melancoryphus* (Molina): Black-necked Swan.

A male Black-neck was shot on April 30. It has a wing measurement of 436. Soft parts: "iris brown; bill, upper mandible dark slate, tip fleshy gray; facial skin red; legs and webs fleshy."

*Coscoroba coscoroba* (Molina): Coscoroba Swan.

A male Coscoroba taken May 4 is in partial immature plumage. A few feathers on the crown and a considerable area of the upper back, a few scapulars, tertials, median wing coverts and upper tail coverts are tipped with brown. The primaries are blackish terminally. This immature plumage is very swan-like. Soft parts: "iris light brown, bill reddish purple, legs and webs pinkish-flesh." Wing: 145. Not common. Found only on inland ponds.

*Lophonetta specularoides specularoides* (King): Crested Duck.

The most abundant duck at this season. Three males were skinned out of a good number shot on April 28 and 29. Two males are in very worn plumage. One bird is in extremely fresh plumage indicating the closeness of the moult. Soft parts: "iris red (2), light brown (1); bill, upper mandible bluish-black, lower pinkish-orange; legs and webs brownish-gray." Wing: 257.5, 259 (worn), 275.

*Chloëphaga poliocephala* Selater: Ashy-headed Goose.

A male Ashy-head weighing five pounds was taken on May 1. Normally these birds leave about the seventh of April, and Mr. Migdalski consequently found this the least common of

the geese. It is in fact the least common species in the Rio Grande area. Soft parts: "iris dark brown; bill black; tibio-tarsus orange with black mottling; feet, middle toe and webs black, inner and outer toes black with orange sides." Wing: 363. This bird is in worn plumage although the tail and wing feathers have been largely freshly moulted in.

*Chloëphaga rubidiceps* Sclater: Ruddy-headed Goose.

A pair and a young female were taken April 27 and 29. This, the second most common species in the area, is said to leave normally by April 15. They return in early September and usually begin to breed about October 24. The clutch size ranges from 4 to 11 eggs. Birds are flocking for migration by about April 10. One adult weighed 4 pounds 8 ounces.

These birds are in wing moult. They measure: wing ♂ 325, ♀ 314, im. ♀ 329. The adult female seems to be growing a new set of primaries, while the males' are being partially shed. The tarsus of these specimens measures: 66.5, 64, im. 65.

*Chloëphaga picta picta* (Gmelin): Upland Goose, Caiquen.

This is the most numerous species in the San Sebastian region. An adult and an immature male and an adult female were collected on May 1 and 2. These are the Barred Upland type, the predominant type in this area. Mr. Migdalski failed to find the white males during his stay. Local information claimed that most males were of the barred type, and that the pure white birds were a color phase.

This species arrives in the area in early September and seldom begins breeding before October 17. The average clutch is seven eggs which take the normal incubation period. By the end of February most of the young can fly. Migration begins the last week in April and by May 20 nearly all birds have left. Those few that stay over the winter usually suffer from frozen feet and become very thin. Local estimates report that seven to ten geese eat as much grass as one sheep.

Geese are said actually to be drawn by the sheep, as they prefer cropped grass. Thus the density of the geese is greater in the sheep grazing areas. Where they are heavily concentrated the amount of goose excrement is said to become so great that sheep are driven away. Consequently for many years now the upland geese have been a pest and a bounty is paid for their destruction, at the rate of 4 cents (Argentine) an egg, 15 cents per gosling and 50 cents for an adult bird. In 1947-8 alone the Estancia "Sara" staff at Rio Grande broke 35,000 eggs, and another nearby estancia broke 75,000 eggs. The cook and her husband on one estancia during that season collected 4,000 eggs, 900 young and 400 adults for the bounty. These specimens measure: wing ♂ 427 (worn), ♀ 392; tail ♂ 177, ♀ 156; culmen ♂ 33, ♀ 32; tarsus ♂ 84, ♀ 77. Weight ♂ 6 pounds 4 ounces, ♀ 6 pounds.

*Chloëphaga hybrida hybrida* (Molina): Kelp Goose.

A pair of Kelp Geese were collected at Viamonte on May 11 and 15. They were wary and difficult to approach. Migdalski never saw them farther than 60 yards from the shore, once or twice on sheltered small ponds near the beach. The "Kelpers" as they are called locally, arrive in March and leave in September in contrast to the other species. Soft parts: "iris dark brown, bill black, legs, feet and webs bright yellow; iris brown, bill fleshy, legs, feet and webs bright yellow." Wing: ♂ 381, ♀ 344. Both birds are freshly moulted and weigh: ♂ 5 pounds 12 ounces; ♀ 4 pounds 8 ounces.

*Tachyeres patachonicus* (King): Flying Steamer Duck.

Two females were taken May 1 and 4. One is subadult and is in moult. The reddish throat patch is prominent in this bird. Wing: ad. 296, subad. 260. Soft parts: "iris dark brown; bill (ad) greenish-yellow basally, distal half bluish-

black, (im) yellowish-green, tip black; legs and feet yellow, webs grayish-black." The flightless species does not occur so far north.

*Anas versicolor fretensis* King: Southern Gray Teal.

A single male, taken April 29, measures: wing 219. Soft parts: "iris dark brown, bill, upper mandible black, basal half excluding culmen yellow, lower mandible bluish-gray; legs and feet greenish-gray, webs black."

*Anas georgica spinicauda* Vieillot: Brown Pintail.

A female was collected April 27. The tail is worn but the wings are freshly moulted and measure: 229. The bird was very fat and greasy. Soft parts: "iris dark brown; bill, upper mandible yellow, culmen and tip black, lower mandible yellow, tip black; legs and toes gray, webs black."

*Anas flavirostris flavirostris* Vieillot: Yellow-billed Teal.

With the Crested Duck, the commonest species at Rio Grande. Birds were taken the end of April, all fat, freshly moulted and in good condition. Wing: ♂ 179 (m), ♀ 191, 192. Soft parts: "iris dark brown; bill, upper mandible yellow, culmen and tip black; lower mandible yellow, tip black; legs and feet gray, webs black."

*Anas sibilatrix* Poepig: Chiloe Widgeon.

A single male, freshly moulted, was collected April 29.

#### *Accipitridae*

*Buteo polyosoma polyosoma* (Quoy and Gaimard): Rufous-backed Buzzard.

Two varicolored immature birds, presumably a male and female, were secured on May 2 and 15. Soft parts: "iris

creamy-brown, yellowish-brown; bill greenish-gray, black tip to upper mandible; cere greenish-yellow; legs yellow." Wings: ♂ ? 440, ♀ ? 500.

#### *Falconidae*

*Milvago chimango chimango* (Vieillot): Chimango.

Three females were collected at Rio Grande in late April. They are tame confiding birds. Soft parts: "iris dark brown; bill horny-gray, cere fleshy; legs bluish-gray." Wing: 283-304.

*Polyborus plancus plancus* (J. F. Miller): Carancho or Caracara.

A male was collected at Rio Grande May 4. Soft parts: "iris light brown; bill creamy-white, touch of light blue at the base; cere orange; ocular skin orange; legs yellow." Wing: 415.

*Falco sparverius cinnamominus* Swainson: Chilean Kestrel.

A female with a wing measurement of 205 was taken May 2.

#### *Haematopodidae*

*Haematopus leucopodus* Garnot: Magellan Oyster-catcher.

A pair were found at Viamonte May 3 and 16. They measure: wing ♂ 261, ♀ 256. Both are rather worn. Soft parts: "iris orange red; eyelids yellowish-orange; bill, upper mandible dark brown, reddish-orange at base, lower mandible basally orange red, distally dark brown; light grayish with fleshy touches."

*Haematopus ater* Vieillot and Oudart: Quoy's Black Oyster-catcher.

A male taken May 3 has a wing measurement of 271. Soft



parts: "iris orange red; eyelids orange red; bill red; legs light creamy-flesh."

#### *Thinocoridae*

*Attagis malouinus* (Boddaert): White-bellied Seed Snipe.

Two males, a female and a specimen in alcohol were taken in late April and May. These birds are in fresh plumage, wing ♂ 165, 175, ♀ 172. Soft parts: "iris brown; bill dark horn; legs creamy gray."

#### *Charadriidae*

*Oreopholus ruficollis* (Wagler): Slender-billed Dotterel.

A male with a wing measurement of 167 was collected May 3. This is a very late date for this Dotterel. No other shore birds were taken or seen. This bird was extremely fat.

#### *Laridae*

*Larus marinus dominicanus* Lichtenstein: Kelp Gull.

A single male of April 27 has soft parts: "iris brownish-gray; eyelids pinkish-orange; bill yellow, distal third of lower mandible reddish-orange; legs greenish-cream."

#### *Strigidae*

*Bubo virginianus nacurutu* (Vieillot): Magellan Horned Owl.

A female with a wing of 350 was shot at Viamonte May 11. Soft parts: "iris yellow; bill and cere black."

#### *Picidae*

*Campephilus magellanicus* (King): Magellan Woodpecker.

A pair were taken in a patch of forest fifteen miles inland from Viamonte on May 19. The female has slightly enlarged

ovaries. Soft parts: "iris orange; bill and legs grayish-brown."  
Wing: ♂ 221.5, ♀ 216.

#### *Furnariidae*

*Aphrastura spinicauda spinicauda* (Gmelin): Thorn-tailed Creeper.

Common in the trees at Viamonte. Soft parts: "iris brown; bill, upper mandible black, lower whitish-flesh, tip black; legs greenish-brown, pads greenish-yellow." Wing: ♂ 64, 65, ♀ 60-62.

This race is more pure brown, less rufous than specimens from Southern Chile, which should be separated as *tupinieri*.

*Pygarrhicus albogularis* (King): White-throated Tree-Runner.

Another common spiny-tail about Viamonte. Soft parts: "iris brown, dark brown; bill, upper mandible black, lower grayish-white, dark tip (♂), light grayish-white, dark tip (♀); legs brown." Wing: ♂ 85-88, ♀ 83-85.

#### *Tyrannidae*

*Xolmis pyrope* (Kittlitz): Fire-eyed Peipoza.

Two males taken May 13 and 14 were the only tyrannids seen. Soft parts: "iris red." Wing: 120, 122.5.

#### *Muscicapidae*

*Turdus falcklandii magellanicus* King: Magellan Robin.

Some of these thrushes, taken between May 11 and 15, are

coming into breeding condition. All specimens are very fat and freshly moulted. Wing: ♂ 137.5-144, ♀ 131, 132.

*Fringillidae*

*Phrygilus unicolor ultimus*, subsp. nov: Tierra del Fuego  
Plumbeous Finch.

Type: ♂ ad. (Yale Peabody Museum No. 9335.) collected at Viamonte, Rio Grande, Tierra del Fuego, Argentina, on May 16, 1948, by E. C. Migdalski.

Description: similar to *unicolor* (type locality Tacna, restricted by Hellmayr) but larger, the adult females with somewhat darker, more blackish streaks. From *tucumanus* and *inca* this race differs as does *unicolor*. From *grandis* these birds differ by being lighter gray in color in the male, and in the females by being lighter, less rufescent on the back, with lighter streaking.

Measurements: wing ♂ 98.5, ♀ 94.5, 95; tail ♂ 72.5, ♀ 65, 66; culmen (from skull) ♂ 13, ♀ 12.5 (2). A series of eleven birds from Chile and northern Argentina measure: wing ♂ 88-92.5, ♀ 81-88; tail ♂ 60-68.5, ♀ 59-61.5; culmen ♂ 11-12, ♀ 11-11.5.

Remarks: These birds are in fresh plumage. Soft parts: "iris brown; bill, upper mandible dark horn, lower light horn; legs brown."

*Zonotrichia capensis australis* (Latham): Patagonian Sparrow,  
Chingolo.

Two males were collected in mid-May. Both birds have considerable streaking on the crown. Wing: 78, 84.

*Icteridae*

*Notiopsar curaeus* (Molina): Chilean Blackbird.

Not uncommon about Viamonte in mid-May. One male had slightly enlarged testes. Wing: ♂ 137, 138, ♀ 129, 132.

*Trupialis militaris militaris* (Linnaeus): Red-breasted Starling, Pecho Colorado.

Common at Rio Grande in April and May. Soft parts: "iris brown; bill, upper mandible dark horn, lower light grayish-horn; legs slate gray (some with a brownish tint)."