

# POSTILLA

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**Yale** PEABODY MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

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# Postilla

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### CUBAN BIRD NOTES

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The following notes are the result of a collecting trip to Cuba by one of us (Watson), for the Yale Peabody Museum between August 6 and December 12, 1955. Nesting dates or other data are given where they may supplement Bond's definitive works, his *Check-List of Birds of the West Indies*, Philadelphia, 1956, and earlier *Field Guide of Birds of the West Indies*, New York, 1947. We are very grateful to Dr. R. A. Paynter, Jr. for comments and measurements on the collections at the Museum of Comparative Zoology at Harvard.

*Podiceps dominicus dominicus* (Linnaeus): rarely seen and shy. Young found in the Zapata Swamp, October 19. A male and female with enlarged gonads, taken on this date, weighed 182 and 167 grams respectively. The juvenal, which is in body down, has on the crown a developing median streak of light cinnamon-brown juvenal feathers, paler towards the forehead.

*Podilymbus podiceps antillarum* Bangs: an incubating bird was observed August 14, with young hatched two days later. A trio of adults weighed: ♂ 325, 345; ♀ 355 grams respectively, while a nearly full-grown female, in immature plumage, weighed 247 grams. These weights are notably less than those recorded by Paynter (*Bull. Yale Peabody Mus.*, 9:22, 1955) for the typical subspecies in Yucatán in winter.

*Bubulcus ibis ibis* (Linnaeus): a flock of 150 Cattle Egrets noted daily during September at Finca Dayaniguas in Pinar del Rio, always with the same herd of Brahman cattle. Three specimens from this flock are now in the Villalba Collection at the University of Havana. A few were seen about Lake Ariguanabo in mid-November. The species has since been found in Oriente.

*Dendrocygna arborea* (Linnaeus): becoming rarer in Cuba; formerly common, now rare in the Lanier Swamp, Isle of Pines. Young, beginning to assume feathers (perhaps six weeks old), were seen south of San Cristobal, Pinar del Rio, in early October. Adults were in extremely worn plumage at this time.

*Aix sponsa* (Linnaeus): downy young seen in Pinar del Rio in late September.

*Oxyura dominica* (Linnaeus): young of about eight weeks (heads still downy, primaries breaking sheaths) seen in Pinar del Rio, Sept. 16. Specimens taken at this time weighed: ad. ♂ 386, im. ♂ (in first year plumage) 387; ad. ♀ 445, im. ♀ (in first year plumage) 275 gm. The subadult birds have notably wider, paler margins to the feathers of the back and wing coverts, and more fluffy, almost downlike feathers on the underparts with distinct wide pale margins which, due to the relative sparseness of the feathering in this area, give a rather mottled effect.

*Buteogallus anthracinus gundlachii* (Cabanis): not a shy species and apparently becoming rarer. Two seen and two more heard during a day's walk to the south coast of the Isle of Pines.

*Grus canadensis nesiotus* Bangs and Zappey: said to be very common in the Zapata Swamp where they are a staple in the local diet. Two flocks of 13 and 16 seen in Pinar del Rio, south of Paso Real, in September and December.

*Pardirallus maculatus inoptatus* (Bangs): abundant in the Zapata Swamp. A female laying was taken Sept. 16. Heard (?) Isle of Pines, Nov. 6. Weight: ♂ ♂ 195, 198; ♀ ♀ 153, 167, 190 gm. Local name (at Santo Tomás = Las Mercedes, Za-

pata), "Gallinuela Color-Guineo." Call: infrequent deep, chesty grunting; also a clucking *tuk-tuk-tuk*, etc., gradually accelerating.

Among the rails, the breeding season seemed to be at its height in September. Half-grown young *Rallus elegans ram-sideni* Riley, (local name; "Martillera"), were found in Pinar del Rio in December. *Porzana flaviventer gossii* (Bonaparte) was laying on Sept. 9.

*Porzana carolina* (Linnaeus): a subadult female taken Sept. 9 at Dayaniguas represents an early record for this species.

*Porphyryla martinica* (Linnaeus): a male Purple Gallinule in the subadult greenish-brown plumage was collected August 27 at Aguada de Passajeras, Las Villas, near the eastern edge of the Zapata Swamp. The bird had greatly enlarged gonads indicating that it might be capable of breeding, although in immature plumage. The forehead shield was swollen and tumid, although dull colored. Nests of this species were seen on Sept. 9.

Among other species, week-old young of *Gallinula chloropus cerceris* Bangs were found in early September. *Fulica americana* Gmelin, on the other hand, would seem to breed earlier, as nearly full-grown young were seen in September.

*Chlidonias niger surinamensis* (Gmelin): a male was taken from a flock of four on Sept. 16 at Dayaniguas in Pinar del Rio.

*Geotrygon montana montana* (Linnaeus) and *Geotrygon chrysis Salvadori*: both species were common on the Isle of Pines near the Lanier Swamp. Although found in the same forest, the former was more inclined to be near water and in damper places, while the latter was seen in slightly drier areas and was noted more often perched in trees.

*Staroenas cyanocephala* (Linnaeus): not encountered on the Isle of Pines although said to have been fairly common in the past. In Cuba found rather commonly on the hillsides north of Candellaria in Pinar del Rio. Call: two notes, fast and rather deep like a soft fog horn.

*Aratinga euops* (Wagler): a flock of 25 were noted at Santa Tomás in the Zapata Swamp, associated with a flock of *Amazona*.

*Coccyzus americanus americanus* (Linnaeus): a young bird out of the nest but not yet flying was found at Soledad on August 28.

*Glaucidium siju siju* (d'Orbigny): the collection of fifteen of these Owlets both on Cuba and the Isle of Pines shows that Ridgway's race, *vittatum*, from the Isle of Pines (Bull. U.S. nat. Mus., No. 50, Pt. 6:782,805, 1914) should be recognized. Eight birds from the Isle of Pines seem grayer, more heavily barred as Ridgway points out, and are larger: Cuba, wing ♂♂ 88-92; ♀♀ 98-103; Isle of Pines, wing ♂♂ 94, 95; ♀♀ 102-109 millimeters. In weight there is a distinct correlation; Cuba, ♂♂ 55, 55, 57 (one 75 gm. = ♀?); ♀♀ 66.5, 73.5 (one 55 = ♂?); Isle of Pines, ♂♂ 65, 68, ♀♀ 84 (2), 85, 89 (2), 92 gm. Thus there is a difference of as much or more than ten grams between the corresponding sexes, an average of twelve to fifteen per cent of the body weight of the birds. Call: a high squeaking. In December, a male on the Isle of Pines uttered a slowly repeated *too too, too*.

*Gymnoglaux lawrencii* Sclater and Salvin: common in the damp forests of Santo Tomás in the Zapata Swamp, common also in the forest near Paso Piedras on the Isle of Pines. The collection of a series of nine specimens shows that Bangs' race, *exsul*, from western Cuba and the Isle of Pines cannot be upheld. The race *exsul* (Proc. New Engl. Zool. Cl., 4:91, 1913) was separated on the basis of being less reddish and more dusky brown above, with the white spots on the dorsum being larger and more numerous. Dr. Paynter has assisted us by comparing Bangs' original series, which he notes show the characters enumerated by Bangs, but as in our series, these characters do not remain distinctive when additional specimens of later date are compared. Call: usual note (♂?) is a soft accelerating *Coooo-cooo-coo-cu-cu-cu*, etc., becoming somewhat higher pitched at the end. The reply (♀?) is an alto *hui, hui, hui, hui*, more clearly separable into syllables, and slower than the rather similar cry of the *Glaucidium*.

*Caprimulgus cubanensis cubanensis* (Lawrence): Nightjars were common in the region of Las Mercedes, Zapata Swamp,

and near Lanier Swamp, Isle of Pines. The only specimen collected at the Zapata Swamp in mid-October, proved to be the migrant, *C. carolinensis* Gmelin.

*Colaptes auratus chrysocaulosus* Gundlach: noted commonly at one or two spots in the Sierra del Cristal in Oriente. A pair of specimens from this area are notably erythristic in coloration, apparently an uncommon characteristic of the Cuban population.

*Riparia riparia riparia* (Linnaeus): seen commonly in flocks during September in Pinar del Rio.

*Corvus palmarum minutus* Gundlach: found only at Finca La Manaja near Matahambre in Pinar del Rio where a flock of eight were seen. The "cao" is unknown now at Porto Esperanza. Nearer the hills, through the pines to the bases of the sugar loaves, local information was that the crow (possibly this species) had been common in the past, but had disappeared along with the parrots and parakeets when the deciduous woods were lumbered. La Manaja has a deciduous grove. A pair weighed: ♂ 315; ♀ 263 gm. Call: a low *craa*, *craa*.

*Vireo gundlachi* Lembeye: a juvenal bird just ready to fly was taken at Soledad in mid-August. A gray specimen of this species, exhibiting the phenomenon of schizochroism, almost totally devoid of lipochrome pigment in the plumage, was collected on the Isle of Pines, Oct. 29, and another was seen. In color this specimen closely resembles the species *Vireo vicinior* Coues from the far western United States and northwest Mexico.

*Dendroica pensylvanica* (Linnaeus): a single specimen was taken in mangroves at Finca Dayaniguas Sept. 24.

*Teretistris fernandinae* (Lembeye): a common species in the lowlands at sea level from the eastern Zapata Swamp west, and also on the Isle of Pines. Weight: ♂ 11.5—13.75; ♀ 10.5, 10.75 gm. Not breeding at this time.

*Teretistris fornsi* Gundlach: seen only at 2500 feet above sea level in the mountains above Nicaro. Three females weighed: 10.5 (2); 11.25 gm.

*Torreornis inexpectata* Barbour and Peters: the Zapata Finch was seen three times in October near Las Mercedes, always in small flocks. The birds work over a low bush in much the same manner that warblers do, occasionally uttering a hissing note. Will respond to hissing by the observer. Local name "Gorrión." The following weights were recorded: ♂ ♂ 26.5, 27; ♀ ♀ 25, 27; ♀ 26 gm.