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A New Subspecies of *Icterus icterus* and Other Notes on the Birds of Northern South America

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During two trips along the left bank of the Río Meta in southern Apure, Venezuela, from Puerto Páez to the Colombian border, for the Phelps Collection, from August 4 to 30, 1963, and June 3 to 23, 1964, Manuel Castro, our collector, obtained a series of a new subspecies of *Icterus icterus* from Paragüito to the frontier where the river enters Venezuelan territory. The Meta, one of the largest tributaries of the Orinoco, traverses a vast area of grassland, the llanos, with isolated patches of woodland and gallery forest along the rivers.

Early in 1965, Reinaldo Morales, of the Venezuelan-Brazilian Mixed Boundary Commission, made a small collection of birds for us on the Cerro de la Neblina, at the boundary between Brazil and Venezuela, at the extreme eastern end of the Sierra Imeri on the lower slopes of Zuloaga Peak, Cardona Peak, and Phelps Peak. Cerro de la Neblina is a sandstone tepui (mesa) rising precipitously from heavily forested level lowlands. Among these birds are three species and two subspecies new to Brazil, which are listed below. A few other taxonomic and distributional comments on Venezuelan birds are included.

We thank the staff, and especially Mr. Eugene Eisenmann, of the American Museum of Natural History for access to their collections and for their help in our work there, and the late Dr. W. H. Phelps for his

¹ Phelps Collection, Apartado 2009, Caracas, Venezuela.

important aid. We are also indebted to Dr. J. Dorst of the Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle, Paris, to Dr. Raymond A. Paynter, Jr., of the Museum of Comparative Zoology at Harvard College, to Dr. Oliverio Mario de Oliveira Pinto of the Departamento de Zoologia of the Secretaria da Agricultura, São Paulo, Brazil, to Dr. Alphonse R. Hoge of the Instituto Butantan, also of São Paulo, to the authorities of the Museu Nacional in Rio de Janeiro, Museo de Biología of the Universidad Central de Venezuela, and to the Museo de Ciencias Naturales, Caracas, for their help and the use of specimens in their institutions. Specimens listed are in the Phelps Collection, Caracas, unless otherwise specified. The names of colors are capitalized when direct comparison has been made with Ridgway (1912). Wing measurements are of the chord. Original citations, type localities, and ranges can be found in Phelps and Phelps (1958 and 1963).

Otus albobularis meridensis (Chapman)

Chapman (1923) described the race *meridensis*, with type locality Es-corial, near Mérida, Venezuela. Later Phelps and Phelps (1953) described a race *Otus a. obscurus* with type locality Cerro Pejochaina, Cumbre, Alto Río Negro, Sierra de Perijá, Zulia, Venezuela; 2300 meters.

Since the description of *obscurus*, we have collected further specimens: three males and one female at Páramo La Negra, Mérida. Also, we have examined two other specimens in the Museo de Biología of the Universidad Central de Venezuela at Caracas, namely, one male and one unsexed skin from Mucuy, near Tabay, Mérida. A restudy of the topotypical series, together with the above six additional specimens, shows that the difference in color is not constant and that the difference in wing length is less than 5 per cent, which is not sufficient as the only character on which to continue the separation of the Perijá population, so we synonymize *obscurus* with *meridensis*.

Campylopterus duidae duidae (Chapman)

Two skins from the Brazilian frontier on the Cerro de la Neblina, Territorio Amazonas, Venezuela, collected April 2, 1965, at 2400 meters, extend the range of the species to Brazil from Venezuela.

Picumnus pumilus Cabanis and Heine

A male and two females from Tahuapunto, Rio Uaupés, Brazil, in the American Museum of Natural History extend the range of the species to Brazil from Maipures, Colombia, on the Orinoco River.

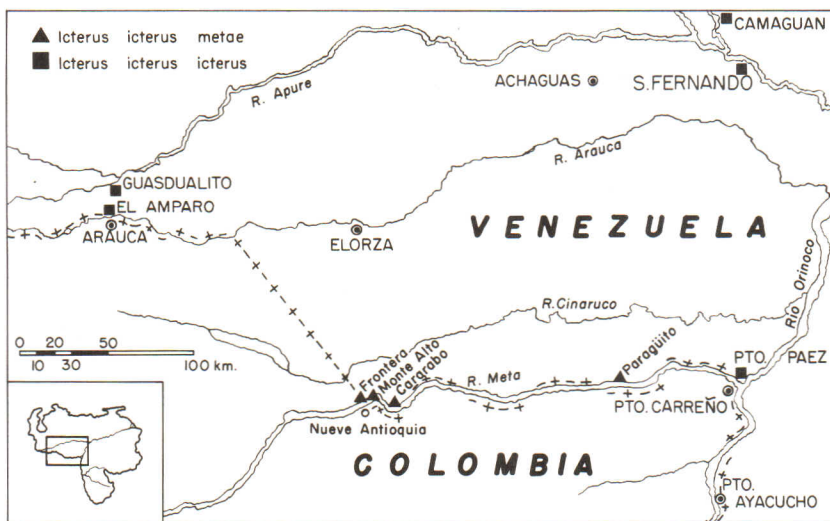


FIG. 1. Known localities for *Icterus icterus icterus* and *Icterus icterus metae* in the state of Apure, Venezuela.

Picumnus olivaceus eisenmanni, new name

This name replaces *Picumnus olivaceus perijanus* Phelps and Phelps (1953, p. 3) which is a junior homonym of *Picumnus cinnamomeus perijanus* Zimmer and Phelps (1944, p. 5). We dedicate this bird to Mr. Eugene Eisenmann, Research Associate in the American Museum of Natural History, who has always been most generous to all of us at the Phelps Collection with his sound advice. He has been of great help to us in our researches in that Museum, and it was he who called our attention, after so many years, to having used a preoccupied name.

Phacellodomus rufifrons inornatus Ridgway

We have a male taken at the frontier with Colombia, on the left bank of the Río Meta, altitude 100 meters, August 20, 1963. The frontier is locally called "La Raya." It is situated one hour by motor launch above the settlement of Cararabo which consists of 12 inhabited houses; the Venezuelan National Guard is stationed there. The surroundings at this time of year are flooded savannas, brush, pools, and estuaries. The nearest localities in Venezuela where we have collected this species are San Fernando de Apure and Guasdualito on the Apure River.

This specimen extends the range of the genus to Colombia from Venezuela.

Machetornis rixosa flavigularis Todd

After study of additional material, we now find that *Machetornis rixosa obscuradorsalis* described by Phelps and Phelps (1947, p. 66) from Ciudad Bolivia, Barinas, Venezuela, is a synonym of the race *flavigularis* Todd from El Tocuyo, Estado Lara, Venezuela.

Myiarchus crinitus boreus Bangs

We have the following specimens: one male, Machiques, Zulia; one male, one female, El Vigía, Mérida; one male, Zea, Mérida; one male, one female, San Fernando de Atabapo, Territorio Amazonas. Phelps and Phelps (1963, p. 187) did not identify these specimens subspecifically, but they have now been identified by Dr. Wesley E. Lanyon, Associate Curator of Ornithology in the American Museum of Natural History, as the northern race, thus extending the range of this subspecies to Venezuela.

Troglodytes rufulus wetmorei Phelps and Phelps

A male specimen was collected at the Brazilian frontier on the Cerro de la Neblina, Territorio Amazonas, Venezuela. It extends the range of the subspecies to Brazil from Venezuela.

Turdus serranus fuscobrunneus (Chapman)

We have the following additional specimens: one male, Páramo Tamá, Venezuela, altitude 2500 meters, February 27, 1941; one female, Río Chiquito, Hacienda La Providencia, Táchira, altitude 1900 meters, February 4, 1955. They extend the range of this subspecies from Colombia to Venezuela. Previously we had erroneously identified the Páramo Tamá specimen as *T. s. atrosericus* (Lafresnaye).

Turdus olivater kemptoni Phelps and Phelps

A male from the Brazilian frontier on the Cerro de la Neblina, Territorio Amazonas, Venezuela, collected March 25, 1965, at 2450 meters extends the range of the subspecies to Brazil from Venezuela.

Icterus icterus metae, new subspecies

TYPE: Adult male, Phelps Collection No. 66686, Caracas; from Cararabo, Meta River, Apure, Venezuela, 100 meters; collected June 8, 1964, by Manuel Castro; presently on deposit at the American Museum of Natural History.

DIAGNOSIS: Differing from the other two subspecies, *I. i. icterus* (Linné) and *I. i. ridgwayi* (Hartert), in having the black of top of head less extensive, without reaching nape (which it approaches in some specimens but in an irregular form); in having the black band on back narrower, white on wings less prominent, and distal part of wing coverts usually black, which shows the white band of wing interrupted in the middle.

RANGE: KNOWN thus far only in the extreme southwestern part of the state of Apure along the Meta River from Paragüito to the Colombian frontier.

DESCRIPTION OF TYPE: Forehead, crown, sides of head, throat, upper breast, band across upper mantle, upper surface of remiges, greater wing coverts, rectrices and fine lines on posterior crown on nape, black; nape and hind neck, lower mantle, rump, upper tail coverts, sides of neck, lesser wing coverts, lower breast, sides, abdomen, shanks, and under tail coverts Orange Chrome \times Cadmium Orange; middle wing coverts, outer edge of secondaries, except distally, white, forming a conspicuous white band crossed midway by black on distal part of greater coverts which are white; under surface of remiges grayish brown; under wing coverts and bend of wings Lemon Chrome \times Apricot Yellow.

Soft parts, according to collector's labels: bill (in life) "black," with base of lower mandible "nacre"; feet "dark gray"; iris "yellow." Wing, 105 mm.; tail, 90; culmen from base, 31; tarsus, 34.

REMARKS: Sexes similar in color, but females slightly smaller. Size similar to that of *I. i. icterus*. Range of measurements: Seven adult males, including type: wing, 103–110 (105.8) mm.; tail (five), 80–94 (91.2); culmen from base, 30–33.5 (31.2); width of black band across back, 20–25 (22.5); six adult females; wing, 93–101 (97.8); tail (four), 84–97 (88.7); culmen from base, 29–30 (29.2); width of black band across back, 20–25 (22.5). Measurements of *I. i. icterus*: Five adult males: wing, 106–109 (107); tail, 91–95 (93); culmen from base, 29–31 (30.1); width of black band across back (12 specimens), 32–39 (34.5); five adult females: wing, 100–103 (101.6); tail, 88–89 (88.6); culmen from base, 26–28 (27.2); width of black band across back (10 specimens), 30–35 (33.3).

On none of the specimens of *metae* does the black of the top of the head reach the nape. There is great variability in this character; all the specimens are different from one another.

A juvenile of undetermined sex was collected on August 4 in Cararabo. It differs from the juvenile of *I. i. icterus* and that of *I. i. ridgwayi* in having the white of the wings limited to the secondaries. The black of the top of the head ends at the nape, as in the juveniles of the other two subspecies, but not in such a clearly delimited line. It is similar to the adult of *metae*,



FIG. 2. *Icterus icterus metae*, lateral view.



FIG. 3. *Icterus icterus icterus*, lateral view.



FIG. 4. *Icterus icterus metae*, dorsal view.

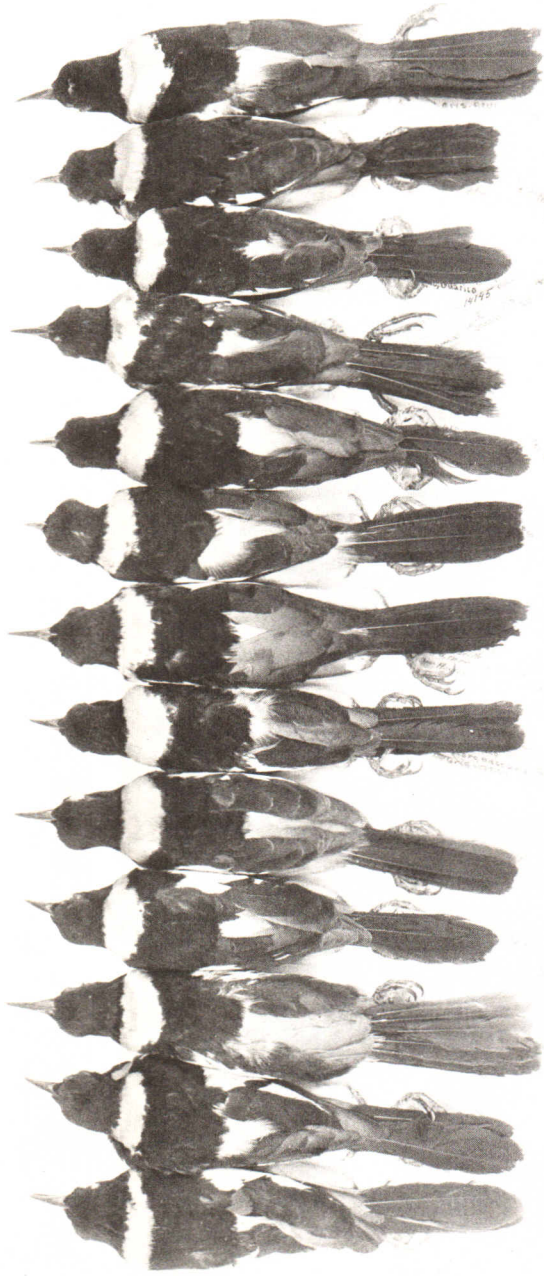


FIG. 5. *Icterus icterus icterus*, dorsal view.

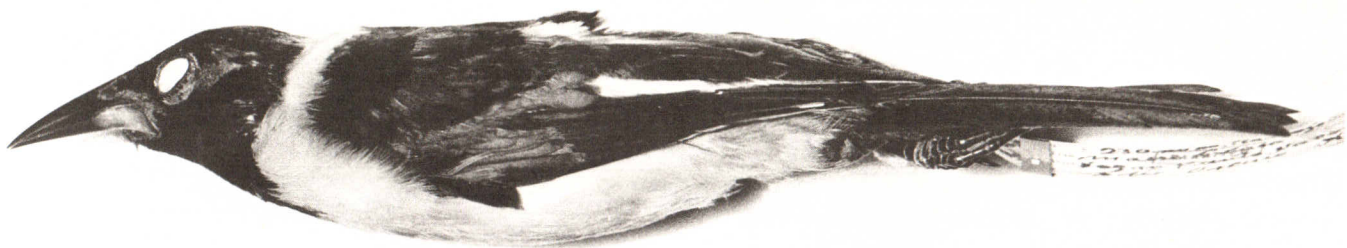


FIG. 6. *Icterus icterus metae*, juvenal plumage.

but the orange color is yellower and the black has a brownish tone without brilliance; moreover the white on the wings does not appear on the wing coverts as in the adult. Some new feathers are colored as in the adult.

This new subspecies appears to be intermediate between the two other subspecies of *I. icterus*, which have the top of the head entirely black and the band across the mantle wider, and the species *I. croconotus* Wagler, from the Amazon basin and British Guiana, which has the black on the top of head limited to the forehead and the black band across the mantle in many cases interrupted in the middle. The possibility that the population of *I. i. metae* is the result of recent hybridization between *I. icterus* and *I. croconotus* appears remote, because the nearest specimens of *Icterus croconotus* to *I. i. metae* were taken one at 1000 kilometers to the east in the Takutu River, British Guiana, and the other 1100 kilometers to the south in Mocagua in Colombia, on the Amazon River. The species *I. jamacaii* (Gmelin) from eastern Brazil seems also to be very close to the species *I. icterus*, the only apparent difference in plumage being that the white on the wings of *I. jamacaii* is confined to the secondaries as in the juvenile of *I. i. metae*. The most conspicuous difference in plumage between the species *I. croconotus* and *I. jamacaii* is that *I. jamacaii* has the pileum entirely black and *I. croconotus* has the pileum orange except for a narrow black frontal band.

Our five specimens from Puerto Páez approach *I. i. metae* in the width of the back band and in less prominent wing band, whereas the sixth, a specimen in the Museo de Ciencias Naturales, Caracas, is similar to *I. i. icterus*.

Hellmayr (1937, pp. 139–141) considered *croconotus* to be a subspecies of *I. jamacaii*. He also wrote in a footnote "*I. jamacaii* is probably conspecific with *I. icterus*." Pinto (1944, pp. 571–572) maintained the separation of the species *jamacaii* and *croconotus*. De Schauensee (1951, p. 998) also considered them separate species. Svend Frisch and Johan Dalgas Frisch (1964, pp. 193–194) commented (translated): "For some time now ornithologists have been debating the complex problem of species and subspecies in relation to the orioles in Brazil. One decision accepted by several ornithologists, including Hellmayr, is that there is only one species divided into three subspecies. Others, led by Oliverio Pinto, have discarded this decision in favor of two distinct species. We are inclined to agree with the latter, as in addition to the slight difference in color between *Icterus jamacaii* of the northeast and *Icterus croconotus* of the Mato Grosso, their songs are markedly different."

This series of troupials from the Meta is of special interest not only

because it is a distinct new subspecies but also because it raises the problem of relationship with the Amazonian *I. croconotus*. Although there is a suggestion of intermediacy, *I. croconotus* seems restricted to the forested Amazonian drainage, whereas *I. icterus* is primarily a species of the savannas of the middle and lower Orinoco drainage and the arid Caribbean littoral.

Nevertheless the great variability in the color of the crown in *metae*, no two individuals being alike, suggests that there was some secondary intergradation between the two forms in the past, or even possibly along rivers connecting the Amazon and Orinoco systems at the present time.

SPECIMENS EXAMINED

I. i. ridgwayi: Venezuela: Zulia: Paraguaipoa, 2 ♂, 2 ♀; Cojoro, 1 ♂; Santa Cruz de Mara, 1 ♂. Falcón: 38. Lara: Quebrada Arriba, 1 ♂; El Cují, 1 ♂. Isla de Margarita; 17, 4.¹

I. i. icterus: Venezuela: Carabobo: Urama, 1 ♀. Miranda: Carenero, 1 ♀; Aricagua, 1 ♂; San Antonio de Yare, 1?. Anzoátegui: Barcelona, 2 ♀, 1?; Píritu, 1 ♂; Bergantín, 1 ♂, 1?. Monagas: Maturín, 1 ♀. Portuguesa: Acarigua, 2 ♂. Cojedes: El Baúl, 1 ♂. Guárico: Palenque, 1 ♂, 2 ♀; Camaguán, 1 ♂, 1 ♀; Calabozo, 1 ♂, 1 ♀; Cabruta, 1 ♀; Altigracia de Orituco, 3 ♂, 1?; Santa María de Ipire, 1 ♂; Carretera de Camaguán, 1 ♂, 1 ♀. Apure: El Amparo, 1 ♂, 1 ♀; Guasdalito, 2 ♂; San Fernando de Apure, 1 ?juvenile; San Camilo, 1 ♂, 1 ♀. Bolívar: Caicara, 2 ♂, 1 ♀.

I. i. icterus × *metae*: Venezuela: Mouth of the Río Meta, Apure: Puerto Páez, 2 ♂, 2 ♀, 1 juvenile, 1 ♂.²

I. i. metae: Venezuela: Río Meta, Apure: Cararabo, 5 ♂ (including type), 3 ♀, 1 ?juvenile; Monte Alto, 1 ♂, 1 ♀; Paragüito, 1 ♀. Colombia-Venezuela: Frontier, where the Río Meta enters Venezuelan territory, 1 ♂ 1 ♀.

I. c. croconotus: Ecuador¹: Río Suno, 1 ♂, 3 ♀; Río Napo, 2 ♂, 2?. Brazil: Amazonas: Nhamunda, Bom Jardim,³ 1 ♂, 1 ♀; Itacoatiara,³ 1 ♂; Río Anebé,³ 1 ♂ juvenile; Foz do Rio Curuá,³ 1 ♀; Lago Canacari, 1 ♂,⁴ 1 ♂³; Manacapurú,³ 1 ♂. Pará: Monte Alegre,¹ 1 ♂; Igarapé de Paituna, Monte Alegre,⁴ 1 ♂; Santarem,⁴ 3 ♀; Patana, near Obidos,³ 1 ♀; Conceição do Araguaia,³ 1 ♂, 1 ♀. Goiás: Ilha do Bananal,³ 1?; Rio Branco,⁴ 3?. British Guiana: Takutu River,¹ 1 ♂.

I. jamacaii: Brazil: "Brazil,"¹ 2 ♂. Goiás: 31.⁴ Maranhão: Marianapolis,³ 1 ♂; Ipiranga, Rio Mearin,³ 2 ♂. Piauí: Panagua,¹ 1 ♂. Ceará: Ceará, 21⁴; Baturité,¹ 1 ♂; Pacoti, Serra Baturité,³ 1 ♂; Icarai,³ 1 ♂, 4 ♀; Itapipoca,³ 2 ♀; Acudinho,³ 1 ♂. Paraíba: Curemas,³ 3 ♀, 3 ♂. Alagoas: Palmeira dos Índios,³ 2 ♂, 1 ♀; Quebrangulo,³ 1 ♀. Bahia¹: Bahia, 3 ♂, 2?; Buritarama,³ 3 ♀, 1 ♂; Curupeba,³ 1 ♂; Bom Jesus da Lapa, Rio San Francisco,⁴ 2 ♂. Minas Gerais: Pirapora,¹ 1 ♂; Brejo Januaria,⁴ 1 ♀.

¹ Specimens in the American Museum of Natural History.

² Specimens in the Museo de Ciencias Naturales, Caracas.

³ Specimens in the Museu de São Paulo.

⁴ Specimens in the Museu Nacional de Rio de Janeiro.

Diglossa duidae duidae Chapman

Five specimens collected at the Brazilian frontier on the Cerro de la Neblina, Territorio Amazonas, Venezuela, March 3 to 28, 1965, between 2300 and 2500 meters, extend the range of the species to Brazil from Venezuela.

Spinus magellanicus longirostris (Sharpe)

A male taken at the frontier with Colombia, on the left bank of the Río Meta, altitude 100 meters, August 20, 1963, constitutes an extension of the range of the subspecies to Colombia from the Gran Sabana, Venezuela, British Guiana, and Brazil. For a description of this locality, see above under *Phacellodomus rufifrons inornatus*.

Atlapetes personatus jugularis Phelps and Phelps

A female collected at the Brazilian frontier on the Cerro de la Neblina, Territorio Amazonas, Venezuela, on March 25, 1965, at 2450 meters in altitude, extends the range of the species to Brazil from Venezuela.

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