

ORNITHOLOGY.—*A new race of bird of the genus Spodiornis from Venezuela.*¹

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The curious avian species *Spodiornis rusticus*, at present placed in the family Fringilidae, is of scattered and erratic distribution in Central and South America from the

mountains of eastern Veracruz in México south to northern Bolivia. In Venezuela it has been known from 10 skins of *Spodiornis rusticus rusticus*, the typical race, collected on Cerro del Avila in the mountain near

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Caracas. A specimen taken by the junior author on Cerro Chimantá-tepui in the Guayana Highlands of Venezuela, south of the Río Orinoco, has been of especial interest for its extension of the known range to an isolated locality. After careful study we have determined this to represent an unknown form, and present its description.

Spodiornis rusticus arcanus, n. subsp.

Characters.—Similar to *Spodiornis rusticus rusticus* Tschudi² but blacker, more sooty gray above, and darker below.

Description.—Type, Phelps Collection no. 36,128-A, male, taken at 1,850 meters elevation near the summit on the western side of Cerro Chimantá-tepui, Estado Bolívar, Venezuela, July 13, 1946, by W. H. Phelps, Jr.; on deposit in the United States National Museum. Above blackish slate, shading to dark neutral gray on the sides of the head and rump; below neutral gray, with a slight amount of dull white in the center of the abdomen, and as edging on the larger under tail coverts; rectrices and remiges slate-black. Iris brown, maxilla black, mandible gray, tarsus brown (in life).

Measurements.—Wing 70.8, tail 46.5, culmen from base 12.1 (approximate), tarsus 19.5 mm.

Range.—Known only from the type locality near the summit of Cerro Chimantá-tepui, south-eastern Bolívar, Venezuela.

Remarks.—The type, the only individual seen, was collected in low bushes near the summit of Chimantá-tepui, which is a table-top mountain of sandstone, with an area of more than 400 square miles, and an elevation of about 2,000 meters, located in the western part of the Gran Sabana region of southeastern Venezuela. The locality where the bird was found is covered with dense, subtropical plant growth, so that it is likely that the main part of the range of the form is found across the summit, where the cover of smaller trees and bushes is more open. No *Spodiornis* has been taken on the 14 other great sandstone mountains where collections have been made to date in the vast Guayana Highlands, between Roraima and Uei-tepui, on the British Guiana border, and Duida and Paraque in the region of the upper Orinoco.

² *Phrygilus rusticus* Tschudi, Arch. Naturg. 10 (1): 290. May 1844. (Perú.)

The type specimen is unique but differs so definitely from a fair series of the typical form that there is no hesitance in allocating it a new name. The tip of the maxilla is broken, causing the bill to appear blunt, which serves to change the appearance of the head considerably, as these birds have sharply pointed bills. By chance the tongue has remained in place, its tip, under low magnification, being distinctly brushlike. It seemed at first that the whole tongue was fringed, but careful cleaning revealed that the fimbriate area was confined to the tip instead of continuing down the sides as at first supposed. The sharply pointed rectrices with the inner web cut away at the tip, a character of the genus *Spodiornis*, are peculiar. While placed in the Fringillidae it may be observed that the form of the tail and of the tongue suggest affinities with the Coerebidae, which in fact is the family in which P. L. Selater originally described *Spodiornis*. A further unusual character is the posterior lengthening of the gonys so that the gonydeal angle is at the level of the posterior margin of the nasal fossae, instead of well anterior to that point as is usual in Fringillidae.

The latest treatment of *Spodiornis*, that of Hellmayr,³ recognizes three subspecies to which the present description adds a fourth. *Spodiornis rusticus barrilesensis* Davidson, of Costa Rica, and Chiriquí in western Panamá, has a slightly larger bill, and while somewhat darker than *rusticus* is definitely lighter, less sooty gray, than *arcanus*. *S. r. uniformis* from near Jalapa, Veracruz, which has not been available for examination, is described as being larger, but the difference from *barrilesensis* seemingly is slight. According to Ridgway⁴ the wing measures 76 mm, whereas Hellmayr gives it as 75 mm.

Material available for comparison (adult males only) has been as follows:

Spodiornis rusticus rusticus: ECUADOR: Sumaco Arriba, Quito, below Calacali. COLOMBIA: Cachirí and Buenos Aires, Province of Santander del Norte.

Spodiornis rusticus barrilesensis: COSTA RICA: Carrillo and Navarro.

³ Cat. Birds Amer., Field Mus. Nat. Hist., zool. ser., 13 (pt. 11): 369-371. 1938.

⁴ U. S. Nat. Mus. Bull. 50 (pt. 1): 521. 1901.