

# POSTILLA

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**Yale** PEABODY MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

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# Postilla

YALE PEABODY MUSEUM

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## RARE MIGRATION AND WINTERING RECORDS FROM THE YUCATAN PENINSULA

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While collecting ornithological specimens from October, 1948 to August, 1949 in the territory of Quintana Roo, on some of the islands off the east coast of the peninsula, and for a short while in the state of Yucatan, a number of wintering and migrating North American species were taken. Some of these specimens constitute new, or rare, records for the peninsula and cast additional light on the winter range and migration routes of common North American birds. The specimens referred to hereinafter are incorporated in the collections of the Peabody Museum. A comprehensive report on my Yucatan Peninsula collection is in preparation.

*Numenius americanus* Bechstein

Long-billed Curlew

The Long-billed Curlew has been recorded from Cozumel Island by Salvin (Ibis, 1889: 379) but never from the mainland of the peninsula. However, on March 31 while at Vigia

Chico, an abandoned village on Ascension Bay, Quintana Roo, a flock of five curlews was seen flying about a quarter of a mile off shore. On April 7, again at Vigia Chico, eight curlews were found on a sand-bar a short distance from the shore. They could be studied with binoculars with ease but were too far out to be collected.

*Catoptrophorus semipalmatus inornatus* (Brewster)

Western Willet

The only example of this species seen was a male which was collected in southern Quintana Roo at Xcalac on February 3. The willet has been recorded from Yucatan by Lawrence (Ann. Lyc. N. Y., 9: 210, 1878) and on Cozumel Island by Salvin (*Ibid.*: 379). Ridgway (Bull. U. S. Nat. Mus., 50 (8): 317, 1919) has listed these records under *C. s. semipalmatus* but apparently he did not examine the specimens and merely assumed only the eastern race occurred on the peninsula. It seems probable that both races do occur there but, until the old specimens can be examined, *inornatus* is the only race definitely recorded.

*Steganopus tricolor* Vieillot

Wilson's Phalarope

Wilson's Phalarope has never been recorded from the Yucatan Peninsula. There are numerous records from central Mexico and the migration of the species through the lower portion of the peninsula is not unexpected. The only specimen seen was a lone male which was taken on May 19 at Laguna Chacanbacab (also called Laguna Alton), a large shallow body of water in Quintana Roo near the border of Campeche at the

base of the peninsula. The date is unusually late for a bird so far south (see, *e.g.*, Bent, Bull. U. S. Nat. Mus., 142: 28, 1927) but the specimen was exceedingly thin and may have been unable to migrate farther north.

*Caprimulgus carolinensis* Gmelin

Chuck-will's-widow

On April 5, at Cayo Culebra, Ascension Bay, a single specimen of this species was secured. No others were seen or heard. It has never been found on the peninsula or nearby islands and presumably does not winter there. During the first week of April the arrival of a wave of migrants composed of a number of diurnal species was noted and presumably this species was among them.

*Tyrannus tyrannus* (Linnaeus)

Kingbird

On April 3 we began field work on Cayo Culebra and secured two specimens of this species from the great number which was present. The Kingbird was not found on the mainland previous to this date but, upon our return on April 7, it was seen quite frequently during the months of April and May whenever we were in rather open country. Both Salvin (*Ibid.*: 362) and Boucard (Proc. Zool. Soc. Lond., 1883: 448) reported the species abundant in northern Yucatan in the same months.

*Bombycilla cedrorum* Vieillot

Cedar Waxwing

A very rare species on the mainland of the peninsula. A single waxwing was seen feeding in the sea-wrack at Xcalac on February 2 and another bird was seen and collected at

Tabi (an Indian village about twenty miles northwest of Carrillo Puerto, Quintana Roo) on March 12. The only previous mainland record was a bird which was taken at Izalam, Yucatan in February, 1879 (Boucard, *Ibid.*: 442). Griscom (Amer. Mus. Novit. No. 236: 4, 1926) found the species abundant on Cayo Centro, Chinchorro Bank in January, 1926, but it was not present during my field work in February, 1949.

*Vireo virescens virescens* Vieillot  
Red-eyed Vireo

One specimen was taken at Carrillo Puerto on April 8 and another at Chetumal, Quintana Roo on April 14. These were the only ones seen. The Red-eyed Vireo apparently passes through the Yucatan Peninsula in early April and has moved north by the time *Vireo v. flavoviridis* returns in large numbers in mid-April. Boucard (*Ibid.*: 441) records a specimen taken at Silam, Yucatan, in November by Gaumer but he notes, "No specimens sent to me." It would seem that the record is an error since no one has collected this vireo during the fall or winter months in spite of extensive collecting. The only previous record was a bird heard singing on April 3 by Cole at Chichen Itza (Bull. Mus. Comp. Zool., L (5): 136, 1906).

*Limnothlypis swainsonii* (Audubon)  
Swainson's Warbler

A specimen taken on February 12, forty-six kilometers west of Chetumal, is the third record of this species for the Yucatan Peninsula. Although rare, it seems to occur regularly in the lower portion of the peninsula where little collecting has been done.

*Helmitheros vermivorus* (Gmelin)

## Worm-eating Warbler

The Worm-eating Warbler has been recorded twice before from the mainland and once from Cozumel Island. The fourth record for the region was secured forty-six kilometers west of Chetumal on February 17.

*Vermivora pinus* (Linnaeus)

## Blue-winged Warbler

Boucard (*Ibid.*: 440) reported the only previous record of this species which presumably was collected in Yucatan. On March 12, while at Tabi, a single specimen was seen and collected.

*Vermivora peregrina* (Wilson)

## Tennessee Warbler

A male was collected on Cayo Culebra, Ascension Bay, on April 6. The few existing records for this species are from Cozumel Island. It has not yet been found on the mainland.

*Dendroica tigrina* (Gmelin)

## Cape May Warbler

This warbler regularly winters in the West Indies. The only previous Mexican records are both from the Yucatan Peninsula. Boucard (*Ibid.*: 440) reported a bird in Yucatan and Peters collected one in Quintana Roo (*Auk*, XXX: 387, 1913). I secured one on Cayo Norte, Chinchorro Bank on February 4. Its presence on Chinchorro is not surprising since these small islands have great West Indian affinities, as does Cozumel Island to the north.

*Dendroica caerulescens caerulescens* (Gmelin)

## Black-throated Blue Warbler

One specimen taken on Cozumel Island on January 12. This is the second record of this species for the island, again indicating the island's affinities with the Antilles.

*Dendroica castanea* (Wilson)

## Bay-breasted Warbler

One of the most interesting discoveries resulting from the work on the Yucatan Peninsula was the presence of the Bay-breasted Warbler in great numbers in early May. The only other Mexican record I have been able to discover was a bird taken at Tehuantepec (Lawrence, Bull. U. S. Nat. Mus. 4: 15, 1876). Unfortunately, I was present in Chetumal only two days during the migration of the species and my data is not so abundant as might be desired. Previous to the days in Chetumal I was in the city of Merida, and after that time in the rainforests in the middle of the peninsula. In neither locality did I see the species. However, on May 6 two specimens were taken at different localities in the low second growth outside the town of Chetumal. On the next day one specimen was taken, on a short trip to the outskirts of the town, and five more were seen mixed in with a flock of yellow warblers (*Dendroica aestiva*) and Magnolia Warblers (*Dendroica magnolia*). It would appear then, from the lack of records from central Mexico, that the species migrates through Central America and up through the Yucatan Peninsula and then across the Gulf of Mexico.

*Piranga olivacea* (Gmelin)

## Scarlet Tanager

The Scarlet Tanager appears to be another species which migrates through the peninsula in the manner of the Bay-breasted Warbler. The first specimen seen was collected on April 1 outside of Chetumal. Field work took me to regions less suitable for the species during the month but on May 5 another specimen was taken at Chetumal. There are only a few other records for the peninsula although Boucard (*Ibid.*: 443) states it is common near Merida, presumably in the spring.