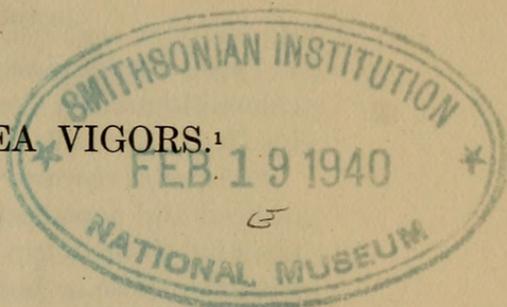


PROCEEDINGS
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THE RACES OF *SITTA PYGMAEA* VIGORS.¹

BY A. J. VAN ROSSEM.



As long as twenty-five years ago Mr. Ridgway (Birds of North and Middle America, 3, 1904, p. 457, footnote) mentioned certain differences between the Pygmy Nuthatches of Mexico, the Rocky Mountain district and California, but lacking proper material from California, he did not attempt further subdivision of the species. The present writer has lately had the opportunity of examining adequate series from Lower California, the California coastal district, the Sierra Nevada and the Rocky Mountains, as well as a small series from Chihuahua. Most important of all is the fact that these series are made up for most part of birds in fresh, unabraded plumage whose characters are unobscured by wear. Comment on the geographic characters displayed is given below.

Sitta pygmaea pygmaea Vigors.

MONTEREY PYGMY NUTHATCH.

Sitta pygmaea Vigors, Zool. Beechey's Voyage, 1839, p. 25, pl. 4 (Monterey, California).

Range.—Coast of California from Monterey Bay north to Mendocino County.

Remarks.—The range occupied by typical *pygmaea* is much more restricted than was formerly supposed. I have examined specimens collected at many stations from Monterey Bay to Mendocino City and Gualala, Mendocino County, but I know of no coastal records north of these two latter points. The record for Vancouver Island has been shown to be an error (Swarth, Birds of British Columbia, 1925, p. 115).

The color characters distinguishing *pygmaea* from *melanotis* (see postea) are more brownish pileum and nape, combined with a relatively indistinct ocular streak which is never prominent and in extreme cases so nearly

¹Contribution from the California Institute of Technology.

concolor with the head as to be almost indistinguishable. From *chihuahuae* it is set off by much shorter wing, slightly larger bill and somewhat paler dorsal coloration. Forty-five specimens examined.

***Sitta pygmaea melanotis*, subsp. nov.**

ROCKY MOUNTAIN PYGMY NUTHATCH.

Type.—Male adult; no. 25,938 collection of Donald R. Dickey; Chiricahua Mountains, Cochise County, Arizona; September 19, 1919; collected by H. H. Kimball; original no. 3102.

Subspecific characters.—Similar in size to *Sitta pygmaea pygmaea*, but top of head and nape decidedly darker and more slaty (less brownish); streak from bill through eye broader and often nearly black, contrasting strongly with the white or buffy white malar region. Differs from *Sitta pygmaea leuconucha* in decidedly smaller size and very much darker coloration.

Range.—Rocky Mountain region of the United States (and British Columbia?) from the United States-Mexican boundary north, at least to northern Idaho; west to eastern Washington, eastern Oregon, the Sierra Nevada and south to the San Bernardino Mountains in southern California.

Remarks.—The characters of this form are best developed in the Rocky Mountain region. The Sierra Nevada, San Gabriel and San Bernardino population is individually extremely variable, but adequate series from all these mountains show that in mass aggregate, they should be referred to this form. In southern California, intergradation with *leuconucha* is very gradual and birds from the extreme southern Sierras, Mt. Pinos, the San Gabriel and San Bernardino Mountains are definitely larger than northern Sierra and Rocky Mountain series. These intergrades have heretofore been called *leuconucha*, probably on account of their approach to that race in size. Ninety-seven specimens examined.

***Sitta pygmaea leuconucha* Anthony.**

SAN PEDRO MARTIR PYGMY NUTHATCH.

Sitta pygmaea leuconucha Anthony, Proc. Calif. Acad. Sci., Ser. 2, no. 2, October 11, 1889, p. 77 (San Pedro Martir Mountains, Baja, California, Mexico).

Range.—San Pedro Martir Mountains, Lower California, north through the Sierra Juarez to the Cuyamaca and San Jacinto Mountains of California.

Remarks.—*Leuconucha* in typical form occurs only south of the Lower California boundary. Birds from north of that point are somewhat intermediate toward *melanotis*, but a good series from the San Jacinto Mountains demonstrates clearly that *leuconucha* extends to that range.

Compared with the other races, *leuconucha* is characterized by largest size, particularly of bill; paler, more ashy coloration of the upper parts, and least buffy underparts. I can not agree that the amount of white on the nape is of diagnostic value. Fifty-one specimens examined.

Sitta pygmaea chihuahuae, subsp. nov.

CHIHUAHUA PYGMY NUTHATCH.

Type.—Male adult; no. 115,701, Museum of Comparative Zoology; Mound Valley, Chihuahua, Mexico; September 3, 1905; collected by W. W. Brown, Jr.

Subspecific characters.—Most nearly like *Sitta pygmaea pygmaea* and, like that form, with pileum tending to brownish rather than slaty, and streak through eye ill defined; but dorsal coloration slightly darker, wing longer and bill shorter. Measurements of type: wing, 67.0 mm.; tail, 35.0; culmen from base, 15.0.

Remarks.—Ridgway has previously commented on the similarity in color of Californian and Mexican examples and the present investigation verifies his findings in this respect. Except for the longer wing, shorter bill and slightly darker color of the head, there is nothing to distinguish specimens from these two widely separated regions. They are, however, separated from one another by the wide territory occupied by *melanotis*. I have examined 20 specimens of this race, only 8 of which are suitable for purposes of comparison. All are from the State of Chihuahua, Mexico.

In addition to the splendid series of Pygmy Nuthatches in the collection of Mr. Dickey at the California Institute of Technology, I wish to express my appreciation for the loan of specimens by the Museum of Comparative Zoology and the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology.

MEASUREMENT TABLE.

	<i>Wing.</i>	<i>Tail.</i>	<i>Culmen from base.</i>
<i>pygmaea</i> 17 ad. ♂'s from Monterey Co., Cal.	60.0–63.0 (61.8)	30.0–33.0 (31.8)	15.0–17.7 (16.3)
<i>melanotis</i> 21 ad. ♂'s from the Rocky Mts.	61.0–66.0 (63.3)	30.0–36.0 (33.6)	14.9–16.9 (16.0)
<i>leuconucha</i> 10 ad. ♂'s from San Pedro Martir Mts.	66.0–70.0 (68.0)	35.0–39.0 (36.5)	17.4–19.0 (18.2)
<i>chihuahuae</i> 4 ad. ♂'s from Chihuahua	63.0–67.0 (65.5)	32.0–35.0 (33.7)	14.1–15.1 (14.7)



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