

THE NOMENCLATURE AND VALIDITY OF CERTAIN  
NORTH AMERICAN GALLINÆ.

BY E. W. NELSON.

*Plates XIV and XV.*

IN 'THE IBIS' for April, 1902 (pp. 233-245), Mr. Ogilvie Grant has a paper entitled 'Remarks on the Species of American Gallinæ recently described and Notes on their Nomenclature.' In this the author gives characteristic expression to a sweeping condemnation of the recent work done in this group by American ornithologists. Among thirty species and subspecies described or revised under old names by American workers since the publication of Mr. Grant's Volume XXII of the 'Catalogue of Birds in the British Museum' in 1893 he considers only four worthy of recognition.

After reading the paper in 'The Ibis' one is prompted to ask if Volume XXII was intended by its author to fix the limit of knowledge in that direction. This is not the first instance, however, in which our critic has differed radically from the views of American ornithologists as shown by his disposal of the commonly recognized subspecies of the Ruffed Grouse, in the cited Vol. XXII.

The tone of absolute finality with which he treats the subject in his recent paper would lead the uninitiated to believe that there could be no appeal from his decisions. In reality, however, in a number of instances they contain such a mixture of misstatement and misrepresentation that they would be unworthy of notice except that they might be accepted at face value by those unfamiliar with the facts. In his recent paper he gives an interesting revelation of the point of view and the methods by which he reaches some of his extraordinary conclusions. No weight is given to the intimate knowledge of the topography and geographic distribution in their territory possessed, usually as the result of years of study and field work, by American ornithologists. On the contrary Mr. Grant appears to approach the subject quite unhampered by any embarrassing knowledge of American geography and to be quite unaware that distribution and varying physical conditions have any real bearing on American ornithology.



This is shown by the confidence with which he makes a comparison of two specimens of the same subspecies from different parts of its range and thereby disproves the existence of another subspecies in quite a distinct and distant faunal area. To render still simpler the process of rejecting species described by American ornithologists our critic does not hesitate to doubt or even deny the existence of characters and specimens not seen by himself.

In 'The Auk' for July, 1902 (pp. 309-311) Dr. J. A. Allen pertinently comments on some of Mr. Grant's remarks concerning various species found north of the Mexican boundary. The following notes are mainly limited to a reply to the strictures on the species described by myself from Mexico. In order to give a clear idea of the basis for my work on the Mexican Gallinæ, so summarily disposed of by Mr. Grant, a few details are necessary.

For about twelve years I have been engaged in a biological survey of Mexico, during which time I have traversed in detail all but an insignificant part of the country. Throughout this period specimens of birds have been collected with the special object of illustrating geographic distribution and variation. Our collection contains about 400 specimens of Mexican Gallinæ, representing all but two or three of the known species, and usually including specimens taken at (or near) the type locality. In studying this material, together with that in the U. S. National Museum, whenever I have found series of specimens from separate districts showing easily recognized differences, and these characters are backed by my personal knowledge that the localities in question are in different faunal areas, my inference has been that the characters thus separating the birds were of specific or subspecific value, as the case might be. During the progress of my work I have constantly consulted Mr. Robert Ridgway who coincides in all of my conclusions regarding the Mexican Gallinæ. Our specimens in this group have also been examined by various other ornithologists who take the same view in the matter. Mr. Grant's condemnation of my work therefore falls with equal force upon the judgment of a number of the best American ornithologists.

Fortunately some of the species treated by my critic have characters sufficiently marked for photographic reproduction, as shown on the accompanying plates.



**Meleagris gallopavo** *Linn.* In reply to my surmise that this name should be referred to the birds which the Spaniards introduced into continental Europe (and which were taken thence to England) probably from the mountains of Vera Cruz, Mr. Grant "cannot see any possible ground for such a supposition," and says "the fact remains that the 'Turkey Cock' figured by Albin in 1740, on which the Linnæan name was founded, can only have been of West or North Mexican origin." To give thus positively the exact origin of the bird from which Albin's crude, diagrammatic figure of a domestic turkey is taken is pure assumption — for Albin says not a word on the subject.

**Meleagris gallopavo merriami** *Nelson.* Mr. Grant states that by contrasting my specimens of this bird with examples of *M. gallopavo* and *M. americana* and avoiding a comparison with *M. g. intermedia* (with which he says it is "obviously synonymous") I would have it considered very distinct. As a matter of fact I did compare the series of *merriami* with a series of *intermedia* before describing the former, but in the preliminary description only published the results of the comparisons with the two forms with which there was or might have been a possible contiguity of range. *M. g. merriami* and *M. g. intermedia* occupy very distinct faunal areas separated by a broad belt of desert country unsuited to any form of *Meleagris*.

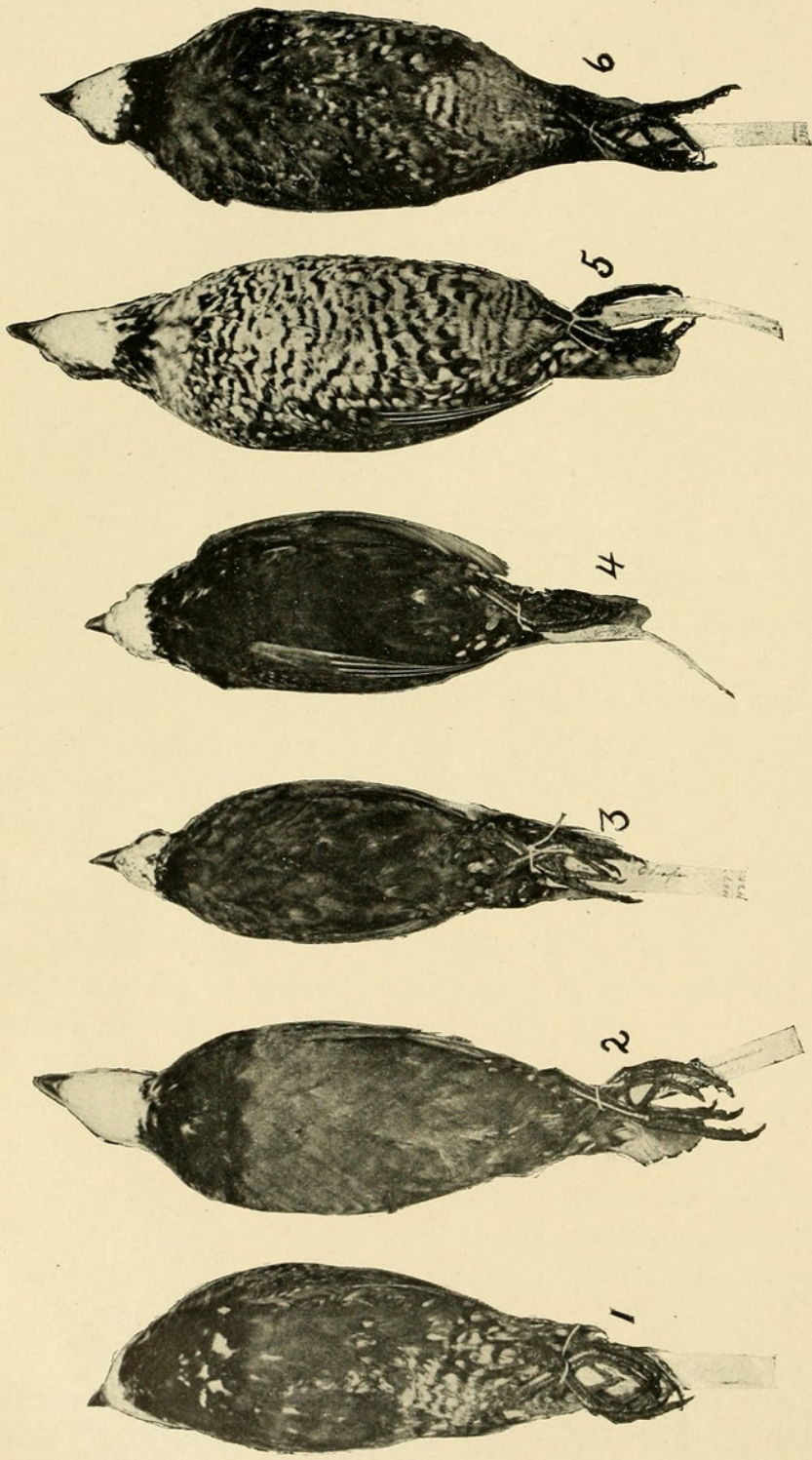
The Committee on Nomenclature of the American Ornithologists' Union has recently compared *M. g. merriami* with its relatives — including *M. g. intermedia* — and found it to be distinct, while Mr. Grant does not claim ever to have seen a specimen of this form.

**Dendrortyx oaxacæ**, **D. macrourus griseipectus**, **D. macrourus striatus** and **D. macrourus dilutus**. Our collection contains twelve specimens of these birds instead of four. Furthermore my familiarity with the region in which the various forms of this bird occur enables me to affirm positively that the differences upon which these birds were described have a definite geographic significance.

**Callipepla gambeli fulvipectus**. This form is rejected because Mr. Grant has examined a specimen of a female bird from Hermosillo, Sonora, and finds it the same as *C. gambeli*!







SPECIES AND SUBSPECIES OF COLINUS.

- |                                    |                                     |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. <i>C. pectoralis.</i>           | 4. <i>C. godmani.</i>               |
| 2. <i>C. graysoni nigripictus.</i> | 5. <i>C. virginianus texanus.</i>   |
| 3. <i>C. minor.</i>                | 6. <i>C. virginianus maculatus.</i> |



DESCRIPTION OF PLATE XIV.

- ✓ Fig. 1. *Colinus pectoralis* (Gould). ♂ from Carrizal, Vera Cruz. Neck and breast with a broad black collar underlaid with much more or less concealed white; rest of underparts to crissum plain *dark* rufous; crissum irregularly marked with black, white and rufous (in some specimens nearly plain rufous).
- ✓ Fig. 2. *Colinus graysoni nigripectus* Nelson. ♂ from Atlixco, Puebla. Decidedly *larger* than *C. pectoralis*; pectoral black collar rather narrower with less concealed white; rest of underparts plain *light* rufous except for a few black and white marks on under tail-coverts.
- ✓ Fig. 3. *Colinus minor* Nelson. ♂ from Palenque, Chiapas. Decidedly *smaller* than *C. pectoralis* (even smaller than *C. godmani*). Narrow, poorly defined black collar below white throat patch; rest of underparts plain dark rufous clouded with black on borders of feathers, with a few white marks on under tail-coverts.
- Fig. 4. *Colinus godmani* Nelson. ♂ from Jaltipan, Vera Cruz. Somewhat larger than *C. minor*; differs mainly from latter in much darker colors, especially below; underparts from throat patch to crissum bright black with some shading of rufous; the black predominating in this bird as the rufous does in *C. minor*.
- Fig. 5. *Colinus virginianus texanus* (Lawr.). ♂ from Matamoros, Tamaulipas. White throat patch bordered by a poorly marked, narrow black collar followed by a narrow *pale reddish* pectoral band; most of breast and rest of underparts strongly barred with black and white.
- ✓ Fig. 6. *Colinus virginianus maculatus* Nelson. ♂ from Atla Mira, Tamaulipas. Size about as in *C. v. texanus*; differs from latter mainly in broader more strongly marked black collar and in having breast and rest of underparts to crissum *dark rufous* spotted and mottled more or less sparingly and posteriorly with black and white.



Nelson, Edward William. 1902. "The Nomenclature and Validity of Certain North American Gallinæ." *The Auk* 19, 386–391.

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