

DESCRIPTION OF A NEW TURKEY.

BY GEORGE B. SENNETT.

IN 1879, in the 'Bulletin of the United States Geological Survey', Vol. V, No. 3, p. 428, I called attention to the probable distinctness of the Turkey found on the lower Rio Grande in Texas, but hesitated to characterize it for lack of specimens. Since that time I have obtained a fair series of both sexes which convinces me that the bird of this region represents a well-marked subspecies. I propose to call it

Meleagris gallopavo ellioti.

RIO GRANDE TURKEY.

Similar in coloration to *M. gallopavo* in its neck, mantle, upper wing-coverts and breast, but differing in having the back and rump jet black; in certain lights all the feathers show a subapical silvery gray bar of about half an inch in width, with slight rosy reflections, and a narrow line of the same hue on the extreme tip. Feathers of lower back extending over the tail also black with a metallic coppery bronze subapical bar, and broadly tipped with dark ochraceous buff. Upper tail-coverts, save the lower series, chestnut with irregular narrow black cross lines, succeeded by a broad black bar, widest in its central portion, with metallic coppery bronze reflections, and broadly tipped with dark ochraceous buff. The lowest series of upper tail-coverts is also deep chestnut, irregularly crossed with black and tipped with ochraceous buff and without a vestige of the subapical black bar so conspicuous in the other feathers. Tail mottled with pale chestnut and black, taking the form of irregular bars on the lateral feathers, with a subapical black band, and tipped with ochraceous buff. Under tail-coverts black, with metallic green, bronze, and red reflections, and broadly tipped with dark ochraceous buff.

The young male resembles the adult, except in having breast and under parts, flanks, back, and rump, conspicuously tipped with ochraceous buff.

The adult female is black with the iridescent hues seen in the male on back, wings, and under surface. All the feathers of the upper surface have black subapical bars, and the tips grayish, becoming broader on the lower back and rump, while the feathers of the under surface have pale buff tips. The tips of the upper tail-coverts are ochraceous, but paler than in the male, while the under tail-coverts closely resemble those of the male. The tail also resembles that of the male, but with paler tips.

Types: adult ♂, No. 569, my collection, Lomita Ranch, Hidalgo Co., Texas, April 13, 1878; adult ♀, No. 5533, my collection, Cameron Co., Texas, March. 6, 1888.

The range or habitat of this race, so far as known at the present time, is restricted to the lowlands of eastern Mexico and southern Texas. It will probably not be found south of Vera Cruz, nor is it likely to be met with to the north beyond the Brazos River of Texas, its range being thus restricted within about ten degrees of latitude. Wherever timber and food are in abundance we find this new form common to the coast and lowlands, and we could not expect to find it at an altitude exceeding 2000 feet above sea-level; while the variety *mexicana* is found only at the higher altitudes from 3000 to 10,000 feet above the sea.

So far as the wild state of the country embraced in the habitat of *M. g. ellioti* allows us to judge, there is no sign of its intergrading with any other form. All the specimens that have come under my observation are remarkably alike, and when compared with the other races show a decidedly marked contrast.

The material on which I base my description is as follows: — Three fine adult males: first, the type taken at Lomita Ranch on the Rio Grande, by myself, on April 13, 1878; second, one taken by my collector, John M. Priour, at Victoria in the State of Tamaulipas, Mexico, April 22, 1888; and third, one taken by F. M. Chapman on the Nueces River, not far from Corpus Christi, Texas, in the latter part of April, 1891. Also two young males taken by my collector, M. A. Frazar, at Lomita Ranch, Hidalgo Co., Texas, Jan. 16, 1881; two adult females, and parts of a dozen other birds which, taken together, show the characters of the race.

In comparing with the other forms, I have access to the figure of the type of *Meleagris mexicana* Gould, in Elliot's 'Birds of North America', Vol. II, pl. 38, exhibiting the bird half its natural size; also to two fine adult females of *M. g. mexicana* in the American Museum of Natural History, New York, which were collected by Dr. Mearns in the high altitudes of Arizona; and of the eastern form several truly typical specimens which are in the mounted collection of the American Museum.

M. g. ellioti can be distinguished from the other forms by its dark buff edgings on tail and upper and lower tail-coverts, in

contrast with the white color on the same parts of *mexicana*, and the deep, dark, reddish chestnut of the same parts in *M. gallopavo*, the eastern United States bird. The lower back is a deep blue black and is wanting in those brilliant metallic tints so prevalent in the eastern bird and in the type of *mexicana*. The primaries of the wing are black with white bars in contrast with *M. gallopavo* the primaries of which are white with black bars; in this respect the new race more nearly resembles *M. g. mexicana*, and approaches *M. g. osceola* of Florida described by Scott, which has narrow, white bars on the primaries. The adult female is darker than that of the other races, and the decided dark ochraceous buff edgings will separate it from the white of *mexicana* and from the dark reddish chestnut of *M. gallopavo*. In the young of both sexes the edgings of all the feathers are paler or lighter than those of the adults, but in all cases the buff is present, while in the other races the edgings are either red or white.

It gives me pleasure to name this new Turkey after my friend, Mr. D. G. Elliot, who, both in his published works and in field study has, in a greater degree than any other ornithologist, made a specialty of the game birds of America.

THE DWARF SCREECH OWL (*MEGASCOPS FLAMMEOLUS IDAHOENSIS* MERRIAM).

BY DR. C. HART MERRIAM.

(Plate II.)

IN STUDYING the bird life of a limited area in the summer season it is usually possible to secure specimens of most of the diurnal species. Not so, however, with the Owls, and the difficulty increases inversely with the size, and is greatly augmented in the case of species that spend the day in holes in trees. As a rule these species are obtained by chance. Who has not heard small Owls about his camp fire at night for weeks, or even



1892. "Description of a New Turkey." *The Auk* 9, 167–169.

<https://doi.org/10.2307/4067939>.

View This Item Online: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/54323>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2307/4067939>

Permalink: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/partpdf/89051>

Holding Institution

Smithsonian Libraries and Archives

Sponsored by

Smithsonian

Copyright & Reuse

Copyright Status: Public domain. The BHL considers that this work is no longer under copyright protection.

This document was created from content at the **Biodiversity Heritage Library**, the world's largest open access digital library for biodiversity literature and archives. Visit BHL at <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org>.