

NOTES

REFUTATION OF WYOMING NESTING RECORD OF THE PACIFIC WREN

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The nesting status of the Pacific Wren (*Troglodytes pacificus*) in Wyoming is not clear. According to several sources (Hellmayr 1934, AOU 1957, Peters 1960, AOU 1998, Dickinson 2003, Clements 2007), Wyoming is not part of the distribution, but this is contradicted by several other sources. On the basis of two immature specimens (USNM 228577 and 228578), collected by Alexander Wetmore in the Tetons on 27 August and 15 September 1910, Phillips (1986) suggested there might be an undescribed subspecies that nests in northwest Wyoming. Saucier examined these specimens and confirmed they are Pacific Wrens, already in adult plumage, although they appear lighter and grayer than specimens from elsewhere. Cary (1917) is the only additional paper we have found mentioning these specimens. We cannot exclude the possibility that they were migrants from elsewhere in the distribution (Toews and Irwin 2012), as information on the schedule of the Pacific Wren's migration in the Rocky Mountains is still lacking. Wyoming has two winter records of the Pacific Wren but none for fall (D. W. Faulkner pers. comm.).

According to Faulkner (2010), there is one record of nesting and five other summer reports of the Pacific Wren for Wyoming. These include two documented reports of singing birds in the Tetons during late June of 1981 and 1985; while nesting seems possible, there was no further evidence. The other three reports are undocumented (Faulkner 2010). The only physical confirmation of nesting in the state is reportedly a single specimen taken from a nest with two fledglings in the Freezeout Hills of central Wyoming in 1897 (Knight 1902, Ridgway 1904, McCreary 1939, Faulkner 2010). Unfortunately, at some point between 1897 and 1910, this specimen was removed from the University of Wyoming Museum of Vertebrates (UWYMV) and could not be located for examination (Faulkner 2010).

Specimens housed at UWYMV were not properly curated for decades; many of them were removed and placed in a poorly organized teaching collection. While recently inventorying, organizing, and returning specimens from the teaching collection that belong in the vertebrate collection, Maley found the missing specimen (UWYMV 740). Charles W. Gilmore collected it on 15 July 1897 along Tepee Creek, Freezeout Hills, Carbon County. Gilmore was an undergraduate in the Department of Zoology hired to assist Wilbur C. Knight in collecting and preparing specimens (Faulkner 2010). Knight (1902) reported that Robert Ridgway identified the specimen. Notes written on other specimen tags indicate that Ridgway identified several specimens collected during the 1890s and now housed at UWYMV.

Examining the specimen closely, we identified it as a juvenile House Wren (*T. aedon*). It is a small, short-tailed wren that is slightly more brightly colored than an adult House Wren. The bird has gray scalloping on the breast, a whitish throat and breast, and buffy flanks and undertail coverts. It lacks the rich cinnamon coloration characteristic of adult (UWYMV 751, 752) and immature (USNM 228577, 228578) Pacific Wrens that we examined. The exposed culmen measures 7.8 mm, the wing chord 43.4 mm, the tail 17.5 mm, and the tarsus 15.6 mm. The bill and wing length are below the range of adults of either species (Pyle 1997). The tail is growing in and also shorter than the range of either species (Pyle 1997). It may not have been made

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clear to Ridgway that this was a juvenile taken from the nest, not one of the parents. We compared the plumage and measurements to a specimen of a juvenile House Wren (UWYMV 2191) that either was about to fledge or had recently fledged and found them to be very similar. Therefore we conclude that despite suspected nesting of Pacific Wren in Wyoming, this has yet to be confirmed.

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