THREE NEW MIGRATORY BIRD SPECIES REPORTED FROM HISPANIOLA

MIGUEL A. LANDESTOY¹, PEDRO G. RODRÍGUEZ¹, AND STEVEN G. Latta¹,²

¹Sociedad Ornitológica de la Hispaniola, Ave. Maximo Gomez, esq. San Martin, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic; ²Point Reyes Bird Observatory, 3820 Cypress Dr., Petaluma, California 94924; current address: National Aviary, Allegheny Commons West, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15212; e-mail: steve.latta@aviary.org

Abstract: We report the occurrence of three species of migratory birds new to the island of Hispaniola, including Swainson’s Thrush (Catharus ustulatus), Scarlet Tanager (Piranga olivacea), and Eastern Wood-Pewee (Contopus virens). All were seen and photographed during the fall migration period in southwestern Dominican Republic. Other vagrants seen during the same time period are also mentioned.

Key words: Catharus ustulatus, Contopus virens, Dominican Republic, Eastern Wood-Pewee, Hispaniola, Piranga olivacea, Scarlet Tanager, Swainson’s Thrush

Resumen: TRES ESPECIES DE AVES MIGRATORIAS REGISTRADAS EN LA HISPANIOLA. Divalgamos sobre la ocurrencia de tres especies de aves migratorias nuevas a la isla de la Hispaniola, incluyendo Catharus ustulatus, Piranga olivacea, y Contopus virens. Todas fueron vistas y fotografiadas durante el período de la migración de otoño en el sudoeste de la República Dominicana. Mencionamos otras especies raras también que vimos durante el mismo período.

Palabras clave: Catharus ustulatus, Contopus virens, Hispaniola, Piranga olivacea, República Dominicana

Résumé : OBSERVATION DE TROIS NOUVELLES ESPÈCES D’OISEAUX MIGRATEURS À HISPANIOLA. Nous rapportons la présence de 3 nouvelles espèces d’oiseaux migrateurs pour l’île d’Hispaniola : la Grive à dos olive (Catharus ustulatus), le Tangara écarlate (Piranga olivacea) et le Pioui de l’Est (Contopus virens). Elles ont toutes étaient observées et photographiée pendant la migration d’automne au sud-ouest de la République Dominicaine. D’autres espèces accidentelles observées à la même époque sont mentionnées.

Mots-clés : Catharus ustulatus, Contopus virens, Grive à dos olive, Piou de l’Est, Hispaniola, Piranga olivacea, Republique Dominicaine, Tangara écarlate

HISPANIOLA OCCUPIES a central location among landmasses in the West Indies and is thus a major crossroads of migration (Keith et al. 2003). Numerous migratory birds pass through the island or overwinter in the Dominican Republic and Haiti (Raffaele et al. 1998, Latta et al. 2006). Nonetheless, a number of migratory species have been recorded on Cuba, Jamaica, and other Caribbean islands that are perhaps more intensively explored by birdwatchers, so new records are still to be expected from Hispaniola. Here we report details for three new species for Hispaniola and several other vagrants, all in the Dominican Republic.

NEW SPECIES

SWAINSON’S THRUSH (CATHARUS USTULATUS)

At about 11:00 hr on 16 October 2005, Landestoy observed a thrush fly into mesquite scrub at Las Calderas Naval Base near Las Salinas de Bani, Peravia Province, Dominican Republic. At this coastal site, habitat patches include salt lagoons, commercial salt ponds, open mangroves, dry scrub with cactus and mesquite, and residential gardens. It was identified as a Swainson’s Thrush by its uniformly olive brown upperparts, white underparts with sides of face, throat and breast washed pale buffy, and dark spotting on the sides of the throat and breast (Fig. 1). A distinct buffy eye-ring and lores were unmistakable. Most thrushes on Hispaniola are vagrants or occur at higher elevations (Keith et al. 2003). For example, the superficially similar Bicknell’s Thrush (Catharus bicknelli) is an uncommon to rare winter resident found primarily in montane broadleaf forest (but see Arendt et al. 2004), but the eye-ring and lores are grayer. The only common thrush on Hispaniola, the Red-legged Thrush (Turdus plumbeus), has slaty gray upperparts, reddish legs, bill, and eye-ring, and conspicuous white tail tips (Latta et al. 2006). Swainson’s Thrush was reported once previously in the Dominican Republic based on a “light eye ring” (Bond 1980), but few other details were provided and this species was subsequently treated as hypothetical (Keith et al. 2003). This species has also been reported from Cuba, Jamaica, the Cayman Islands, and the Bahamas (Raffaele et al. 1998), so its occurrence on Hispaniola is not entirely unexpected.
Wash on the breast and sides, two broad whitish wing-bars, and a partial light-colored eye-ring. The bill was dark above, but the lower mandible was extensively yellowish at its base. This bird was readily discernable from the Hispaniolan Pewee which has darker underparts that are gray with an olive-yellow or brown wash, usually lacking or having very inconspicuous buffy wing bars, and the bill is usually darker and pinkish at the base of the lower mandible (Latta et al. 2006). A series of excellent photographs was taken by Rodríguez (Fig. 3). Although the Eastern Wood-Pewee and the very similar Western Wood-Pewee (C. sordidulus) are most reliably separated by voice (McCarty 1996, Bemis and Rising 1999), and the individual seen at Bahía de las Calderas was unfortunately silent, we identified this bird as a hatching year Eastern Wood-Pewee. Consistent with C. virens, this bird had a relatively pale chest with the dusky color of the chest band not extending down the flanks, the back appeared gray tinged with green and contrasted with the more brownish-olive head, and the edgings to the wings were bright and the wingbars equally distinct, characteristics that are all much more consistent with C. virens than C. sordidulus. The distance between the tips of the uppertail coverts and the tip of the tail also appeared longer than is found in most Westerns, which also is a good characteristic (P. Pyle pers. comm.). The extent of black on the tip of the lower mandible indicated a hatching year bird, as younger birds have more black here than do adults, species by species. In addition, while C. sordidulus has been recorded as a vagrant on Cuba and Jamaica (Raffaele et al. 1998), the normal migratory route of C. virens would make this species’s occurrence in the Dominican Republic far more likely than that of C. sordidulus, and it has been previously reported.
from many islands of the West Indies (Raffaele et al. 1998). A similar individual was seen later that same day near the parking lot of the Natural Monument in mixed vegetation of mesquite, mangrove, and sea grape (Coccoloba uvifera), and may have been a second individual.

OTHER BIRD VAGRANTS

Other birds considered vagrant on Hispaniola by Keith et al. (2003) were also recorded at Salinas de Bani on 16 October 2005. These included a Red-eyed Vireo (Vireo olivaceus), previously reported five times on migration; Chestnut-sided Warbler (Dendroica pensylvanica), reported four times previously during migration; Blackburnian Warbler (Dendroica fusca), reported only four times in the past; and Hudsonian Godwit (Limosa haemastica), only the second record since three birds were collected in 1930. More than a week later, on 24 October, Landestoy found single individuals of a Contopus sp. and Swainson’s Thrush at this same site, but it is unknown if these were the same individuals remaining through an extended stopover, or newly-arrived migrants. Also unusual at Rabo de Gato on 11 November were two Baltimore Orioles (Icterus galbula), a rare non-breeding visitor with a dozen previous records from Hispaniola (Keith et al. 2003).

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LITERATURE CITED


