

General Field Notes

Will Cook

North Carolina Editor
418 Sharon Road
Chapel Hill, NC 27514
cwcook@acpub.duke.edu

Dennis M. Forsythe

South Carolina Editor
Department of Biology
The Citadel
Charleston, SC 29409
forsythed@citadel.edu
Fax: (803) 953-7084

A South Carolina Specimen of the Spotted Towhee

William Post

Charleston Museum
360 Meeting Street
Charleston, South Carolina 29403

Jon S. Greenlaw

2813 SW 43d Lane
Cape Coral, Florida 33914-6024

On 19 February 1967, J. O. Watkins collected a Spotted Towhee (*Pipilo maculatus*) at his banding station in Spartanburg, Spartanburg County, South Carolina. The specimen (ChM 67.53; fig. 1) was prepared as a study skin by E. B. Chamberlain. The bird was a female, as determined by plumage. Its age was not determined. The preparator noted that the bird was "quite fat." Its mass was 45.1 g. Although the plumage was frayed, no molt was evident. Linear measurements, as recorded on the specimen label, were as follows: wing, 80 mm; tail, 87.5 mm; tarsus, 24 mm; bill [exposed culmen], 11.6 mm. R. C. Laybourne of the US National Museum determined that the bird belonged to the subspecies *arcticus*, which breeds in the northern Great Plains.

This record was mentioned by Burton (1970), but at that time *maculatus* was considered by the American Ornithologists' Union (1957) to be a subspecies of the "Rufous-sided Towhee" (*P. erythrophthalmus*). Originally, the Spotted Towhee was described as a distinct species (Swainson 1827, Sibley 1950), but later, based on information that it hybridizes with the Eastern Towhee, it was regarded as conspecific with that species (Sibley and West 1959). More recently, however, the hybridization evidence was reevaluated, and information on vocalizations, sexual dichromatism, and mitochondrial genetics were weighed, which resulted in resurrecting *P. maculatus* as a separate species (American Ornithologists' Union 1995, 1998).

Specimen or photographic records now also exist for North Carolina, Georgia and Florida. The North Carolina record is based on a specimen of *P. m. arcticus* collected 14 February 1957 at Fayetteville (Hauser 1960, J.A. Gerwin, pers. comm.). The Georgia record is of a male that was photographed



Figure 1. South Carolina specimen of the Spotted Towhee (ChM 67.53), collected 19 February 1967, Spartanburg, South Carolina, by J.O. Watkins. Digital photograph by P.S. Coleman, archived at Charleston Museum.

at Atlanta, spring 2000 (P. W. Sykes, Jr., pers. comm.). Interestingly, the single Florida specimen was collected in the same year as the South Carolina bird: a female arcticus (misidentified as a male) from Franklin Co., Florida, 14 December 1967 (Stevenson and Anderson 1994, Bowman 2000, Greenlaw and Engstrom forthcoming).

Literature Cited

- American Ornithologists' Union. 1957. Check-list of North American birds, 5th edition. Allen Press, Inc., Lawrence, Kansas. XIII + 691 pp.
- American Ornithologists' Union. 1995. Fortieth supplement to the American Ornithologists' Union Checklist of North American birds. *Auk* 112:819-830.
- American Ornithologists' Union. 1998. Check-list of North American birds, 7th edition. American Ornithologists' Union, Washington, D.C.
- Bowman, R. 2000. Thirteenth report of the Florida Ornithological Society Records Committee: 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, and 2000. *Florida Field Nat.* 28:138-160.
- Burton, E M. 1970. Supplement to South Carolina Bird Life. Univ. South Carolina Press.
- Greenlaw, J S, and R T Engstrom. First record of Spotted Towhee (*Pipilo maculatus*) in Florida. *Florida Field Nat.* Forthcoming.
- Hauser, D C. 1960. A record of *Pipilo erythrophthalmus arcticus* in North Carolina. *Auk* 77:349.
- Sibley, C G. 1950. Species formation in the Red-eyed Towhees of Mexico. *Univ. Calif. Publ. Zool.* 50:109-194.
- Sibley, C G, and D A West. 1959. Hybridization in the Rufous-sided Towhees of the Great Plains. *Auk* 76:326-338.
- Stevenson, H M, and B H Anderson. 1994. The birdlife of Florida. Univ. Press of Florida, Gainesville.
- Swainson, W. 1827. A synopsis of the birds discovered in Mexico by W Bullock, F L S, and H S, and Mr. William Bullock, jun. *Philos. Mag.*, new series, 1:364-369; 433-442.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR AUTHORS

www.carolinabirdclub.org/thechat.html
