



Eremophila alpestris (Alaudidae): A new bird species and family for the Yucatan Peninsula, Mexico

Barbara MacKinnon¹, Jaques Laesser², James Rotenberg³ and Luís I. Tellez⁴

¹ Amigos de Sian Ka'an A.C., Calle 13A No. 98 entre 18 y 20, Itzimná, C.P. 97100, Mérida, Yucatán, México. E-mail: barbaram@sureste.com

² International Tropical Conservation Foundation, Progrés 111a, CH-2300 La Chaux-de-Fonds, Switzerland. E-mail: jlaesser@bluewin.ch

³ Reserva El Eden, Teocaltiche 207, SM 45 M4 L3, Fracc. Villas del Sol, C.P. 77506 Cancún, Q. Roo, México. E-mail: jamier@citrus.ucr.edu

⁴ Viajes Sabe, J.O. de Domínguez No. 90, C.P. 77098, Chetumal, Q. Roo, México. E-mail: sacbettravel@prodigy.com.mx

Resumen

***Eremophila alpestris* (Alaudidae): una especie y familia nueva para la Península de Yucatán, México**

Se reporta el primer registro de *Eremophila alpestris* el 23 de noviembre del 2002, en Progreso, costa norte de la Península de Yucatán, México. La población migratoria más cercana esta en la costa de Texas y posiblemente este individuo cruzo el Golfo de México.

Palabras clave: *Eremophila alpestris*, Yucatán.

Abstract

This note reports on the first record of Horned Lark on November 23, 2002 at Progreso, on the north coast of Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula. The closest migratory population reaches the Texas coast and conceivably this individual crossed the Gulf of Mexico.

Keywords: *Eremophila alpestris*, Yucatán.

Résumé

***Eremophila alpestris* (Alaudidae): une nouvelle espèce et famille d'oiseau pour la Péninsule de Yucatan, Mexique**

Cette note rend compte de la première observation de *Eremophila alpestris* le 23 novembre 2002 en Progreso, sur la côte du nord de la Péninsule du Yucatan, Mexique. Les populations migratrices atteignent les côtes du Texas (USA), et possiblement cet individu a traversé le Golfe du Mexique.

Mots clés: *Eremophila alpestris*, Yucatán.

HUITZIL (2003) 4: 1-2

This note is to report the first record (sensu MacKinnon H. 2002) of the Horned Lark (*Eremophila alpestris*, family Alaudidae) in the Yucatan Peninsula, Mexico. A single female was discovered by BMH on the ground, in disturbed, gravel-grassy habitat, alongside the coastal lagoon south of Progreso, Yucatan on 23 November, 2002. The bird was observed by all eight team members participating in the Yucatan Bird-a-thon between 0700 and 0800. The bird, located 50 meters distant from observers, was thoroughly studied using binoculars and a Bushnell 20-60X60 spotting scope. Species identification was concluded consulting field guides (National Geographic Society 1999, Sibley 2000). JL described field markings into a recorder as he studied the bird through the spotting scope and later that day he completed a sketch of the bird (Fig. 1). All four authors participated in the identification of the bird, a species known previously to three of them.

The Horned Lark breeds in North America from western and northern Alaska, the Arctic coast of northern Canada, Banks, Prince Patrick, Devon, and northern Baffin islands, northern Quebec, northern Labrador, and

Newfoundland and throughout almost all of the United States. Within Mexico it is resident to southern Baja California, central Sonora, in the central plateau, including Tamaulipas on the Atlantic slope and in the interior of Oaxaca (AOU 1998). An isolated and uncommon breeding population on the Pacific coast exists in the Isthmus of Tehuantepec (Binford 1989). Another isolated population exists in the highlands of Colombia's Eastern Andes (Hilty and Brown 1986). However, the northern populations are migratory (Howell and Webb 1995) and conceivably the individual reported here was a migrant from Canada, or the U.S.A., where it has been observed on the Texas coast at Port Bolivar (BMH. pers. obs). Due to the similarities among females (Sibley 2000), the authors do not make any suggestions as to the possible subspecies.

Description noted in the field

A bulky passerine; walked rather than hopped on the ground. Bill strong and dark, tarsus and eyes dark. Crown sand-gray with darker streaks; a wider streak bordering the supercilium; light, wide supercilium entering the area of the forehead so that there is no black between

the crown and the beak; blackish lores barely touching the front of the eyes; white crescent under the eye; moustache region gray-brown but darker than the auricular; auricular sand-gray somewhat darker at the back of the eye stripe; no strong contrast between the auriculars and the nape; nape sand-gray. The throat yellowish with a black collar, but not a solid black; whitish below the collar with fine streaking. Flanks brownish and slightly warmer than the back, reaching to the chest; belly and abdomen white. Back grayish-sand with the center of each feather darker. Tail

and wing feathers contrast and are darker than the back. Outer rectrices white; tail slightly forked; rump tinged like back but slightly lighter.

Acknowledgments

The authors wish to thank the assistance of their teammates in the Yucatan bird-a-thon: María Teresa Püig, Alejandra Silveira Püig, Andrés Sierra, Fabiola Murillo and Haroldo Mesh, in addition to Dr. Héctor Gómez de Silva who reviewed the manuscript.

Literature cited

- Binford, L.C. 1989. A Distributional Survey of the Birds of the Mexican State of Oaxaca. The American Ornithologists' Union, Washington, D.C.
- Hilty, S.L. and Brown, W.L. 1986. A guide to the birds of Colombia. Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey.
- Howell, S.N.G. and Webb, S. 1995. A Guide to the Birds of Mexico and Northern Central America. Oxford University Press, New York.
- MacKinnon H., B. 2002. Check-list of the birds of the Yucatan Peninsula. Amigos de Sian Ka'an A.C. y la Secretaría de Turismo de Yucatán, Mérida, Yucatán.
- National Geographic Society. 1999. Field Guide to the Birds of North America, Third Edition. National Geographic Society, Washington, D.C.
- Sibley, D.A. 2000. National Audubon Society The Sibley Guide to Birds. Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., New York.
- AOU (American Ornithologist's Union). 1998. Check-list of North American Birds. Seventh edition. American Ornithologist's Union, Allen Press, Inc., Lawrence, Kansas.



Figure 1. Drawing of Horned Lark by J. Laesser.

Recibido: 4 de febrero del 2003; Revisión aceptada: 14 de abril del 2003.

Editor asociado: Fernando González-García