



American Museum of Natural History

1892-01
? museum
specimens ?

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Dr. William H. Behle
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201 Biology Building
Salt Lake City, Utah 84112

Dear Bill,

There is no question that the woodpecker in question is a bona fide Dryocopus pileatus. It is AMNH 754950. Determination as to subspecies is more equivocal. Short (1982, Woodpeckers of the World) recognizes only two subspecies, a northern abieticola, and a southern pileatus, distinguished primarily in size, with the southern form having a noticeably shorter bill. The bill of 754950 is small - much smaller than our series of abieticola, and matching most pileatus. Two curators here, independently have put "pileatus ?" on each of the two labels on the specimen.

But all of the above becomes academic, since I think there is good reason to suspect the labels. There are two labels. The older and presumably original label is an AMNH label (with no catalog no.) that reads "214 (collector's no., presumably) ♂ May 21, 1892 Bluff City, Utah, 4500 ft.", with "Rowley" on the reverse side. I suspect that Sanford must have given Rowley some AMNH labels to use in the field. When Sanford (Dr. L.C.) received the specimen, he attached one of his own collection labels to it, and it was cataloged no. 134 in his collection. There was no identification on the original label. On Sanford's label was written "Phlæotomus p. albiaticola ♂ Bluff City, Utah, May 21, 1892, collected by Rowley". Later this was cataloged into the AMNH collection with a stamp on the reverse side, no. 754950. Sanford's card file has this same information appearing opposite no. 134, and this information is repeated in the AMNH catalog opposite 754950. So far, nothing suspicious, and I was about to write you confirming that everything checked out here. But then I noticed some measurements written on the back of Rowley's original label, the one without any identification. These read "Length 6 3/4, Tail 2 1/2, Foot 1 5/16". There's no way that those measurements could apply to a Pileated Woodpecker!

At this point I decided to go through the entire Sanford card file to see if I could spot additional C. P. Rowley specimens, hoping that I might find one missing an original label and fitting the measurements given for the Pileated. Unfortunately, the only other C.P. Rowley specimen in the Sanford collection is a Pinon Jay. It has an original label like that on the Pileated, reading "60 ♂ May 19, 1892, Bluff City Utah, 4500 ft". On the reverse side, no measurements, but "Shot by Soldier Coat's Boy Navajo Indian with Bow and Arrow. Rowley." It has no identification on it,

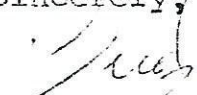
either, but there seems to be no question that he could have taken a Pinon Jay at that locality. Both the card file and the AMNH catalog repeat the same information.

So I'm at a loss how to explain an apparently authentic Rowley label on the woodpecker, which has measurements that are inappropriate. If that label came off another Rowley specimen, leaving that specimen dataless and unworthy of cataloging, conceivably it might have ^{been} erroneously placed on a dataless Pileated from elsewhere in the southeastern states. But that's only speculation. We probably will never know how it happened.

I would conclude that the unlikely probability of a Pileated at Bluff City, coupled with the inappropriate measurements on the original Rowley label, lacking species identification, makes this locality record highly questionable. Agreed?

If you can think of anything else I can do, by way of detective work, let me know. I don't suppose you have any idea what C.P. Rowley collected at Bluff City in May of 1892? Is he a relative of John Rowley and J. Stuart Rowley? Father of John, perhaps?

Sincerely,


Wesley E. Lanyon
Lamont Curator of Birds