

Notes based on Joe Morlan's Ornithology class lecture March 11th, 2010.
Joe Morlan is not responsible for these notes, any errors or omissions in them are mine.

The issue of **collecting birds for science** was discussed. Joe recommends the book "A Parrot Without a Name. The Search for the Last Unknown Birds on Earth" by Don Stap. It describes the work of ornithologists John O'Neill and Ted Parker in South America.

Dive **displays** and sounds of some **hummingbirds**:

Anna's has a J-shaped dive with a pop-sound at the bottom.

Allen's typically begins with a shuttle that goes back and forth, then flies up and does a dive.

At the bottom of the dive the typical sound is a very high pitched machine like whiny sound.

Rufous sometimes starts with a shuttle but usually not. It goes up and does a dive. Then it goes up to another position and does another dive. The starting positions of the dives describe a loop.

The dive sound of Rufous is high and shrill similar to Allen's, but more broken up in a staccato.

We have mostly Anna's and Allen's in GG Park. Allen's are abundant now.

We are getting towards the time when Rufous are expected, they tend to peak in March-April.

They migrate more through the interior where there aren't so many Allen's.

Galliform birds

Chicken-like birds.

Generally plump, fairly large, delicious species with sturdy feet and short, stubby bills. Generally very small heads. Several families.

A great many species have been introduced around the world, primarily for sport hunting.

Guan family

Differ from other chicken-like birds in that they have long rear toes at the same level as the front toes. So the rear toe can function for grasping. In other members of this order the rear toe is short and stubby and also elevated up onto the back of the leg and does not function for grasping. The Guan family birds are more arboreal than other members of the galliform group.

None of them are migratory, many are either rare or critically endangered.

Very difficult birds to see.

Plain Chachalaca

OCCURRENCE

Extreme southern Texas and Mexico.

Numerous other Chachalacas are found in the American tropics. In many areas the species are very shy and secretive. Certainly true of the Plain Chachalaca in most areas where the birds have been hunted. They have been hunted for probably thousands of years. They have an inherent distrust of human beings.

However in the Rio Grande Valley, where there is still a little bit of habitat left, the birds have become used to human beings, especially in areas where they have been protected. For example

the Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuge has signs telling you that the Chachalacas have the right of way. There are feeding stations where you can photograph them. They will actually walk right up to you just like chickens.

Occur in forests and forest edges. There has been a lot of deforestation in the lower Rio Grande and a great deal of effort has been made in the last 50 years to restore some of the original riparian habitat. Most of the restoration that has taken place has been destroyed in the last years by the fence that was put up there by the department of Homeland Security. They are exempted from any environmental regulations so that they are able to act quickly if they think the country is threatened. In Hidalgo County the fence is complete and it will never be taken down. It is not a fence, it is a project in which somebody got a whole lot of money for selling enormous amounts of reinforced concrete.

The Plain Chachalacas come in to feeders that people have along the river.

You'll see them in flocks, sometimes working their way through the tops of the trees.

Since they are non-migratory the only chance to see them in CA would be escaped cage birds.

The name is onomatopoeia for the loud crowing sound given by these birds especially at dawn.

They make a huge racket, usually from the tops of the trees. They are all doing it in unison. In areas where the species still acts fairly wild you can't even see them, they are hiding in the trees.

FIELD MARKS

Plain grayish brown bird.

Bare gray skin on the throat, turns bright red in males during the breeding season.

Really long tail.

Not too likely to be confused with much else, but the Brown Jay, which formerly also occurred along the Rio Grande, is very large and has a long tail with pale corners and looks like a miniature Chachalaca in a lot of ways.

Partridge family

Partridges, grouse, turkeys and old world quail.

Chukar

OCCURRENCE

Introduced for hunting purposes. Readily available by mail order.

There are private hunting preserves which import large numbers of Chukars and release them. Have been established very well in the Great Basin Region and some of the arid desert southwest as well as up in arid areas as far north as British Columbia, mostly in the interior.

Native of rocky, arid hillsides from Turkey eastwards all the way into India. They basically look for habitat that looks like Afghanistan. Main diet is a non-native grass which also grows in that part of the Middle East and which has apparently also been transported and introduced into the western US. They need a source of permanent water which can be hard to find in much of the desert. They are usually seen at watering holes in the early morning and in the evening. They wander around the rocky hillsides mostly on foot and sometimes they can be heard at a considerable distance from the high hillsides.

In CA well established in Mono County and Inyo County. Also apparently present in Lassen County and into Modoc County. There are small introduced populations that seem to be self sustaining. One of them is on Shotgun Pass, the pass that leads from Panoche Valley towards Mercy Hot Springs. There is some BLM-land there, people hunt Chukars out there during hunting

season. Probably a little too grassy, a little too lush to be optimal habitat. There are numerous game farms up in the Grizzly Island area. Chukars are released there for hunting purposes and frequently fly over the fence and end up in the wildlife refuge.

Prolific, the females lay large clutches, they can be bred in captivity very easily. So it is not surprising that Chukars are seen in out of the way places. They may be sold in Chinatown, possibly even alive. Are sold at the Civic Center Farmers Market on Wednesdays, alive. Most people count birds from areas where they are pretty well established for their life list, like the Great Basin, around Westgard Pass in the White Mountains, Shotgun Pass.

FIELD MARKS

Blend in very well with the rocky environment.

Red bill.

Bold black vertical bars on the sides.

Gray body.

VOCALIZATIONS

A kind of a mechanical chukar, chukar, chukar, chukar.

Red-legged Partridge

(Sibley p.135)

Native to southwest Europe (Portugal, Spain, France, introduced in Great Britain).

Also frequently introduced onto game farms, can escape. No established populations in NA.

Extremely similar to the Chukar.

Black spots underneath the black collar.

Gray Partridge

OCCURRENCE

Was introduced even earlier than the Chukar was, also for hunting purposes.

Formerly known as the Hungarian Partridge. Hunters still call it the Hun.

Established in the northern tier of the US, mostly in grassy areas or agricultural land.

Quite shy, not particularly easy to see, declining.

Was on the CA checklist for a while but had to be removed.

It had been reported as introduced successfully in Surprise Valley in Modoc County east of the Warner Mountains. No birdwatchers were ever able to find it there. It turned out that the specimens of Gray Partridge from there were Chukars.

FIELD MARKS

Gray overall.

Some streaking.

Orange face.

Gray bill.