

Bulletin of the

OKLAHOMA ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Vol. I

SEPTEMBER, 1968

No. 2

OKLAHOMA RECORDS FOR THE KNOT

BY JOHN G. NEWELL

THE KNOT (*Calidris canutus*) was first recorded in Oklahoma on September 19, 1941, when Seth H. Low and Wendell Taber saw a Knot with a small flock of Black-bellied Plovers (*Squatarola squatarola*) on the beach of the main reservoir

KNOT IN FLIGHT-DISPLAY OVER ITS NESTING GROUND
From a watercolor painted by George Miksch Sutton on Jenny Lind Island, in the Canadian Arctic Archipelago, in the summer of 1966

at the Salt Plains National Wildlife Refuge, in Alfalfa County. The following day, along the same stretch of shore, Low and Taber saw two Knots, this time separate from other shorebirds (Sutton, 1967, *Oklahoma Birds*, p. 193). All other Oklahoma records for *Calidris canutus* are, with one exception, for the vicinity of Oklahoma City, and all but two are for late summer and fall.

On the two large water-supply impoundments near Oklahoma City — Lake Hefner (surface area, when full, about four square miles) and Lake Overholser (surface area a little over two square miles), the former in Oklahoma County, the latter straddling the Oklahoma-Canadian county line just west of Oklahoma City — I have seen the Knot several times during and since the fall of 1962. The two impoundments fluctuate considerably in surface area depending on weather and withdrawals. Whenever extensive mud and sand flats are exposed during the season of bird migration, large numbers and many species of shorebirds are attracted, and the lively mixed populations sometimes linger for many days.

I have seen Knots at these impoundments only when the flats were extensive and — perhaps significantly — only during or following inclement weather. Knots that I have observed usually fed along the water's edge, where waves overran the flats far out from old high-water lines. Except when silhouetted against the water, summer and fall birds were hard to see, for the light gray of their upperparts blended well with the sandy mud, and their shadowed underparts reflected this very same color. In good light the pale edging of the feathers of the upperparts — the "scaly effect" referred to in published descriptions — was readily discernible. Some summer and fall birds had a uniform suffusion of pale pinkish buff on the flanks.

Since *Calidris canutus* has been recorded only infrequently in Oklahoma, the following records, arranged chronologically, are presented in some detail.

September 1, 1962. Observer J. G. Newell. The weather had been cool and rainy and there was a heavy influx of several species of shorebirds. I saw a single Knot in non-breeding feather on the southwest shore of Lake Hefner. It was wary and could not be approached closely. It flushed and circled the area, calling. It finally joined a Ruddy Turnstone (*Arenaria interpres*) and flew toward the south shore of the lake. I could not locate it again.

September 9, 1962. Observers W. Marvin Davis and J. G. Newell. A north wind was blowing rather steadily and the sky was overcast, threatening rain. We saw a single bird in non-breeding feather momentarily near the southwest shore of Lake Hefner. We flushed it before seeing it. It flew toward the south shore, and was lost to view.

October 18, 1964. Observers V. J. Vacin and J. G. Newell. It was mid-afternoon and a strong north wind was blowing. The sky was overcast. A cold front had entered the state the previous day. The Knot was with many other shorebirds, mostly dowitchers (probably *Limnodromus scolopaceus*), Pectoral Sandpipers (*Erolia melanotos*), and Killdeers (*Charadrius vociferus*), on a mud flat at the north end of Lake Overholser. We observed it at length in good light at distances of from fifty

to seventy-five feet. It was not wary and seemed to be very hungry. When finally we flushed it, to expose its flight pattern, it flew past us with a Black-bellied Plover, allowing close comparison with that bird.

May 14, 1967. Observer John S. Shackford. The sky was overcast; it had been raining lightly, and a north wind had been blowing for 24 hours. Shackford saw a single bird in bright breeding plumage along the southwest shore of Lake Hefner.

May 15, 1967. Observers V. J. Vacin, Nelson Hall, and J. G. Newell. About two hours before sunset we saw a single bird with bright brick-colored breast, probably the same individual as that discussed above, along the southwest shore of Lake Hefner. We walked to within one hundred feet before the bird flew off a short distance. It did not seem very wary and we studied it for about an hour. Toward sundown it flew off to the northwest with three Black-bellied Plovers and a Ruddy Turnstone.

August 27, 1967. Observer J. G. Newell. A cool front had passed through, the sky had cleared, and a light north wind was blowing. I found three Knots on the mud flats at the north end of Lake Overholser. Shorebirds of several species were abundant there. The Knots fed in shallow water in a close group with several Lesser Yellowlegs (*Totanus flavipes*) and Stilt Sandpipers (*Micropalama himantopus*). All of the Knots were in non-breeding feather, but at least one had a pale rusty or pinkish-buff tinge on the sides of the lower breast and flanks. I searched the entire area carefully the following day, but could not find the birds.

September 2, 1967. Observer J. G. Newell. The weather was cool; it rained lightly and intermittently all morning. Only a few shorebirds were on the mud flats at the north end of Lake Overholser, and most of these were "peeps". I found two Knots, each with a pinkish-buff tinge on the flanks. I checked the area thoroughly toward evening the same day, and again on September 3, but could not find the Knots.

September 4, 1967. Observers James L. Norman, Marion Norman, V. J. Vacin, and J. G. Newell. It rained most of the morning. We observed a single Knot at fairly close range on the flats at the north end of Lake Overholser. It was feeding with a few "peeps". Each of us noted the pinkish-buff tinge of the flanks.

July 26, 1968. Observers George M. Sutton, George A. Newman, and ten members of the University of Oklahoma Biological Station ornithology class. Day hot, calm, and bright; no inclement weather during preceding several days. Four Knots, all more or less rust-colored below, were observed along the shore of an almost-drained fishery pond near Durant, Bryan County. The birds flew in about 9:30 a.m. with several Lesser Yellowlegs, joining a mixed flock composed of several Killdeers, Least Sandpipers (*Erolia minutilla*), Semipalmated Sandpipers (*Ereunetes pusillus*), and Western Sandpipers (*E. mauri*), four Stilt Sandpipers, one Long-billed Dowitcher, and one Pectoral Sandpiper. While probing in the mud, all facing in the same direction, the Knots kept together but

did not move off as a group from the other shorebirds. Sutton collected two specimens, both adult females largely in breeding feather, neither very fat, each with ill-defined brood-patches and unenlarged ovary. The only food found in the stomachs were snails of the genus *Physa* (probably *P. anatina*), 68 of which had been eaten by the heavier bird (120.6 grams), 13 by the lighter (118.3 grams). The snails were identified by George V. Oliver, a member of the ornithology class. The fact that the two Knots were adult females coupled with the fact that the only adult specimens taken by D. F. Parmelee *et al.* on Jenny Lind Island, in the western American arctic, late in the breeding season of 1966, were *males*, lends weight to Sutton's belief that adult females move southward from the breeding ground in advance of their mates (see Parmelee, Stephens, and Schmidt, 1967, The birds of southeastern Victoria Island and adjacent small islands, *Natl. Mus. of Canada Bull.* 222, p. 221).

The Knot has been positively identified in Oklahoma on the several occasions cited above. Drawing conclusions from so few observations is somewhat presumptive; nevertheless the eleven records, supported by those from Barton and Greenwood counties in Kansas (Sutton, *op. cit.*), suggest that the Knot is a rare and irregular migrant in central Oklahoma and probably throughout the open grasslands of the Southern Great Plains from July 26 to October 18. Until more Knots are seen during the period of northward migration, the two Oklahoma City spring sightings, believed to be of the same individual, suggest that spring occurrence is accidental.

4129 NORTH EVEREST, OKLAHOMA CITY, OKLAHOMA 73111, 22 APRIL 1968

SUMMERING OF ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEAK NEAR OKLAHOMA CITY, OKLAHOMA

BY VICTOR J. VACIN

THE ROSE-BREASTED Grosbeak (*Pheucticus ludovicianus*), an "irregular summer resident in eastern and central Oklahoma," nested successfully along the east side of Lake Overholser, in a residential part of Oklahoma City, in the summer of 1957; the one breeding pair observed that year fledged three young about June 25 from a nest built 15 feet up in an elm at the edge of a lawn (Sutton, 1967, *Oklahoma Birds*, pp. 574-575).

At Silver Lake, a horseshoe-shaped, 40-acre impoundment just west of Lake Hefner, in the extreme northwestern part of Oklahoma City, several observers (including myself) have seen the Rose-breast each summer since 1964. We have not found a nest, but we have seen adult and young birds repeatedly. The properties of the tight-knit community known as the Silver Lake Association completely surround the impoundment; in the many yards (about 70) are fine elm, hackberry, willow, pine, and juniper trees, a few oaks, and much climax shrubbery.

In this somewhat parklike habitat the Rose-breast was first sighted by John