

OKLAHOMA ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

OBSERVATIONS AT A RED-TAILED HAWK NEST

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ON THE AFTERNOON of 19 April 1969, about six miles south of Okeene, Blaine County, central Oklahoma, we observed a pair of Red-tailed Hawks (*Buteo jamaicensis*) circling over a stocky, wind-thrown eastern juniper (*Juniperus virginiana*) standing in an open field in an eroded, gypsum-capped area along the Cimarron River. The squealing of the hawks indicated that they were excited, so we walked closer and saw a large nest near the top of the tree. We decided to investigate.

The nest was 21 feet above the ground and five feet below the very top of the tree, supported by stout branches. It was fully two feet across and a foot



NEST OF RED-TAILED HAWK WITH YOUNG

Photographed 19 April 1969 by James W. Carpenter, six miles south of Okeene, Blaine County, central Oklahoma

high with an inner basin about five inches deep. It was made largely of coarse twigs. There were no feathers, down, or other soft materials in the lining. The three young, which were probably a little less than a week old, moved about clumsily. They showed no antagonism toward us. Each of them was covered with white down and each had a black bill and pinkish legs and feet. An adult Eastern Wood Rat (*Neotoma floridana*) was lying on the rim of the nest. One of the brood had obviously been nibbling at the carcass or had recently been fed, for its beak and facial down were blood-stained.

About four hours later we visited the nest again, finding a freshly caught Eastern Wood Rat, a freshly caught Hispid Cotton Rat (*Sigmodon hispidus*), and a partly eaten Eastern Wood Rat on the nest's rim, a little above the level of the young hawks.

The nest was exceptionally low. According to Sutton (1967, *Oklahoma Birds*, p. 102), the lowest Oklahoma nest thus far on record was about 25 feet up. Data on file at the University of Oklahoma Bird Range clearly indicate that most nests in Oklahoma are from 40 to 60 feet above ground. The hatching date is early: a nest found by D. F. Parmelee on 17 April 1954 on a cliff in Cimarron County still contained eggs; a nest found by L. E. Dunn and P. F. Nighswonger on 2 May 1958 in Roman Nose State Park, Blaine County, held two young chicks (Sutton, op. cit., p. 103).

The Red-tailed Hawk is an important bird of prey in Oklahoma. The species inhabits wooded parts of the state all year, though some birds that nest or are reared here probably move farther south in winter, being replaced by birds that nest or are reared north of Oklahoma. In rough country Red-tails often nest on cliffs as well as in trees in Oklahoma. They are uncommon in treeless parts of Oklahoma in winter. The accompanying photograph lends further evidence as to the importance and efficiency of the Red-tailed Hawk in the natural regulation of rodent populations.

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THE RED PHALAROPE IN OKLAHOMA

By GEORGE MIKSCH SUTTON

THE RED PHALAROPE (*Phalaropus fulicarius*) is believed to be rare in the Southern Great Plains. Its migrations take place largely at sea. It has been taken six times in Kansas, five times in the fall (October 6 to December 5), once in spring (May 10), twice in the northeastern part of the state, four times at the Cheyenne Bottoms, in Barton County, about one hundred miles north of Woods County, Oklahoma (Sutton, 1967, *Oklahoma Birds*, p. 209). The only record that I know of for Texas is of a bird seen on 26 September 1893 in Wise County, about fifty miles south of Jefferson and Love counties, Oklahoma (Bent,