

--we released it in the culvert.

The climbing ability and arboreal habits of ratsnakes, especially of *E. obsoleta*, are well known. In reaching the swallow nests the two ratsnakes probably did not swim in (though most snakes swim well), but made their way along the half-inch-wide seam at the top of the north wall. The seam appeared to be too narrow to accommodate a snake 42 in. long, but when we held one of the scale-clipped snakes against the seam it took hold immediately and clung there without difficulty. It did not, however, attempt to move forward, possibly because of the traumatic palpating it had just experienced.

In Oklahoma the Black Ratsnake is largely nocturnal in summer. The snakes we captured may well have made their way into the culvert and captured the swallows at night. I feel fairly sure that they did not inhabit the culvert continuously, for on six occasions between 21 June and 21 July I checked every swallow nest and examined every crack without finding a snake, and on only three occasions during that same period did anyone observe a snake there. Even on bright days the culvert was a cool, rather dark place. For a well-fed snake a Cliff Swallow nest was a made-to-order retreat.

I wish to thank Dr. Charles C. Carpenter of the Department of Zoology at the University of Oklahoma for his critical comments on my paper; Dr. William A. Lunk of the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor for checking certain references; and George A. Newman, of the Department of Biology at Hardin-Simmons University in Abilene, Texas, for the excellent photograph of the ratsnake forfeiting its meal.

1601 MONUMENT ROAD, PONCA CITY, OKLAHOMA 74601, 31 MAY 1969.

THE BLACKPOLL WARBLER IN THE SOUTHERN GREAT PLAINS

BY CHARLES A. ELY

THE BLACKPOLL WARBLER (*Dendroica striata*) is a transient through the Southern Great Plains. It occurs regularly, often commonly, in the spring but only irregularly and rarely in the fall. In spring it is much more common along the wooded eastern edge of the plains than in the restricted wooded areas of the plains themselves. In Kansas it is considered "common" in the east, "uncommon" in the west (Johnston, 1965, A directory of the birds of Kansas, Univ. Kansas Mus. Nat. Hist., Misc. Publ. 41, p. 48), a status similar to that reported for Oklahoma (Sutton, 1967, Oklahoma birds, p. 509).

Dendroica striata breeds in the northern spruce forests from Alaska to Labrador and in the mountains of New England and eastern New York; it winters in northern and central South America (AOU Check-list of North American birds, pp. 500-501). Most spring migrants funnel northward through the West Indies and Florida, then fan out over the eastern United States, the

Mississippi Valley, and the Northern Great Plains (see map in Lincoln, 1939, *The migration of American birds*, p. 35).

At Hays, in Ellis County, west-central Kansas, the species' spring migration is characterized by moderate to large numbers for a very brief period, and it is usually associated with overcast skies and rain. At such times, Blackpolls may be really numerous along wooded streams and in towns. They are chiefly treetop birds, however, and only 48 of them were caught in mist-nets during three seasons—38 of these during a warbler "wave" or "fallout" on 20 May 1967. Extreme migration dates for Hays are 2 and 26 May. Peak numbers have been recorded regularly between 20 and 25 May.

In the fall most Blackpolls migrate eastward, concentrating along the Atlantic coast of the United States and funneling southward through Florida and the West Indies. As Burleigh (1934, *Wilson Bull.*, 46: 145) so aptly states, the Blackpoll in fall is "at best merely a straggler over much of the area it occupies in the spring migration." Apparently very few birds move southward across the Great Plains. The only fall specimen for Oklahoma was taken by Sutton (1934, *Ann. Carnegie Mus.*, 24: 11) along Texackee Creek near Kenton, Cimarron County, at the western end of the Panhandle, on 3 October 1932. Sutton states further (1967, *Oklahoma birds*, p. 509) that the species has neither been taken nor seen in fall during the years 1952-1966 "despite efforts of several observers." Nice (1931, *Birds of Oklahoma*, p. 195), who called the species an "uncommon transient in May and November" in Cleveland County, central Oklahoma, mentioned nine sightings (one to three birds at each sighting) spanning the period 4-16 November between 1919 and 1926, but the continuing failure of the species to appear in fall anywhere in Oklahoma during recent decades has led to understandable belief that the birds seen by Dr. Nice might have been misidentified. There is no fall record for Colorado (Bailey and Niedrach, 1965, *Birds of Colorado*, 2: 694) and only one fall record for New Mexico—one seen at Clayton, in the northeastern corner of the state, on 3 October 1954 (Ligon, 1961, *New Mexico birds and where to find them*, p. 308). Additionally there are but single fall records from Arkansas and Texas. Douglas James (letter of 4 February 1970 to G. M. Sutton) reports a sight record from Ashley County, southeast Arkansas on 23 October 1965. Edgar Kincaid Jr. (letter of 24 February 1970 to G. M. Sutton) reports (Oberholser manuscript) one collected at Brownsville, Cameron County, Texas by J. C. Merrill in August 1876 or 1877.

Fall records for Kansas are nearly as scarce. I have no sight records for Hays during the periods 1960-1963 and 1966-1969, despite a considerable amount of local field work. At the Hays mist-netting station only three Blackpolls were captured during 175 days of operation in September and October from 1966 to 1969. A total of 799 warblers of 20 species (including the Blackpoll) was handled during that period. In south-central Kansas, Max C. Thompson

(personal communication) netted only one Blackpoll (an immature bird, 27 September) in 31 days of netting during the fall of 1969 near the Arkansas River 4.5 miles west of Udall, in Sumner County. During this period he netted 829 other warblers of 15 species. These September dates are of interest in view of the fact that Johnston (*op. cit.*) reported fall movement southward "in late October."

The three Hays specimens are apparently the only fall specimens of *D. striata* for Kansas, as there are none in the University of Kansas Museum of Natural History collections (Robert M. Mengel, personal communication). The three specimens were taken singly on 15, 16, and 22 September 1969. All were immature (one male, two females) with moderate to heavy fat deposits and very small gonads. They were netted in young box elders and tall annual weeds (sunflower and giant ragweed) along Big Creek near the Fort Hays Kansas State College campus.

Although the Blackpoll Warbler appears to be very rare and irregular in fall throughout the Southern Great Plains, more intensive field work may reveal that there is a regular spillover of birds from the northern migration route. Such a spillover has been documented since 1961 for California by DeBenedictis (1968, *Audubon Field Notes*, 22: 8). Specimens, recognizable photographs, and in-hand identifications by observers experienced with fall warblers are urgently needed to clarify further the status of the Blackpoll in the Southern Great Plains. Casual identification of fall-plumaged warblers is often erroneous; as pointed out by Burleigh (*op. cit.*) and Mengel (1965, *Birds of Kentucky*, p. 415) this misidentification badly confuses the distributional problems bird students are trying to solve.

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GENERAL NOTES

Banded five-year-old Ruby-throated Hummingbird recaptured in Oklahoma.— On 14 August 1969 at my banding station at Silver Lake, along the west edge of Oklahoma City, in Oklahoma County, central Oklahoma, I captured with a feeder-snare an adult male Ruby-throated Hummingbird (*Archilochus colubris*) with fully red throat-patch. This same bird I had caught and banded on 23 August 1964. On that date its throat was white, marked with rows of dusky spots and with one tiny iridescent red dot where, presumably, an "immature" feather had been replaced by an "adult" feather. On the date of the bird's recapture it was at least five years and nine days old. The etched numerals on the band (X-7278) were still sharply defined. The band showed very little wear.

Since 1962 I have had a total of 16 Ruby-throated Hummingbird "returns." Six "returns" in the summer of 1964 gave me my greatest total for