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### THE VERDIN IN NORTHWESTERN TEXAS

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ON 22 DECEMBER 1965, during the Christmas Count of the Texas Panhandle Audubon Society in Palo Duro Canyon State Park in Randall County, northwestern Texas, Carroll D. Littlefield saw an adult Verdin (*Auriparus flaviceps*) about 200 yards south-southeast of the riding stable (1966, Audubon Field Notes, 20: 313). This sighting was, so far as I know, the first of the Verdin for Palo Duro Canyon, if not for the whole of the Texas Panhandle.



*Two Verdin nests in little-leaf sumac. Photographed on 5 July 1970 in Palo Duro Canyon State Park, Randall County, Texas, by Kenneth D. Seyffert. The upper nest probably was used in 1970, the lower in a previous year.*

On 9 January 1966, Peggy Acord, George Waddill, Esther Waddill, Kenneth Whipple, and Kathryn Whipple discovered a Verdin's winter roosting nest a few yards back of the so-called Sad Monkey railroad station in the same general area. The nest was about 6 feet up in the topmost branch of a jejupe bush (*Zizyphus obtusifolia*). A small bird seen by the five just-named persons in the immediate vicinity on that date was not positively identified, but Leo A. Galloway and I, visiting the nest separately on 10 and 15 January, respectively, each clearly saw a Verdin as it approached and entered the nest shortly before nightfall.

On 5 September 1966, I saw an adult Verdin a mile south of the Sad Monkey depot at a spot about 300 yards downstream from the first of five road-crossings of the Prairie Dog Town Fork of the Red River. On 21 January 1967, I saw two Verdins about 500 yards west of the Sad Monkey depot.

On 26 March 1967, about 150 yards east of the Sad Monkey depot, I happened upon a Verdin busily constructing a nest about 8 feet up in the top of a little-leaf sumac (*Rhus microphylla*) growing on a sloping bank above the floodplain of the Prairie Dog Town Fork. Presently I perceived that a second Verdin was participating in the nest building. Throughout April and May, Leo Galloway and I kept this nest under observation. On 21 May I put my finger inside it, feeling three young, a count confirmed on 5 June, when I observed two adult Verdins and three fledglings across the stream not far east of the nest site. On 18 June I saw a young bird near the nest site.

On 28 June 1970, I found another Verdin's nest about 300 yards north of the one just discussed. This latter nest was about 9½ feet up in the outermost branch of a little-leaf sumac growing in an "island" of small mesquites (*Prosopis juliflora*) and one-seed junipers (*Juniperus monosperma*). The nest was 6 inches long and 3½ inches in diameter; although unoccupied, it appeared to be of recent construction as it was in good condition and well lined with feathers. In the same bush was another nest, this one of a previous year's construction, weathered and hollowed out inside. On 6 September 1970 I saw three Verdins within a quarter mile of these two nests. All three appeared to be in juvenal plumage; at any rate I could see neither yellow on their heads nor rust on their wings.

The nesting of the Verdin in Palo Duro Canyon furnishes evidence of what appears to be a significant extension of range. The AOU Check-list of North American birds (1957: 394) states that the subspecies *Auriparus flaviceps ornatus* is resident "from central and southeastern Arizona . . . , southern New Mexico (San Antonio, Deming, Carlsbad) and southwestern and south-central Texas (Monahans, Kerrville, Seguin, Corpus Christi, Harlingen) [southward] to north-eastern Sonora (Arispe) and Tamaulipas (San Fernando)." Of the localities

named here, the closest to Palo Duro Canyon are Carlsbad, New Mexico, and Monahans, Texas, each of these being about 250 miles from the canyon. The Verdin is not listed for Oklahoma by Sutton (1967, Oklahoma Birds) or for Colorado by Bailey and Niedrach (1965, Birds of Colorado). In his "New Mexico birds and where to find them," Ligon (1961: 210) states that the range of *Auriparus flaviceps* "covers the southern section of the state, extending north to Silver City, Socorro, Tularosa, and Dexter." Dexter is a little closer than Carlsbad to Palo Duro Canyon.

I have seen the Verdin myself in Lubbock County, Texas (on 30 December 1966 Carroll Littlefield and I saw two; on 29 December 1968 I saw one), in an area about 150 miles north of Monahans and 125 miles south of Palo Duro Canyon. According to M. Kent Rylander (personal letter of 28 May 1968), the species has not been found nesting in Lubbock County. The field check-list of birds of that county summarizes the status of the Verdin as "uncommon" in winter and "rare" in summer. Leo Galloway informs me that he saw a Verdin in Stonewall County, Texas, 9 miles east of the town of Jayton, on 10 May 1970 (predominant vegetation in area: mesquite). Stonewall County is about 100 miles south of the southwestern corner of the main body of Oklahoma.

Recent Texas sightings of the Verdin by John S. Weske are considerably closer to Oklahoma than others on record. On 5 December 1967 he saw (and collected) a female "in a smilax tangle in low but fairly dense hackberry-elm-cottonwood woodland" along Beaver Creek, 10½ miles south and 2½ miles east of Harrold, Wilbarger County (about 20 miles south of the Oklahoma state line). On the same date he recorded two more Verdins—one heard calling (but not seen) in a dense smilax tangle along Beaver Creek 14 miles south-southeast of Vernon, Wilbarger County (about 16 miles south of Oklahoma) and later in the day, one seen among big mesquite trees (in a pasture in which scattered small live-oaks also grew) 2½ miles west and ¾ of a mile south of Elbert, Throckmorton County (about 65 miles south of Oklahoma). On 27 February 1968 he saw a Verdin along the Little Wichita River 4 miles north of Archer City, Archer County (about 32 miles south of the Oklahoma state line).

Observers should be on the alert for the Verdin in all southwestern Oklahoma counties that border Texas.

2709 S. FAIRFIELD ST., AMARILLO, TEXAS 79103, 25 OCTOBER 1970.

### GENERAL NOTES

**Early nesting of Black Vulture in Oklahoma.**—On 22 March 1970 a boy and his sister saw a Black Vulture (*Coragyps atratus*) enter a small opening in the rock at the top of a rugged 30-foot limestone outcropping in grassland 5 miles east of Connerville, Johnston County, south-central Oklahoma. Investigating, the children discovered the incubating bird, which flushed