

**GREEN-TAILED TOWHEE IN CENTRAL OKLAHOMA  
IN WINTER**

BY JOHN S. SHACKFORD

ON 18 DECEMBER 1971, while participating in a Christmas Count at Oklahoma City, Oklahoma County, central Oklahoma, I saw a Green-tailed Towhee (*Chlorura chlorura*) just north of Northeast Lake in Lincoln Park. At about 10:00 that day I decided to "squeak up" some Harris's Sparrows (*Zonotrichia querula*) that had moved ahead of me into some thick vines covering a small dead tree—a thicket about 12 feet high and 5 feet wide near some animal pens of the Oklahoma City Zoo. When the sparrows hopped up into sight, the towhee also appeared. It was about 40 feet from me, 8 feet above ground, and in good light. I observed it for two or three minutes through my 10 x 50 binocular. The bright rufous of the crown caught my eye immediately, then the olive-green



**GREEN-TAILED TOWHEE**

*Photographed by John S. Shackford just north of Northeast Lake in Lincoln Park, Oklahoma City, on 27 January 1972.*

back, brighter, somewhat yellowish olive-green wing, clear white throat, ashy gray chest, and white belly. The bird uttered a metallic, nearly one-pitched "tzree" that seemed less sharp than the "chink" of the sparrows.

The towhee stayed in the general vicinity of the animal pens all winter. Food that I scattered for it made observation by many other people and photography possible. It was last seen, so far as I know, on 1 March 1972. John G. Newell saw it that day.

Two comments on the bird's out-of-range habitat are in order. 1. The goats and sheep in the animal pens had turned a steep slope close by into a bare red rock-and-dirt hillside perhaps similar enough to a Rocky Mountain habitat to make the bird feel comfortable. 2. The thickets surrounding the animal pens and a pile of weed and tree clippings from the zoo afforded excellent protection. The weather, as a rule, was not severe; there was not much snow; but on one occasion the air temperature descended to a low of 1° F.

The Green-tailed Towhee has visited Oklahoma City twice before—first ten or twelve years ago when Henry Walter saw one in a rock garden in Will Rogers Park (date not recorded), again on 9, 10, and 11 May 1965, when John G. Newell saw a single bird in a brush pile in his backyard at 4129 N. Everest (1965, Audubon Field Notes, 19: 489). The three Oklahoma City records and a Cleveland County record (one seen repeatedly on 28 and 29 September 1964 by Sam C. Holland at a feeding counter in Norman) are the easternmost for the state. According to data filed at the University of Oklahoma Bird Range the latest fall sighting heretofore reported was of a single bird "in rocks at edge of little bluestem stand just above Buffalo Springs" in the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge in Comanche County, southwestern Oklahoma, on 8 November 1954 (Arthur F. Halloran).

812 N.W. 41ST ST., OKLAHOMA CITY, OKLAHOMA 73111, 1 AUGUST 1972.

## GENERAL NOTES

**Green Heron at Fort Smith, Arkansas in winter.**—Toward noon during a Christmas Count on 27 December 1971 Margaret Hedges, Audra Morris, Doris Springer and I observed a Green Heron (*Butorides virescens*) along a little stream near a farm-pond at the corner of Park Avenue and North 66th Street in Fort Smith, Sebastian County, west-central Arkansas. Mrs. Hedges flushed the heron from the closer bank as she neared the stream. She watched it fly to a low limb across the stream and "freeze" there. Not being sure what it was, she called Mrs. Morris, Mrs. Springer, and me, and the four of us approached to within about 15 feet of the bird, where we observed it for about 45 minutes, both with and without binoculars.

The heron did not move for about half an hour. Then, as if attracted by something in the water, it walked slowly and carefully along the limb, stepped down onto the ground without spreading its wings, and waded two or three feet out from shore. There it stood motionless a while, then sud-