

from hard-working Common Mergansers (*Mergus merganser*). Ring-billed Gulls, too, resort to this sort of thieving: Warren Harden saw a Ring-bill snatch a fish from an American Coot (*Fulica americana*) at Lake Thunderbird near Norman (1971, Bull. Oklahoma Orn. Soc., 4: 5-6).

Many gull species, the Ring-bill included, have what Witherby *et al.* (1948, Handb. British birds, 5: 66, 81, 90, 96, 99, 104) call "very varied" food habits. The Ring-billed Gulls at Lake Texoma sometimes desert the water in fall to "feed extensively on peanuts" (Sutton, *op. cit.*), thus incurring the dislike of the farmers. This habit clearly shows how adaptable the species is. Whether the gulls go after the peanuts only when fish are difficult to obtain remains to be ascertained. Also to be determined is whether the Ring-bill's stomach becomes a hard-muscled gizzard when its diet changes from fish to peanuts.

At Oklahoma City, Ring-billed Gulls feed regularly at several dumps and sewage-disposal plants. They find a few dead fish along the shores of Lakes Hefner and Overholser, but obtain a good deal of their food away from water. Those that go to the open grassland catch grasshoppers and other insects when the sun has warmed the air. If ice covers the lakes, the gulls move off, presumably southward.

A considerable flock of Ring-billed Gulls has gathered winter after winter recently at the Oklahoma City Zoo in Lincoln Park. Here they find fish that die in Northeast Lake, but they also feed on undigested material in the feces of the larger zoo mammals and on scattered grain near the feeding troughs of the outdoors exhibits. The birds become surprisingly tame. When frightened, they fly up in a cloud — as shown in the accompanying photograph.

No one asked our Ring-billed Gulls to winter here. No food was put out to attract them. But the hungry birds soon found that "artificial" food was just as edible as "wild" food, so to the dumps and sewage-disposal plants and pens in the zoo they have come. Bird students may observe them at any time of the day nearly all winter long. When full of food, they line up on the shore or float lazily in the water. At night they go to one of the larger impoundments not far away as a rule.

Those who watch them may study the various plumage-stages to their hearts' content. Many of the birds are "yearlings," with dark-tipped tails. With the Ring-bills occasionally appears a fine gull of another species, frequently a Herring, exceptionally a Glaucous.

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A LOUISIANA WATERTHRUSH NEST IN GHOST HOLLOW

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Two miles northeast of Ripley, Payne County, north-central Oklahoma is an isolated area, almost a wilderness, known as Ghost Hollow. A narrow, little

used road not quite a mile long leads northward through the area from the Cimarron River and its road before connecting with a much used farm road north of the hollow. East of the hollow road the ground is high, rocky, and covered with blackjack oak; west of it is low country through which a spring-fed creek winds. Here the trees are huge old oaks, cottonwoods, and sycamores. My sister (Margaret Williamson) and I often drive out from Ripley, park the car near the Cimarron, and walk up the Ghost Hollow road.

One stretch of the road parallels the creek for about 150 feet. Here the stream is 1 to 5 feet wide and 1 to 24 inches deep, with banks 8 to 10 feet high. At a spot where a bank juts out forming a small sandbar, and where there are gravel-bottomed riffles, Margaret and I saw a waterthrush on 23 May 1965. We knew that it was a waterthrush from its "wagging" tail, but we had to look it up before knowing for sure that it was a Louisiana Waterthrush (*Seiurus motacilla*).

On learning that the nest of this species had never been reported from Payne County, we tried to find one. From time to time we heard a male bird singing his brilliant song or saw a non-singing female, but we found no nest. As the years passed the species seemed to become more numerous. Within the past year or so there have been three pairs in the hollow, one near the sandbar, another upstream a way, a third downstream — between the sandbar and the Cimarron River.

On 23 April 1973, not far from the sandbar, Margaret and I saw a waterthrush carrying dead leaves in its bill. Feeling sure that the bird was nest-building, we watched it carefully. On the far side of the creek, perhaps 25 feet from where we were standing, was a fallen cottonwood limb. The limb was about 6 feet above the water and well hidden by a Virginia creeper vine. We watched the waterthrush as it made several trips carrying leaves up under the limb. Fearing that our presence might cause the bird to desert, we slipped away.

On 28 April Deloris Isted, Margaret, and I returned to our observation spot. We did not try to find the nest itself, but we saw a bird go toward it several times. On 5 May Margaret and I saw one bird go to the hidden spot in which we knew the nest to be — under the limb. On 11 May we heard one distinctive *chip* of alarm upstream a way, but saw no bird. On 19 May — almost a full month after we had observed nest-building — Deloris Isted, her husband Desmond, Margaret, and I watched both birds as they made regular trips to the nest-spot carrying food. This time we did our best to find the nest itself, but it was so well hidden above the point at which the birds went under the limb that we could neither see nor feel it. We thought we could hear young birds that day. Two days later my sister and I were sure we could hear them.

On the night of 22 May a 3½-inch rain sent a wall of water down the little creek. On 23 May the bank where the nest had been was bare. Even the Virginia creeper vine was gone. We found a slight depression that we thought might have held the waterthrush's nest.

After the flood we saw a waterthrush carrying leaves on one occasion, but we could not find the nest. From time to time in June and July we heard a male bird singing. Though three pairs of birds may have summered in Ghost Hollow

in 1973 we found no evidence that any pair had reared a brood.

The following data pertain to *Seiurus motacilla* as my sister and I have observed the species in Ghost Hollow: 23 May 1965, one seen; 18 April 1967, one seen; 12 April 1968, one seen; species noted all summer, especially on 27 July and 1 and 2 August; 6 April 1969, one seen; species noted repeatedly through 30 August; 3 April 1971, one seen; species noted repeatedly through 31 August; 20 April 1973, one seen.

BOX 27, RIPLEY, OKLAHOMA 74062, 1 JULY 1973.

GENERAL NOTES

Barnacle Goose again in southeastern Oklahoma.—For an hour on the afternoon of 7 November 1974 (from about 1530 to 1630) Refuge Manager Ernest S. Jemison, Game Ranger Harold Scates, and I observed a Barnacle Goose (*Branta leucopsis*) on the Tishomingo National Wildlife Refuge in Johnston County, southeastern Oklahoma. The bird was feeding along the edge of a flock of about 3000 Canada Geese (*B. canadensis*) in a wheatfield $\frac{1}{4}$ mile north of refuge headquarters. The Canada Geese were all small (possibly of the geographical race *B. c. hutchinsii*), not one of them being conspicuously larger than the Barnacle. I was able to approach the great flock to within about 80 yards and I took several photographs of the Barnacle, but it was raining and I had to "shoot at $\frac{1}{4}$ second," so the pictures are not very clear and the image of the Barnacle, though readily identifiable (largely white head, very light underparts, striking wing markings, black of neck extending down onto chest), is small.

A Barnacle Goose wintered with Canada Geese on the Tishomingo refuge from 16 December 1971 to 1 March 1972 (Jemison, 1972, Bull. Oklahoma Orn. Soc., 5: 27-28). There are two *Branta leucopsis* records for Alfalfa County, north-central Oklahoma: on 21 November 1958 one was observed with Canada Geese on the Salt Plains National Wildlife Refuge (Marquardt, 1960, Southwest. Nat., 5: 228) and on 14 December 1963 one was shot near Amorita; the head, neck, and one wing of the specimen were preserved (Sutton, 1967, Oklahoma birds, p. 56).—Billy J. Hawthorne, *Tishomingo National Wildlife Refuge, Box 248, Tishomingo, Oklahoma 73460, 26 December 1974.*

American Kestrel banded in Oklahoma and recovered in Nebraska.—On 23 January 1974 W. Michael Brewer, a licensed bird-bander, captured and banded (1143-25202) an American Kestrel (*Falco sparverius*) in female plumage near Pauls Valley, Garvin County, south-central Oklahoma. The bird was recovered 62 days later, on 26 March 1974, in Minden, south-central Nebraska, by George Piester, who found it dead, plugging a spout in his feed mill (pers. comm.). Mr. Piester thought the kestrel had been dead about a day at the time of its discovery. Minden is approximately 400 miles north and 100 miles west of Pauls Valley.

According to the AOU Check-list of North American birds (1957, p. 123), the northernmost race of *Falco sparverius* winters widely throughout much of continental North America, moving northward somewhat to breed. To what extent the birds of a given locality are actually resident there (i.e., non-migratory) has not been well documented. In Oklahoma April 18 is said to be the earliest date for nesting and August 1 the latest (Sutton, 1967, Oklahoma birds, pp. 126-28). For Kansas the time-span for eggs is said to be March 21 to May 20 with a "peak around April 10" (Johnston, 1965, A directory to the birds of Kansas, p. 18) — a "peak" considerably earlier than any actual egg-date for Oklahoma. Data of this sort call attention to the fact that much is to be learned about the American Kestrel in Oklahoma. Just when does kestrel migration begin and end here? Do birds that breed here ever remain in their breeding areas the