

and G. M. Sutton found that the young had left most of the 20 or so nests to which they climbed. They did, however, capture and band one of two barely-fledged young that they saw, and one nest held three small young. At the Bethany heronry in Oklahoma County on 20 July 1971, W. D. Harden, R. G. Lawrence, and G. M. Sutton saw many young Great-tailed Grackles, some of which appeared to have fledged recently.

DEPARTMENT OF PHARMACOLOGY, UNIVERSITY OF MISSISSIPPI, UNIVERSITY,
MISSISSIPPI 38677, 1 MARCH 1975.

GENERAL NOTES

Early spring arrival date for Least Bittern.—On 9 April 1975, a pleasant day, I observed a Least Bittern (*Ixobrychus exilis*) at one of two small ponds just below the dam of Hospital Lake in the northeastern part of Norman, Cleveland County, central Oklahoma. It was walking under some small junipers lining a narrow strip of land between the ponds. When I approached — to within about ten feet — it flew to the opposite bank. When I approached again, it flew back to about the spot from which it had first flown. The date is early. According to Sutton (1967, Oklahoma birds, p. 38) the Least Bittern inhabits Oklahoma from 16 April to 30 October. Records filed at the University of Oklahoma Bird Range indicate that on 16 April 1928 one was seen at Tulsa, Tulsa County, northeastern Oklahoma (Nice, 1931, Birds of Oklahoma, p. 58); that on 17 April 1970 one was seen at the Salt Plains National Wildlife Refuge in Alfalfa County, north-central Oklahoma, by John Grula; and that on 19 April 1928 one was seen at Lake Overholser in Oklahoma City, central Oklahoma, by George B. Saunders (Nice, *loc. cit.*). — Neil B. Ford, *Department of Zoology, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma 73069, 5 May 1975.*

Wood Duck in Cimarron County, Oklahoma.—In mid-morning on 10 May 1973, while I was looking for birds just below the Lake Carl Etling dam in Black Mesa State Park, Cimarron County, far western Oklahoma, a medium-sized duck sprang from cattails bordering a quiet pool below the spillway, circled twice low overhead, and flew westward following the lake's north shore. It made no vocal sound. I noted that it had a crest, that there was a large whitish area about the eye, and that its upperparts were dull gray. There was no mistaking the bird: it was a hen Wood Duck (*Aix sponsa*). An hour later I flushed it again, this time from cattails along the west shore of the lake not far from a small mixed flock of Baldpates (*Mareca americana*), Northern Shovelers (*Anas clypeata*), Gadwalls (*A. strepera*), and Blue-winged Teal (*A. discors*).

This is, I believe, the first Wood Duck sighting for the Oklahoma Panhandle and it is decidedly the westernmost sighting for the state. According to data filed at the University of Oklahoma Bird Range, the westernmost Oklahoma localities from which the species has heretofore been reported are Rosston, Harper County (adult drake, UOMZ 7484, collected 5 mi. north, 3½ mi. west of town on 27 October 1973 by Laurence E. Dunn); Woodward, Woodward County, where a hen was seen several times 13 to 23 July 1905 (Nice, 1931, Birds of Oklahoma, p. 63); and Durham, Roger Mills County, where Rena Ross *et al.* have seen Wood Ducks occasionally in late summer and early fall (23 August to 2 September). W. E. Lewis did not mention the Wood Duck in his paper on water birds seen by him near Gate, Beaver County, at the eastern end of the Panhandle (1930, Wilson Bull., 42: 26-44). In New Mexico, where *Aix sponsa* is "rare to uncommon," no evidence of breeding has thus far been obtained (Hubbard, 1970, Check-list of the birds of New Mexico, p. 17).—Jack D. Tyler, *Department of Biology, Cameron University, Lawton, Oklahoma 73501, 15 July 1974.*

Nesting of American Coot in Comanche County, Oklahoma.—On 26 May 1972, at Lake Helen in Lawton, Comanche County, southwestern Oklahoma, I discovered a

pair of American Coots (*Fulica americana*) with their four young. Lake Helen is in the northeastern part of Lawton; it is bordered by one major highway on the north and another on the east; at its shallow west end there is a sizeable stand of rank cattail and a scattering of black willows (*Salix nigra*) along the shore.

When I first saw the coot family they were feeding in the water in a grassy area 7 or 8 feet out from the north shore. The chicks, which were 6 to 8 inches long, were orange-red on the bill, forehead, and lores, but there was no bright color back of the eyes or on the wings, so I judged them to be about ten days old (Bent, 1926, Bull. U.S. Natl. Mus. 135, p. 362; Gullion, 1954, Auk, 71: 392). From 26 May to 17 June I observed the family three or four times daily. By 17 June the young were about as large as their parents and they appeared to be fully fledged, though I did not see any of them flying on that date. They were dark gray above and whitish below, with dark speckling on the foreneck and breast. The bill of each was brownish black, the legs green, as in the adult. On 17 June the young seemed to be independent of their parents, though the six birds stayed fairly close together.

On checking the field notes of Arthur F. Halloran and Jack D. Tyler, I learned that in 1955 and 1971 the American Coot had been seen so late in spring in Comanche County as to suggest that it might be nesting there. It was seen on 27 May in 1955 and on 25 June in 1971. Nothing in the climatological record for the period would explain such late departure for the north.

According to Sutton (1967, Oklahoma birds, p. 166), *Fulica americana* has been known to breed in the following Oklahoma counties: Cimarron, Harper, Cleveland, Love. Ray (1973, Bull. Oklahoma Orn. Soc., 6: 21) has reported its breeding also in Lincoln County. Breeding in Comanche County has not heretofore been reported.—Cindy A. Felis, 102 Cimarron Trail, Lawton, Oklahoma 73501, 20 February 1973.

Which subspecies of Vermilion Flycatcher inhabits Oklahoma? On 27 April 1968, along the Cimarron River 9 miles east of Kenton, Cimarron County, far western Oklahoma, David F. Parmelee collected the first fully adult male Vermilion Flycatcher (*Pyrocephalus rubinus*) for the state. The specimen, beautifully mounted by Richard H. Schmidt of Kansas State College in Emporia, Kansas, was presented to the University of Oklahoma by Dr. Parmelee. It represents the geographical race *P. r. flammeus* (type from Brawley, Imperial County, southern California). In identifying it subspecifically I borrowed from the Carnegie Museum in Pittsburgh — through the courtesy of Kenneth C. Parkes — a considerable series of *P. r. flammeus* and *P. r. mexicanus*, the former from California, New Mexico, and Arizona, the latter from Mexico (Nuevo León, the State of Mexico, and Jalisco) and southern Texas. Five adult male *mexicanus* from this series measured wing 82-84 mm. (av. 82.4), tail 57-61 (av. 59.6), six *flammeus* wing 79-81.5 (av. 80.1), tail 57.5-60 (av. 58.8), thus confirming the statement in the original description of *flammeus* that that race is "slightly smaller" than *mexicanus* (van Rossem, 1934, Trans. San Diego Soc. Nat. Hist., 7: 353). According to this original description, adult male *flammeus* averages "more orange (less crimson) red" on the crown and underparts, a character obvious in the Oklahoma specimen when it is compared directly with adult male *mexicanus*. A subadult male bird collected by Dr. Parmelee 9 miles east of Kenton on 26 April 1968 (UOMZ 6324, wing 79, tail 56), a subadult male taken by John A. Wiens 4 miles southeast of Kenton on 1 July 1965 (UOMZ 5738, wing 78, tail 59), and an adult female taken by me 14 miles northwest of Boise City, Cimarron County, Oklahoma on 27 April 1969 (UOMZ 6550, wing 75, tail 58), probably represent *flammeus* also, though the characters of that race — "more grayish (less blackish) slate" on the back, wings, and tail, "females with the underparts less conspicuously streaked" — certainly are not obvious in the three specimens. — George M. Sutton, *Stovall Museum of Science and History, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma 73069, 7 February 1971.*

Early nesting of Barn Swallow in Oklahoma.—On 4 April 1973, in a pump

house of the pollution control facility at Fort Sill, Comanche County, southwestern Oklahoma, I flushed a Barn Swallow (*Hirundo rustica*) from a nest containing five eggs. I had no way of knowing how long the eggs had been incubated, but they appeared to be fresh. The nest was attached to a concrete roof beam. The birds must have entered and left the building while the door was open, for there was no other way for them to get in and out. Someone closed the door on 6 April. How long it stayed closed I do not know, but on 9 April, at noon, I found on the floor a dead female bird, who might have killed herself trying to fly through the closed door's glass window, though her weight (11 grams) suggested that she had died from lack of water (two female specimens in the University of Oklahoma bird collection weighed 16.4 grams and 17.9 grams).

The egg-date is exceptionally early. Assuming that one egg was laid per day, the first must have been laid no later than 31 March. The earliest date thus far reported for a nest with eggs in Oklahoma is 18 April 1965, when G. W. Dickson found two eggs in a "rebuilt old nest" in Oklahoma County; that nest contained a full clutch of five on 21 April (Sutton, 1967, Oklahoma birds, p. 360).

Fort Sill's pollution control facility provides an attractive habitat for Barn Swallows. At the several concrete settling tanks many kinds of flying insects — important swallow food — reproduce and the buildings furnish excellent nest sites.—Louis E. McGee, 1703 N. 43rd St., Lawton, Oklahoma 73501, 11 June 1973.

Wood Thrush in Comanche County, Oklahoma.—On 10 May 1972 Audrey G. Halloran and I watched a Wood Thrush (*Hycichla mustelina*) for over an hour as it searched for food among dead leaves beneath shrubbery in her backyard along Wolf Creek in a residential part of Lawton, Comanche County, southwestern Oklahoma. The bold black spotting on the bird's underparts was easy to see.

On 15 October that same year Mrs. Halloran again saw a Wood Thrush in her yard. The following day I saw one in our backyard (possibly the same bird, since our yard is only about 250 feet north of the Halloran yard). This time the bird fed busily on pyracantha berries and bathed in a birdbath under a large pyracantha bush. On 17 October I briefly saw the bird again in our backyard.

According to the summary of records at the University of Oklahoma Bird Range, the Wood Thrush has not heretofore been reported from Comanche County. The fall sighting reported above is noteworthy, for of the eight fall sightings on record for the state, all are for northeastern Oklahoma — seven for Tulsa County, one for Washington County. The species is "rare along the west edge of its range"; the westernmost counties from which is has heretofore been reported are Cimarron, Major, Oklahoma, Caddo, and Murray (Sutton, 1967, Oklahoma birds, p. 432).—Janet M. McGee, 1703 N. 43rd St., Lawton, Oklahoma 73501, 15 October 1973.

Virginia's Warbler in Texas County, Oklahoma.—On 15 May 1973, at about 1400 (day warm and clear), I observed a Virginia's Warbler (*Vermivora virginiae*) in a small willow tree along Coldwater Creek 2½ miles west of Hardesty, Texas County, in the Oklahoma Panhandle. In the same tree were a Swainson's Thrush (*Catharus ustulatus*) and an *Empidonax* flycatcher. Cottonwoods and willows were the principal trees lining the stream, in which a fair amount of water was flowing. Except for one sighting in Grant County, north-central Oklahoma — two birds seen in or near Wakita on 25 May 1956 by L. L. Byfield, his wife Ann, and Marjorie Stuart (1956, Audubon Field Notes, 10: 344) — Virginia's Warbler has heretofore been reported only from Cimarron County. It has been seen there several times in spring, twice in fall (Sutton, 1967, Oklahoma birds, pp. 496-7).—Jack D. Tyler, Department of Biology, Cameron College, Lawton, Oklahoma 73501, 25 October 1973.

FROM THE EDITOR: The editor wishes to thank the following for their help with preparing for publication W. Marvin Davis's Great-tailed Grackle paper: Louis E. McGee, John G. Newell, Mary P. Williams, John S. Tomer, and Mitchell Coddling. Presenting the paper without at least one map may surprise, and perhaps disappoint, some readers, but we decided that what might appear from a map to be proof of spread eastward and westward from south-central Oklahoma might misrepresent badly what actually happened. In other words, populations first observed in Greer County in 1971 and in McCurtain County in 1972 might well have moved into these "new" areas not from south-central Oklahoma but from adjacent areas in Texas.