

Norman, p. 44), who calls the closely related Red Crossbill (*Loxia curvirostra*) an "irregular winter visitor" found "virtually statewide."

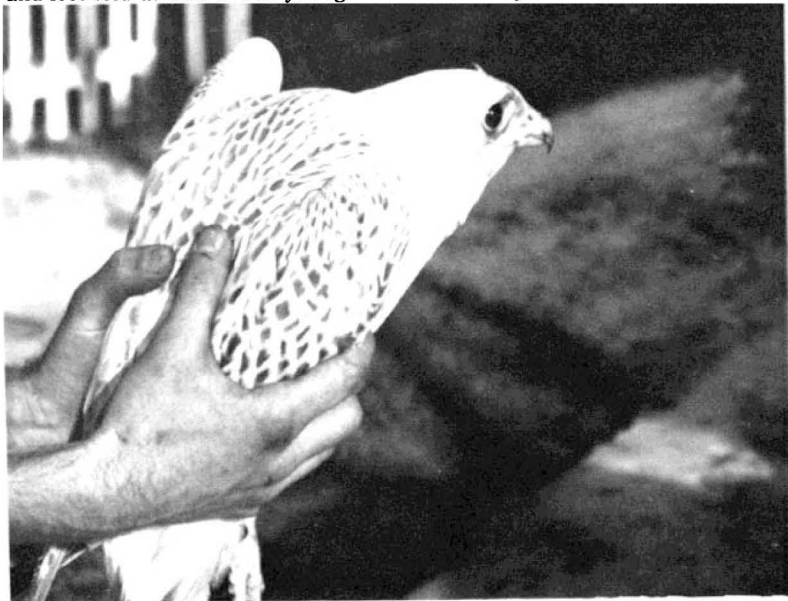
4019 EAST 45TH ST., TULSA, OKLAHOMA 74135, 20 JUNE 1976.

GYRFALCON IN OKLAHOMA

BY STEPHEN W. PLATT

On 12 January 1974 (a clear, calm, very cold day), while driving along a dirt road 2 miles east of Grainola, Osage County, northeastern Oklahoma, I saw a large, very white bird of prey perched on a fencepost not far from the road. I drove to within about 50 feet of the bird before it flew. As it made off, I realized that it was a large falcon and I deduced from its coloration that it could not be anything but a Gyrfalcon (*Falco rusticolus*), a species that had never before been seen in Oklahoma.

The following day, James W. Lish and I returned to the spot at which I had seen the bird. After searching for an hour we found it about a mile south of the post from which it had flown. Using a live-trap baited with a Rock Dove (*Columba livia*), we captured it. The light bluish gray of its bill, cere, eyelids, and feet told us that it was young — a bird of the year.



GYRFALCON

Captured near Grainola, Osage County, Oklahoma on 13 January 1974 by Stephen W. Platt and photographed that day by James W. Lish.

It was surprisingly docile, even at first (see photo). Equipped with hood and jesses, it thrived in captivity. On 24 February I took it to the home of George M. Sutton in Norman. Unhooded in the kitchen there, it showed neither fear nor animosity. It became a good hunter. Its health, generally speaking, was excellent. As it grew older its cere and feet became slightly more yellow.

On 23 July 1976, while being cared for by a fellow falconer in Colorado, the Gyrfalcon became unaccountably ill and died. Its carcass was autopsied at the Colorado State University Veterinary Hospital. Dr. Sutton prepared its skin (GMS 16264), which is now in the University of Oklahoma bird collection. One incoming primary and several secondary feathers in each wing of the three-year-old bird are pure white.

A published statement concerning the capture of this bird (Sutton, 1974, A check-list of Oklahoma birds, *Stovall Mus. Sci. & Hist.*, Univ. Oklahoma, Norman, p. 11) is slightly in error; as stated above, it was first seen on 12 January 1974 but it was captured and photographed the following day.

3017 N ASH ST., PAULS VALLEY, OKLAHOMA 73075, 19 MARCH 1977.

ON CORRECT IDENTIFICATION

BY GEORGE M. SUTTON

It sometimes seems to me that the only person fully qualified to comment on that which gives sight records full validity is the confirmed collector of specimens who has had the experience of identifying a living bird in the field to his complete satisfaction, then of collecting that very bird only to find it *not to be* of the species he had been sure it was.

Three times I have had that experience — first at Churchill, Manitoba, along the west coast of Hudson Bay in the summer of 1931, when I crawled across a mudflat on a very foggy day stalking what I felt sure was a Hudsonian Godwit (*Limosa haemastica*) only to find, after I'd collected the bird, that it was a Stilt Sandpiper (*Micropalama himantopus*) in full breeding feather. In heavy fog the bird had appeared to be three times its actual size. That's how fog can affect visibility.

Again, in the northern panhandle of West Virginia, I collected what I felt sure was an adult male Blue Grosbeak (*Guiraca caerulea*), a species that had never been reported from that area, and picked up a Gray Catbird (*Dumetella carolinensis*), a common species there. The sky was clear and very blue that day. The feathers of the catbird's back had reflected that blue and the bird died because I, convinced that the blueness was that of a Blue Grosbeak, and mindful that I had many times failed to obtain an important specimen as a result of too much deliberation, did not check one very important point — the looks of the bird's bill. Many a reader will say: What nonsense! Nobody'd ever mistake a catbird for a grosbeak! To which I reply: That's exactly what I did. I wanted very much to obtain a Blue Grosbeak. And the reflected blueness tipped the scales in favor of my calling the catbird a grosbeak. It was as simple as that; and the point of this particular discussion is that what happened *happened to me, a veteran*.