

Whether availability of nest-holes is a determining factor or not, a second nest of *Parus inornatus* for Oklahoma was discovered on 18 April 1976 by Gary D. Schnell *et al.* along Texakeet Creek four miles south of Kenton. The nest hole, probably that of a Ladder-backed or Downy woodpecker, was about five feet from the ground in a partly dead elm about fifteen feet southwest of the Laurance Regnier ranch house. Certain members of Schnell's party saw one bird go to the nest after both birds of the pair had scolded. I photographed the bird that did not go to the nest.

Except in coastal California, where it lives chiefly among oaks (Small, 1974, *The birds of California*, Macmillan, New York, p. 106), the Plain Titmouse inhabits pinyon-juniper woodland. In more or less montane eastern California it is a bird of the pinyon-juniper (Small, *loc. cit.*). In Arizona it is common in the northern and central parts of the state, an area throughout which there is much pinyon-juniper, but rare in the southeast, where there is little or no pinyon-juniper (Phillips, Marshall and Monson, 1964, *The birds of Arizona*, Univ. of Arizona Press, Tucson, p. 111). In New Mexico it is common in the "oak and pinyon-juniper foothills" at "from 5000 to 7000 feet" (Ligon, 1961, *New Mexico birds and where to find them*, University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque, pp. 208-209). In Colorado it is common "in the juniper-pinyon country of southern and western parts of the state" (Bailey and Niedrach, 1965, *Birds of Colorado*, Denver Mus. Nat. Hist., p. 577).

In Oklahoma, *Parus inornatus* is almost exclusively a bird of pinyon-juniper woodland. It has never been seen among the cottonwoods, willows, and salt cedar of the Cimarron River's flood-plain. Unlike the Scrub Jay (*Aphelocoma coerulescens*), Pinyon Jay (*Gymnorhinus cyanocephalus*), and Bushtit, all of which are residents of the pinyon-juniper, it has not been observed to move eastward some winters or to descend to the lowlands during that season. Whether, like the Steller's Jay (*Cyanocitta stelleri*) and Mountain Chickadee (*Parus gambeli*), it moves into the Black Mesa country from Colorado and New Mexico now and then is not known. The fact that the species is seen in greater numbers in fall and winter than at other seasons may well be a result of successful rearing of broods during the preceding summer.

2713 HOLLYWOOD AVENUE, NORMAN, OKLAHOMA 73069, 11 NOVEMBER 1977.

## WORK TO BE DONE IN THE BLACK MESA COUNTRY

BY GEORGE M. SUTTON

Several bird species found breeding in the Black Mesa country of far northwestern Oklahoma by R. Crompton Tate between 1908 and 1931 (see Nice, 1931, *Birds of Oklahoma*, p. 43) have not been found there in summer since 1931 so far as I know, this despite the fact that much fieldwork has been done in the area. The species in this category include the Northern Shoveler (*Anas clypeata*), Sharp-shinned Hawk (*Accipiter striatus*), Sharp-tailed Grouse (*Pedioecetes phasianellus*), Sage Grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*), Common

Snipe (*Capella gallinago*), Spotted Sandpiper (*Actitis macularia*), Broad-tailed Hummingbird (*Selasphorus platycercus*), Least Flycatcher (*Empidonax minimus*), Sage Thasher (*Oreoscoptes montanus*), Yellow-headed Blackbird (*Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus*), White-winged Dark-eyed Junco (*Junco hyemalis aikeni*), and McCown's Longspur (*Calcarius mccownii*).

The Sharp-tailed Grouse and Sage Grouse are known to have faded from the Oklahoma scene some time ago, the former presumably about 1912, the latter about 1920 (Nice, *op. cit.*, p. 81), so no one has been expecting to find either of them in the Panhandle at any season during recent years; but most of the others occur regularly as transients or winter visitants, or both, the one exception being the Broad-tailed Hummingbird, a species which is common in the mountains of Colorado and New Mexico and which is to be looked for in Oklahoma.

In my continuing fieldwork in the Black Mesa country during the past 40-some years, I have paid special attention to the above-named birds. I see no reason why some of them should not breed at least occasionally in Black Mesa State Park or thereabouts, so they are to be watched carefully by all who are afield there in spring and summer. To be borne in mind is the fact that breeding is usually accompanied by demonstrations of some sort: if Common Snipes are breeding there should be at least some aerial hooting; a courting male Broad-tailed Hummingbird, making a shrill beady sound as it whizzes past, should be conspicuous; Yellow-headed Blackbirds should be singing their unmusical songs from the cattails; and McCown's Longspurs should be flight-singing.

The following species, most of them not mentioned in any of Tate's published notes, are to be looked for:

1. California Gull. *Larus californicus*. This species may migrate regularly through Oklahoma, but it is not on the state's "official list" since neither an Oklahoma specimen nor an identifiable photograph taken in Oklahoma is available for reference. Adult birds in spring look like under-sized Herring Gulls (*L. argentatus*), but the legs are greenish rather than pink; the black of the wingtips is said to be noticeable from below; and the tip of the bill has a dark mark in addition to the orange spot. Immature birds are virtually impossible to distinguish from immature Herring Gulls in the field. Any gull believed to be a California, whether adult or immature, should be collected.

2. Western Flycatcher. *Empidonax difficilis*. Has been taken once near Kenton (Weske, 1976, *Auk*, 93: 655-56) and should be looked for. Most sight records are not acceptable, however, since the Western Flycatcher so closely resembles the Yellow-bellied (*E. flaviventris*), which breeds across the continent from northern British Columbia to Labrador, and is likely therefore to occur anywhere in Oklahoma as a transient.

3. Black-capped Chickadee. *Parus atricapillus*. This proportionately long-tailed, short-winged species may drift southward into Oklahoma occasionally in winter, though it is not strongly migratory. The spring song should be of two

notes only — a simple *phée-bee*, the former syllable higher in pitch than the latter.

4. Pygmy Nuthatch. *Sitta pygmaea*. The first specimen for the state, a breeding male, was collected on 22 May 1937 by George H. Lowery Jr. A specimen in *juvencal* feather was collected on 22 August 1972 by William A. Carter. The species no doubt nests in the Black Mesa country, but no nest has thus far been found. Young birds may have left the nest by May, for the species breeds early.

5. Gray Vireo. *Vireo vicinior*. The species has been taken once near Kenton — male of a breeding pair on 22 May 1937 (Sutton, 1938, *Auk*, 55: 505). To be looked for among the pinyon, juniper, and scrubby oak of the mesas. The species has a longish tail that it "wags" gnatcatcher-fashion.

6. Virginia's Warbler. *Vermivora virginiae*. Occurs regularly as a transient in western Oklahoma. Several specimens have been taken. Breeding pairs should be looked for among the mesas. The song is an unmusical but fairly noticeable series of chips.

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### GENERAL NOTES

**Wood Duck nesting in Norman, Oklahoma.**—On 25 March 1976, William H. Campbell observed three Wood Ducks (*Aix sponsa*) flying up and down the small stream that flows just back of his house at 2601 S. Berry Road in Norman, Cleveland County, central Oklahoma. Large trees grow along the stream, which has been dammed at one point. The impoundment is small, but the whole area is wooded despite its residentiality. Dr. Campbell did not see the ducks clearly enough to be sure of their sex, but he could not help wondering whether the species might nest in the vicinity.

On the following 20 May, within an hour after my return from Mexico, I received a telephone call from Bruce Granger, who lives at 944 Chautauqua Street about 2 miles from the Campbell residence. Dr. Granger told me of "a strange bird that looks like a duck" that was in his back yard at the moment and that had "nine little ones" with it. Hardly knowing what to make of such a report, I hurried to the Granger house in the gathering dusk, identified the "strange bird" as a hen Wood Duck, and watched mother and brood as they moved about close to the woven wire fence. Knowing that there were many cats and dogs in the neighborhood, and that the closest pond was the so-called "Duck Pond" on the university campus fully half a mile away, Dr. Granger, his wife Rosemary, and I decided to catch all 10 birds if we could and move them to the Duck Pond before dark. The chase began. I managed to get close to the mother bird several times, but she was remarkably agile. Had I rushed her while she was trying to push through the fence I might have caught her, but I missed this chance. Presently she flew lightly over the fence, alighted in the deep grass, and called her brood. Almost immediately the 10 birds disappeared.

We found them again in a remote corner of the plot, but again we failed to catch the mother. The ducklings now began scattering widely. Their peeping attracted two cats, which drew closer rapidly. Human shouts held off the cats while the mother's calls reassembled the brood. The 10 birds now moved back toward the Granger yard. Just at nightfall, while the mother was covering the brood, I almost caught her. The ducklings, now all in one place, were bewildered. As they started running this way and that, close to the fence, I caught six of them. By this time the mother was some distance off in a paved area among some parked cars. When I released the ducklings, they ran toward their mother, but I despaired of their surviving. By this time it was so dark that I could not clearly see either the mother bird or the ducklings.