

did not run off when attacked, but merely moved to the other side of the fence. The foiled owl alighted on the fence directly above the rabbit. About five minutes later the rabbit hopped off into the darkness, keeping under the fence as long as I could see it. The owl did not follow it.

At about 1615 on 24 January 1977 (my son Kevin was with me), I again saw the owl try to catch a jackrabbit. The owl was perched on the shaded lamp referred to above and the rabbit was under the fence. When the owl swooped, the rabbit hopped to the other side of the fence. The owl alighted on the fence above the rabbit. There the owl stayed for about ten minutes. The rabbit now dashed straight away from the fence, with the owl after it. Just as the owl was about to pounce, the rabbit made a sharp left turn, evading its pursuer. The owl circled, swooped again, but missed when the rabbit made another sharp left turn. The rabbit now ran back to the fence, followed by the owl, which alighted above its intended prey. Presently the rabbit left the fence again, and again the owl gave chase and swooped — but in vain. This time the owl returned not to the fence but to the shaded light, where it settled down, presumably to watch for smaller prey.

On 25 January, following the suggestion of Warren D. Harden, I tried to lure the owl into a trap baited with a live Common Hamster (*Cricetus cricetus*). I wanted to band the owl. At 1615 I placed the trap in short grass about 100 yards from the owl, which was perched on the fence. Hardly had I got back to my car when the owl flew to the hamster; but all it did when it got there was sit by the trap and look at the rodent. After watching the hamster for about five minutes it regurgitated a pellet and flew off. I collected the pellet.

On 26 January John Shackford and I tied the hamster outside the trap, hoping that the owl, which was about 100 yards away, would take it. So far as we could tell, the owl ignored the hamster completely. We tried three times that day to catch the owl in this way, but failed.

Early in the morning on 10 February the owl was on its lamp-post perch as I stopped my car at the side of the road. Between the car and a parking lot a few rods off was a grassy stretch that was free of snow. Even as I watched the owl, it flew down, caught a Cotton Rat, and swallowed the apparently full grown animal whole right in front of me (see photo).

On 12 February, at 0725, I saw the owl drive off a Red-tailed Hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*) that had alighted on the chain-link fence. Throughout the period of the owl's stay, I often saw large hawks, chiefly red-tails, in the vicinity, but not at the airport itself.

394 LAFAYETTE DRIVE, OKLAHOMA CITY, OKLAHOMA 73119, 23 FEBRUARY 1977

GENERAL NOTES

Early nesting of Great Horned Owl in Oklahoma.—On 16 January 1975 I flushed a Great Horned Owl (*Bubo virginianus*) from a clutch of four eggs in a nest that had been used the preceding spring by Red-tailed Hawks (*Buteo jamaicensis*). The nest was 42 feet up in a large elm about 3 miles northwest of Cyril, Caddo County, southwestern Oklahoma. In 1974 I had found four Great Horned Owl eggs in a tree-cavity nest only about

40 yards from the 1975 nest with four-egg clutch, so I surmised that the same bird had laid both clutches. In 1974 all four eggs had hatched and all four young had fledged. The cavity had been used by Great Horned Owls in 1972 and 1973 also, but I am not sure how many eggs had been laid in those years.

Mid-January is early for egg-laying in Oklahoma. Bent (1938, U.S. Natl. Mus. Bull. 170, Pt. 2, p. 298) calls the Great Horned Owl "our earliest breeder, often laying its eggs in February, or sometimes in January, as far north as New England and New York, a month or six weeks earlier than our largest hawks." In Florida eggs are laid "in midwinter, from about the middle of December to February" (Howell, 1932, Florida bird life, p. 293). The earliest egg date on record for Oklahoma (Sutton, 1967, Oklahoma birds, p. 257) is 6 February: on that date in 1955 V. E. Dowell found a nest containing two eggs near Willis, Marshall County, south-central Oklahoma. No one knows, of course, when those eggs had been laid.

The Great Horned Owl rarely lays four eggs. In Massachusetts all nests found by Bent (*op. cit.*, p. 302) contained "two eggs or two young, never more or fewer." Clutches of three are not, according to data filed at the University of Oklahoma Bird Range, rare in Oklahoma, and three young are often reared here, but no clutch of four has heretofore been reported for the state so far as I know.—William G. Voelker, *Box 64, Route 2, Millstadt, Illinois 62260, 22 February 1975.*

Early spring arrival date for Western Kingbird in Oklahoma.—On 3 April 1975, about 1 mile south of Eldorado, Jackson County, southwestern Oklahoma, Jimmy W. Tinsley and I observed a Western Kingbird (*Tyrannus verticalis*) perched on a barbed-wire fence. The bird was lethargic, less active than flycatchers usually are. Native pastureland and a small intermittent stream were to the west and plowed ground to the east. A light south wind was blowing, the sky clear, the air temperature about 50°F.

The earliest spring arrival date heretofore on record for *Tyrannus verticalis* in Oklahoma is 9 April (Sutton, 1974, A check-list of Oklahoma birds, Stovall Mus. Sci. & Hist., University of Oklahoma, Norman, p. 25). According to the summary of records on file at the University of Oklahoma Bird Range, R. R. Graber and his wife Jean saw a single Western Kingbird in Norman, Cleveland County, central Oklahoma on 9 April 1953; the "next earliest" spring records are of a single bird seen by J. D. Tyler *et al.* at Anadarko, Caddo County, southwestern Oklahoma, on 13 April 1974, and of a single bird seen along the north edge of Norman by L. W. Oring on 14 April 1965.—John W. Ault III, *4213 Bedford Dr., Laughton, Oklahoma 73505, 15 June 1976.*

Say's Phoebe in Payne County, Oklahoma.—On 20 March 1978, as Charlaire Anderson, Berniece Frichot, J. L. White, and I were driving along a county road on our way to City Lake near Cushing, Payne County, north-central Oklahoma, we had a good look at a Say's Phoebe (*Sayornis saya*). The bird was perched on a fencepost, headed into the wind. Its rufous underparts, gray upperparts, and high-crowned head were instantly apparent. We watched it for about ten minutes. It flew first to a fencepost, then to the ground, then upward over our car's hood in pursuit of a flying insect, finally to a dead weed well back from the fence in a field.

Say's Phoebe has not, according to the summary of records on file at the University of Oklahoma Bird Range, heretofore been reported from Payne County. There is, however, a record for Garfield County, north-central Oklahoma, that of a single bird seen near Enid by Joy Robertson on 18 September 1968 (1969, Audubon Field Notes, 23: 76; Sutton, 1974, Check-list of Oklahoma birds, Stovall Mus. Sci. & Hist., Univ. of Oklahoma, Norman, p. 25).—Deloris Isted, *1124 E. Ninth Pl., Cushing, Oklahoma 74023, 1 June 1978.*

Rusty Blackbird feeds on American Goldfinch.—Starlings (*Sturnus vulgaris*) often feed in my backyard in Bartlesville, Washington County, northeastern Oklahoma in winter, but until the morning of 13 January 1979 I had never seen a Rusty Blackbird

(*Euphagus carolinus*) there. On that morning (air temperature less than 20°F.; snow had covered the ground for about 10 days), I saw what I thought was a Starling feeding on a small dead bird in an open but unset trap mounted on a clothesline post. On examination with binocular I saw that the predator was a Rusty Blackbird, and its victim an American Goldfinch (*Carduelis tristis*) in winter feather. My husband John and I watched the blackbird for several minutes. After it left the trap — apparently disturbed by our movements at the window — it fed for some time on grain scattered on the ground, but did not return to the trap. When I retrieved the goldfinch, I found that the top of its head had been picked bare of feathers and skin; the skull, though exposed, was intact; and most of the feathers, skin, and flesh were gone from the breast and belly and some from the back.

Although we did not see the attack, it seems probable that the blackbird had killed the goldfinch while the latter was feeding in the trap. A letter (from Jessie D. Cummings of Anahuac, southeastern Texas, to Ruthven Deane) published in Bent (1958, U.S. Natl. Mus. Bull. 211: 291) described Rusty and "Crow" blackbirds (*Quiscalus quiscula*) killing and feeding on Common Snipes (*Capella gallinago*) and American Robins (*Turdus migratorius*) during "a period of 3 or 4 days" when snow covered the ground "to a depth of 20 inches." Cummings stated that the blackbirds ate "only the head, or as near as I could see, the brain, while the body was left untouched." He considered the Rusty Blackbirds "the principal aggressors".—Emma H. Messerly, 344 S.E. Elmhurst, Bartlesville, Oklahoma 74003, 16 January 1979.

Common Redpoll in northeastern Oklahoma.—In February and March of 1978 at least four small, red-capped finches, all believed to be Common Redpolls (*Carduelis flammea*), were observed within the corporate limits of Bartlesville, Washington County, northeastern Oklahoma. The first of these, three birds with pink breasts, seen on 9 February by Wilburene Favre at her house at 712 Winding Way, were at a feeder with Purple Finches (*Carpodacus purpureus*) and American Goldfinches (*Carduelis tristis*). No redpoll with pink breast was subsequently reported by anyone that season.

On 19 February I observed a female bird (no pink on breast) that was eating sunflower seed that had fallen from a feeder on my porch. One week later (26 February), I caught what might well have been this same bird in a small sparrow trap. With it in the trap was a Pine Siskin (*C. pinus*). The redpoll's rump was white, streaked with dark brown.

On 4, 5, 6, 14, 15, 16, and 20 March a female bird (no pink on breast) was seen by Paul Hefty and his wife Iris at a feeder at their house at 335 Robin Road. Mrs. Hefty and Ella Delap of Dewey, Oklahoma, observed the bird closely on 14 March; they were convinced that its rump was not white, but streaked with dark gray.—Elizabeth Hicks, 815 S. Jennings, Bartlesville, Oklahoma 74003, 20 October 1978.

Common Redpoll in central Oklahoma.—Every day from 13 January to 23 February 1978 a Common Redpoll (*Carduelis flammea*) visited feeders in my yard in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma County, central Oklahoma, along with scores of Pine Siskins (*C. pinus*) and American Goldfinches (*C. tristis*). Snow was on the ground during the entire period, so seed-eating birds were prompt in availing themselves of the food that my feeders provided. Virtually every bird student of the area came to see the redpoll, whose breast was pink and whose rump was grayish white streaked with dark gray. I took many color photographs, two of which clearly show the streaking on the rump.

At the request of George M. Sutton, who informed me that no Oklahoma specimen of *Carduelis flammea* had ever been preserved, I captured the redpoll on 23 February. It proved to a fully adult male of the wide-ranging nominate race, *C. f. flammea* (UOMZ 13080; weight 14.5 grams; fairly fat; skull fully pneumatized; testes slightly enlarged; wing 71 mm., tail 56).—Wesley Isaacs, 1304 LaFayette Drive, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73119, 15 March 1978.

Common Redpoll in west-central Oklahoma.—In the early afternoon on 22 January 1978 (sky clear after a morning of heavy fog; hoar frost and ice-coating on all vegetation; north wind 8-10 mph; temperature not far above freezing, though some ice was melting; snow up to an inch deep in some level areas), while I was driving with Lulu Hixson along a paved country road in Washita County 1 mile south and 4 east of Elk City, west-central Oklahoma, a flock of about 40 small birds flew across the road in front of the car, alighting among weeds and grasses on a slope close by. I stopped to ascertain what the birds were, expecting them to be Pine Siskins (*Carduelis pinus*), for that species had been unusually common earlier in the season, but they proved to be American Goldfinches (*C. tristis*).

While looking for a siskin to show Mrs. Hixson, I saw a bird that I knew instantly was neither a siskin nor a goldfinch, for it had a red crown-patch. It moved three times, but I kept it in view. Its upper parts were heavily streaked throughout, and its chin was black. Its throat and breast were, so far as I could see, without pink. I decided that it could be nothing but a female (or possibly a young male) Common Redpoll (*C. flammea*). The fact that its rump was streaked ruled out the possibility of its being a Hoary Redpoll (*C. hornemanni*).

We chased the birds back and forth for half an hour. Passing cars flushed them repeatedly. No more than ten or so of them were ever in sight at any one time. As the wind increased, they became more difficult to observe. At times the whole flock dropped into the grass or flew over a fence row and down into the furrows of a plowed field.

We returned later in the afternoon and found the flock again without difficulty, but the wind had become stronger, and I failed to find the redpoll. I returned alone repeatedly during the next week or so when weather permitted, but the birds had apparently exhausted the supply of seeds and moved on. I did, however, come upon a flock of goldfinches about a mile south of the spot at which I had seen them on 22 January. I did not see the redpoll among them. The weather continued to be extremely cold. There was so much snow that I was unable to work the area at all on many days.

The seeds on which the birds were feeding on 22 January were chiefly those of the Golden Crown Beard or Cowpen Daisy (*Verbesina encelioides*), according to Johnnie I. Gentry, Curator of the Bebb Herbarium at the University of Oklahoma.—Ina S. Brown, 106 Sunset, Elk City, Oklahoma 73644, 15 February 1978.

FROM THE EDITOR—The following persons are to be thanked for their help with this issue of the *Bulletin*: John S. Tomer, who told us of Loyd Isley's observations of the Bald Eagles that were nesting at Kerr Reservoir; Robert J. Farris, who went out of his way to examine all photographs that had been taken of the eagles and their nest to make sure that the one reproduced here would be the best of them; Johnnie L. Gentry Jr., Curator of the Bebb Herbarium at the University of Oklahoma, for his identification of the composite whose seeds the goldfinches near Elk City were eating; and Allan R. Phillips, who was kind enough to compare Wesley Isaacs's Common Redpoll directly with the large series representing that species at the U.S. National Museum, thus confirming George M. Sutton's identification of the specimen as *Carduelis f. flammea*.

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