

Bird Studies) have, however, brought to light the following four recent Rufous-sided Towhee sightings: one bird in Ottawa County on Route 22 near Peoria on 1 June 1968 (Dotty M. Goard); one on Route 23 in Craig County east of Welch on 30 May 1968 (Gene T. Hendricks); and two widely separated birds, each "spotted" and "with red eyes," on Route 19 in Dewey County west of Eagle City, in the northwestern part of the main body of the state, on 19 June 1971 (Robert T. Lynn). Though well within the breeding season, some or all of these sightings may represent exceptionally late migration.

In the three years during which my wife and I have lived in Delaware County (since August of 1975) we have observed very few towhees at any season. Summer and late spring sightings have indicated that the population occupying the brushy slopes above Spavinaw Creek north of Colcord is small and local. We visited the site of the 1977 nest on 29 April 1978 and neither saw nor heard a towhee on that date. Between 1 May and 18 June 1978, however, Mary Looney heard at least one towhee singing on at least four dates near her house, which is about half a mile northeast of the 1977 nest site and a quarter mile northwest of the 1978 nest site. On 10 June 1978, at about 0930, Mary Looney and I found a male and female towhee together in a shallow ravine in the same area. The female scolded vigorously before both birds flew off together.

Every bird that we have seen in northeastern Oklahoma in summer has been plain-backed rather than spotted-backed.

ROUTE 2, BOX 51A, JAY, OKLAHOMA 74356. 6 AUGUST 1978.

A BROWN PELICAN IN CENTRAL OKLAHOMA

By BRAD CARLTON

At about 4 o'clock in the afternoon on 23 April 1976 (air temperature up to 62°F. by noon; southwest wind 10-15 mph), I was surprised to find no shorebirds at Prairie Dog Point on the west side of Lake Hefner in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma County, central Oklahoma. What I did find was six Ring-billed Gulls (*Larus delawarensis*) standing at the water's edge with a large, dark, short-legged bird whose back was toward me and whose bill was tucked into its scapular plumage. As I approached the seven birds, the gulls flew off and the large bird lifted its head, revealing a massive bill and a pronounced pattern of dark-brown and white on the neck. Obviously it could be nothing but a Brown Pelican (*Pelecanus occidentalis*), the first I had ever seen away from the ocean coast.

Immediately I drove home for my wife, Helen, for I wanted her to see the bird. At about 4:45 she, Henry Walter, and I returned to Prairie Dog Point, found the bird without trouble, and watched it for about 20 minutes. It would "spook" when approached to within about 100 feet, but after flying about for a while would return to the Point and settle down.

At 7 o'clock the following morning (air temperature 52°F.; north wind 20-30 mph), Wesley Isaacs and I failed to find the pelican at Prairie Dog Point, but we found it on the big impoundment's opposite side, at the tip of Gun Club

Point. This time it was resting with 30 Ring-billed Gulls, 14 Franklin's Gulls (*Larus pipixcan*), and eight Forster's Terns (*Sterna forsteri*). We saw it well. It appeared to be fully adult, for the patterning on its head and neck was very bold and its crest was plainly visible. When disturbed it flew off, flapping its wings steadily as it gained altitude, then soaring in wide circles over the lake.

On 25 April, Warren D. Harden and George M. Sutton drove over from Norman to see the bird and John S. Shackford tried to get a picture of it, but the light was poor for photography. Put to flight, the pelican circled high over the lake for a while, but returned to the Point and alighted not far from the spot at which it had been standing.

I watched the pelican on several occasions between 24 and 29 April. When approached too closely it would fly up, start circling over the lake, and rise higher and higher, at times being so far up that I could hardly see it even with my 8-power binocular, but invariably above the lake itself. Its technique in fishing astonished me: when as much as 80 feet up, it would suddenly fold its wings and shoot straight downward into the water. On 24 April I saw it make four dives in about 20 minutes. It seemed to be most successful in its fishing near the water-intake tower, where the water was roiled. I could not be sure, of course, of how many fish it was catching, but I estimated that about 20% of its dives were successful. The shortest dives that I saw it take were from about 60 feet up, the longest from about 100 feet up.

On 29 April I found the pelican at Prairie Dog Point — this time with a White Pelican (*Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*). The two birds were about 20 yards apart, each standing in shallow water. The Brown Pelican was noticeably smaller than the White. Not far from the pelicans was a flock of 12 American Avocets (*Recurvirostra americana*), all resting at the water's edge.

On 30 April, John Shackford succeeded in obtaining the excellent photograph reproduced here. That day the White Pelican was close to a flock of gulls, most of them Franklin's.

The Brown Pelican was last seen on 5 May. That day Wesley Isaacs



PELICANS BROWN AND WHITE

Photographed by John S. Shackford on 30 April 1976 at Lake Hefner in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Also showing in the picture are eight Franklin's Gulls and three Ring-billed Gulls.

watched it as it dived for fish near the Lake Hefner dam.

According to Sutton (1967, Oklahoma birds, Univ. Oklahoma Press, Norman, pp. 16-17), there have heretofore been seven valid records for the Brown Pelican in Oklahoma, the most recent of them being for 25 May 1955, on which date A. H. Radil shot an immature male bird (UOMZ 2316) at one of the fishery ponds at Reagan, Johnston County, south-central Oklahoma.

12000 ROYAL COACH DR., YUKON, OKLAHOMA 73099, 15 JULY 1978.

GENERAL NOTES

Peregrine Falcons sighted in Texas County, Oklahoma.—At about 1030 on 2 May 1978 (weather unseasonably wintry: sky heavily overcast; intermittent drizzle and sleet; north wind 25-40 kph; air temperature about 3°C.), at a sizeable playa known as Wild Horse Lake, 4.8 kilometers north of Straight, Texas County, northwestern Oklahoma, we saw two large falcons. One of them soon drifted out of sight, but the other continued to cruise about over the water perhaps 100 meters from us and 12 meters up, making short, half-hearted stoops at swimming ducks and chasing shorebirds as if "prey-testing" — i.e., looking for infirm individuals that would be easy to catch.

The falcon moved gradually closer to us, eventually flying directly overhead. With our binoculars we clearly saw the black of the moustachial streaks and top of the head, the blue-gray back, the barred breast and belly, and the barred rather than black axillary feathers. Our identification was positive: the bird was an adult male Peregrine (*Falco peregrinus*). It moved northwestward, harrassing shorebirds as it went. On leaving the lake, it flew low over a wheatfield and we lost sight of it.

A few minutes later, as we were scanning lake and fields with our 15-45X spotting scope, a flock of Mallards (*Anas platyrhynchos*), followed closely by eight Green-winged Teal (*A. crecca*), flew erratically toward us from the north, as if in panic. Suddenly Gene Pester shouted, "It got one!" Glancing upward, we saw a Peregrine (very likely the bird we had been watching) clutching a teal in its talons. A small shower of feathers indicated that the catch had just been made. Falcon and prey were 50 meters from us, about 20 meters up.

The Peregrine flew laboriously southward toward shore. Through our binoculars we saw it bite, wrench, and break its prey's neck. When about half a kilometer south of the lake, it flew so low that we could not see it clearly. We did not see it alight.

About ten minutes later, while we were at the truck talking with the landowner, a falcon that we identified as another Peregrine flew toward us from the southeast, moving leisurely overhead about 10 meters up. This time the diagnostic characters were even more striking than those of the first bird. The falcon flew low over the wheat, heading northwestward, passing out of sight when about half a kilometer away.

Other birds than the Peregrines that we saw at Wild Horse Lake that morning were 13 Mallards, 40 Green-winged Teal, 91 Blue-winged Teal (*A. discors*), two Northern Shovelers (*A. clypeata*), 20 American Coots (*Fulica americana*), 15 Willets (*Catoptrophorus semipalmatus*), 18 Marbled Godwits (*Limosa fedoa*), some Wilson's Phalaropes (*Steganopus tricolor*), and small scolopacids of several species.

Later that day, while in the unfilled basin of Optima Reservoir, at a spot 4.8 kilometers east and 6.5 north of the town of Hardesty, we again saw a large falcon. It was flying so low that we could not see it clearly. After driving to higher ground we saw it again, this time at about 175 meters. We ascertained first that its axillars were not black, then that it was carrying prey. Presently it alighted on a mound about 250 meters from us and we had a good look at it through our spotting scope. It was an adult Peregrine, possibly one of the very birds we had seen at Wild Horse Lake, though that body of water was fully 25 kilometers away.