

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.

While the falcon was eating we drove to within about 150 meters of it. We now saw that its prey was a small bird. Disturbed by our presence, the falcon flew about 75 meters, alighted and resumed eating. Hoping to learn what it had caught, we drove quickly toward it, but when it flew it took its prey with it. Circling widely, it sped westward up the Beaver River and disappeared when about 300 meters from us.

We searched the two feeding sites, gathered an assortment of feathers — all of which proved to be from a Cliff Swallow (*Petrochelidon pyrrhonota*) — and drove in the direction the falcon had taken. As we topped a rise, it flushed once more. Without its prey this time, it flew up the river and disappeared. We failed to find any feathers or bones at the spot from which it had flown.

Birds that we saw in the Optima Reservoir basin were Mallards, Pintails (*Anas acuta*), Green-winged and Blue-winged teal, Northern Shovelers, American Avocets (*Recurvirostra americana*), and various small charadriiform and passeriform species.

In our opinion, the weather may have had much to do with these unexpected Peregrine sightings. Many of the other migrant birds that we saw were sitting out the stiff north wind and cold temperatures as best they could. This unseasonable weather may well have been a deterrent to migration, causing the birds to stockpile, thus attracting predators also on migration.

Sutton (1974, Check-list of Oklahoma birds, Stovall Mus. Sci. & Hist., Univ. Oklahoma, Norman, p. 11), who calls the Peregrine a "transient and winter visitant from 31 August to 26 May," does not name Texas County among the counties from which *Falco peregrinus* has been reported (1967, Oklahoma Birds, Univ. Oklahoma Press, Norman, p. 124).

We are grateful to Victor J. Heller, Graduate Research Assistant in Wildlife Ecology at Oklahoma State University, for identification of the Cliff Swallow feathers.—Mark E. Byard, Oklahoma Dept. Wildlife Conservation, 504 Foster, Ponca City, Oklahoma 74601; Ronald C. Freeman, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, 135 Bel Air Circle, Brunswick, Georgia 31520; Gene A. Pester, Oklahoma Dept. Wildlife Conservation, 1311 N. Sunset, Guymon, Oklahoma 73942, 22 May 1978.

Breeding of King Rail in Washington County, Oklahoma.—Along a narrow drainage ditch that parallels a county road about 1 mile northwest of Dewey, Washington County, northeastern Oklahoma, the King Rail (*Rallus elegans*) has been seen repeatedly in summer during recent years. The ditch is sometimes full of water, sometimes dry, but by midsummer it is lined with sedge and grass up to 4 feet high, no matter how dry the season.

I first saw the King Rail there, an adult, on 23 July 1969. On 10 and 11 August 1970, I saw two young birds at a pond about half a mile southwest of the ditch. On 1 June 1971, Dotty M. Goard *et al.* flushed an adult bird along the ditch after hearing its calls. This year (1977) I first saw the species along the ditch on 23 June, when, hidden back of rank Johnson grass, I watched one parent bird preening its plumage while the other, accompanied by at least six chicks, fed on a mudflat. The chicks, about third-grown, were still covered with black down. They moved in and out among the sedge, on the go so incessantly that counting them was difficult. One chick, chasing an insect, ran with its "knees" close together and feet far apart, a movement handy for pushing vegetation aside, but ludicrous to behold when the bird was in the open.

I found King Rails along the ditch again on the morning of 1 July, observing first an adult as it walked out onto the road several yards from where I stood, then one of the fully feathered young ones, no longer black but dusky with whitish front, as it crossed the road.—Ella Delap, 409 N. Wyandotte, Dewey, Oklahoma 74029, 8 July 1977.

Nest of Lewis's Woodpecker in Cimarron County, Oklahoma.—Lewis's Woodpecker (*Melanerpes lewis*) is known to have bred "irregularly" in the Black Mesa country in the northwesternmost corner of Oklahoma's Panhandle (Sutton, 1974, Check-list of Oklahoma birds, Stovall Mus. Sci. & Hist., Univ. Oklahoma, Norman, p. 24), but it has

never been common there. R. C. Tate (1923, Proc. Oklahoma Acad. Sci., 3: 45) considered it a "not numerous" resident near Kenton, in Cimarron County. He found several nests, one of them on 19 June 1920, and Mrs. Nice herself watched "a pair at their nesting hole" on 31 May 1922 (Nice, 1931, The birds of Oklahoma, Publ. Univ. Oklahoma Biol. Surv., 3: 113). The species has been observed from time to time in the Black Mesa country in recent years, but so far as I know, no nest has been found since 1922.

On the evening of 8 August 1976, Henry N. Buscher and I watched four Lewis's Woodpeckers foraging together in a large elm along Texakeet Creek near the Laurance Regnier ranch-house 4 miles south of Kenton. We judged from their behavior that they were a family group and that nesting had taken place near by.

On the morning of 14 May 1978, while looking for birds with Laurence Dunn, Alice Brues, and several other members of the Oklahoma Ornithological Society in a grove of large cottonwoods near the confluence of Carrizzo Creek and the Cimarron River about 4 miles northeast of Kenton, I noticed two Lewis's Woodpeckers at a nest hole on the under side of a cottonwood limb about 23 feet up. The limb itself was dead, though the tree was alive. The birds remained close by while I climbed to the nest, but they did not seem to be much excited. The entrance to the nest cavity was about $2\frac{3}{4}$ inches in diameter. I could not get my hand through it. I did not hear sounds of young birds while I was at the nest.—Jack D. Tyler, Dept. Biology, Cameron University, Lawton, Oklahoma 73505, 21 July 1978.

On abrasion of plumage in the Starling. Well known is the fact that the heavy speckling of the winter plumage of the Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*) is lost not through molt but through abrasion. The grayish white and pale buffy tips of the feathers are obviously much more friable than the dark parts. Witherby *et al.* (1948, Handb. British birds, 1: 43) describe the breeding plumage thus: "SUMMER.—No moult. Buff and gray of tips of feathers gradually wear off, making the whole bird darker and more glossy, especially on crown and underparts."

On 26 February 1976, in Norman, Cleveland County, central Oklahoma, I observed how certain Starling activities "gradually wear off" the light tips of the feathers. The weather had been unseasonably warm for weeks. At a slitlike natural cavity in an old maple across the street from my house on West Brooks Street, I saw a Starling emerge with a billful of debris. At first I thought there might be something edible in this, but the Starling flicked it off, wiped its bill vigorously, and went in after another load. The opening to the cavity was narrow, but the Starling managed to get in and out by squeezing and pushing at a point about midway between top and bottom. It worked hard, bringing out billful after billful. After removing about twenty loads, it found that it could get rid of the debris by sticking its head and the forepart of its body out without leaving the cavity, a procedure that necessitated backing up immediately after bill-wiping. Even from my position several rods away, I could see that this was hard on the plumage, especially that of the breast, belly, wings, and back.

In the midst of all this cavity-cleaning, another Starling happened by and the worker quickly emerged, dropped its load, wiped its bill hastily, flew to a twig a few feet away, and began waving its wings and calling. This behavior convinced me that the worker was a male, for I believe that female Starlings do not wing-wave. In this I may be wrong. February 26 certainly is early for nest-building.—George M. Sutton, *Stovall Museum of Science and History, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Okla. 73019, 29 February 1976.*

Early nest of Prothonotary Warbler in Washington County, Oklahoma.—In the Roy Quillin Bird Egg Collection at the Rob and Bessie Welder Wildlife Foundation at Sinton, Texas is a set of three eggs of the Prothonotary Warbler (*Protonotaria citrea*) collected 3 miles west of Copan, Washington County, northeastern Oklahoma on 3 May 1917 by Albert J. B. Kirn, early oologist and field naturalist. On the data slip for this set of eggs Kirn describes nest and site: "in stub of elm tree in wood near [Little Caney] river, two feet up; nest near top of stub in hole; of shreds of bark fibre, fine grasses and

lined with rootlets and long hair"; and he noted that the eggs were "fresh." Sutton (1967, Oklahoma birds, Univ. Oklahoma Press, Norman, p. 489) gives the earliest date for nesting in Oklahoma as "May 5, 1916, partly built nest, Washington County, A. J. B. Kirn (Nice, 1931: 155)." There is no way of knowing how Kirn overlooked this earlier nest when he sent his Copan records to Margaret Morse Nice.

Bent (1953, U.S. Natl. Mus. Bull. 203: 31) quotes from a study by Meyer and Nevius (1943, Migrant, 14: 31-36) to the effect that at four nests of the Prothonotary Warbler in Tennessee "from 6 to 10 days were required for nest construction" and "from 3 to 5 days more elapsed before the first eggs were laid." Since *Protonotaria citrea* usually lays one egg each day (Bent. *op. cit.*, p. 23) the Oklahoma nest above-described must have reached the "partly built" stage at least nine days earlier than that referred to in Kirn's published record.—Emma H. Messerly, 344 S. E. Elmhurst, Bartlesville, Oklahoma 74003, 13 July 1978.

Early spring record for Townsend's Warbler in Oklahoma.—At about 1600 on 28 April 1978 (a pleasant, comparatively windless day), I collected a male Townsend's Warbler (*Dendroica townsendi*) along the Cimarron River about 9 kilometers east of Kenton, Cimarron County, far western Oklahoma. The area was heavily used by livestock. Among its trees were scattered large cottonwoods, some dense patches of hackberry, and a few clumps of salt cedar. Other parulids that I saw in the vicinity were many Yellow-rumped Warblers (*D. coronata*) — both white-throated and yellow-throated forms, some of the males singing — two Orange-crowned Warblers (*Vermivora celata*), and two Wilson's Warblers (*Wilsonia pusilla*). My specimen (UOMZ 13291) is the first adult male Townsend's Warbler to have been collected in Oklahoma. The species is listed as a "transient from August 31 to September 22 and from May 11 to 14" (Sutton, 1974, Check-list of Oklahoma birds, Stovall Mus. Sci. & Hist., Univ. Oklahoma, Norman, p. 37). The earliest spring sighting heretofore on record is, according to data filed at the University of Oklahoma Bird Range, of a female bird seen by John S. Weske along the Cimarron River east of Kenton on 11 May 1968. My specimen therefore represents return from the south about two weeks earlier than extant records have indicated.—D. Scott Wood, Dept. of Zoology and Stovall Mus. Sci. & Hist., Univ. Oklahoma, Norman 73019, 7 April 1979.

Prairie Warbler in Cimarron County, Oklahoma.—At about 0930 on 14 May 1978, John S. Tomer, Jerry Sisler, and I observed a male Prairie Warbler (*Dendroica discolor*) working its way among the vegetation along the roadside fence near the sewage treatment pond about a mile northeast of Boise City, Cimarron County, far western Oklahoma. We watched it through both field glasses and telescopes. It was in full breeding plumage. We noted its striped face and sides, its chestnut back, and its "tail wagging." At 1130, Diane Lowe, John Shackford, and others observed it again in the same area. Shackford heard one feeble attempt at singing. Jack D. Tyler and several of his students tried to find it a bit later, but were unsuccessful.

Dendroica discolor breeds in eastern Oklahoma; it has not heretofore been reported from any area west of Garfield and Caddo counties (Sutton, 1974, A check-list of Oklahoma birds, Stovall Mus. Sci. & Hist., Univ. Oklahoma, Norman, pp. 37-38).—Richard L. Reeder, Faculty of Natural Sciences, University of Tulsa, Tulsa, Oklahoma 74104, 8 August 1978.

FROM THE EDITOR: Joseph A. Grzybowski is to be thanked for his part in making the picture of the Rufous-sided Towhee's nest available for reproduction as a halftone in this issue.

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