

nated its nestmates.

In the opinion of every person who saw and heard the parent tanagers, the female was a Summer Tanager. I had noticed the brightness of the bird's underparts the first time I had seen her. When Deloris Isted and Helen Miller saw her they pronounced her a "Summer" almost immediately. Among the careful bird students who saw her well—aside from those mentioned above—were Elizabeth Hayes and Hannah Bass of Tulsa and Carolyn Gritzmaker of Oklahoma City. Repeated attempts were made on 17 July to net the bird so that measurements could be taken, but all attempts failed.

The Scarlet Tanager breeds widely in wooded parts of the eastern third of Oklahoma. There is one valid record for its nesting as far west as Woodward County (1967, Audubon Field Notes, 21: 584). The late Zella Moorman — as well as others who saw the pair at that nest, which was along a road not far from Boiling Springs State Park — assumed quite naturally that the female bird was a Scarlet Tanager.

ROUTE 2, BOX 178, PERKINS, OKLAHOMA 74059. 19 NOVEMBER 1979.

BREEDING OF BLACK-BILLED MAGPIE IN NORTHEASTERN OKLAHOMA

BY GARY W. SALLEE

On 17 June 1979, while banding nestling herons near Sapulpa, Creek County, northeastern Oklahoma, I found two dead young Black-billed Magpies (*Pica pica*) not far apart on the ground. The heronry was in a wooded area near a small tributary to the Arkansas River. The heron nests were in blackjack oak, hawthorn, hackberry, and persimmon trees, most of which were from 4 meters (14 feet) to 10 meters (35 feet) high.

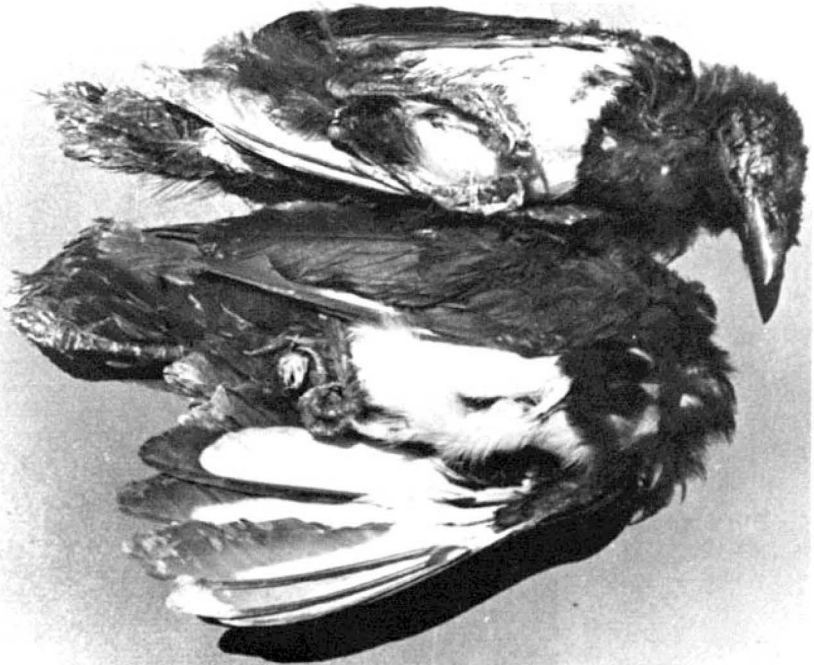
Before entering the heronry that day, I had instructed my companions — Vicki Hatfield and my wife Sheryl — to listen and watch for Great-tailed Grackles (*Quiscalus mexicanus*), a species I had heard there on an earlier visit without being sure that it was nesting. While I was on my ladder at a heron nest, I saw on the ground, not far from the foot of the ladder, what I took to be two dead young grackles. These proved, however, to have bold white markings and feathered nostrils, features instantly declaring them to be magpies, a species I had seen much of while living in southeastern Colorado.

The two young birds were much alike, each being about 30 centimeters (12 inches) long, with tail-length of 10.8 centimeters (4¼ inches). The basal part of the major wing and tail feathers was sheathed for a considerable distance, indicating that the nestlings probably had died well before being able to fly. I guessed that they had been dead about five days. No nest in the immediate vicinity looked much like magpie nests I had seen in Colorado, but some high heron nests drooped over lower ones in such a way as to create a domed-over effect, and I suspect that the young magpies had occupied such a nest. Recent heavy rains may have damaged the structure, causing the nestlings to fall

through to the ground. I continued to wonder why I had not seen or heard an adult magpie in the area.

The Black-billed Magpie breeds commonly today in woods lining streams in Cimarron County at the west end of the Panhandle. There it nests in cottonwood, hackberry, willow, and walnut trees 3.6 to 9.14 meters (12 to 30 feet) from the ground (Sutton, 1967, Oklahoma birds, Univ. Oklahoma Press, Norman, p. 374). It has been reported also from Texas, Beaver, Woods, Grant, Payne, Oklahoma, Hughes, and Payne counties, though it has not been observed to nest successfully anywhere east of Cimarron County. A nest found in Oklahoma County — one that never, so far as known, held eggs or young (1962, Audubon Field Notes, 16: 489) — may have been built by a pair that escaped from the Oklahoma City zoo (Sutton, *loc. cit.*).

Certain corvids are obviously expanding their breeding ranges in Oklahoma. We have no information as to when the Blue Jay (*Cyanocitta cristata*) and Common Crow (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*) first bred in the Panhandle, but both are now well established there, along larger streams, westward to the New Mexico state line. While the Black-billed Magpie may be moving eastward following these same streams, the White-necked Raven (*C. cryptoleucus*) does not appear to be extending its range eastward anywhere in the state.



BLACK-BILLED MAGPIE NESTLINGS

Found dead on the ground at a heronry near Sapulpa, northeastern Oklahoma, on 17 June 1979. Photo by Gary W. Sallee.

Magpies first bred in Oklahoma in 1919 (Tate, 1927, Condor, 29: 244). Subsequent magpie sightings east of Cimarron County do not, according to George M. Sutton's summary of *Pica pica* records, indicate a steady movement eastward since that year, though R. H. Davy's several sightings from 1955 to 1960 at Guymon, Texas County, W. E. Lewis's early sightings near Gate, Beaver County (Nice, 1931, Birds of Oklahoma, p. 127), L. E. Dunn's winter sightings at the east end of the Panhandle from 1958 to 1961, and repeated sightings in Woods and Grant counties in the spring of 1937 (Sutton, *loc. cit.*) all suggest range-extension eastward. The Fish Crow (*Corvus ossifragus*), which has followed the Red and Arkansas rivers into Oklahoma from the southeast, has been exploiting heronries since its advent here. The young magpies that I found in Creek County may well have been the progeny of a pair that were exploiting the Sapulpa heronry.

Heronries are, in other words, important "ecological stepping stones" for corvids, as well as for various other animals. For Common Crows, Fish Crows, and Black-billed Magpies the ready availability of nest sites, nest materials, and food in the form of heron eggs and nestlings must be highly conducive to their establishing themselves in or near a heronry.

TULSA DISTRICT CORPS OF ENGINEERS, P.O. BOX 61, TULSA, OKLAHOMA 74102, 20 JULY 1979.

GENERAL NOTES

Fourth winter record of Dickcissel in Washington County, Oklahoma.—Early in the afternoon on 31 December 1978, in Bartlesville, Washington County, northeastern Oklahoma, I saw a Dickcissel (*Spiza americana*) among the several House Sparrows (*Passer domesticus*) that were perched in shrubbery along the edge of our backyard. Air temperature was about 18°F., and sleet covered the ground. Later that day, my husband John and I saw the Dickcissel several times as it fed with the sparrows on the ground. Each time the sparrows were disturbed and flew into the shrubbery, the Dickcissel remained for a full minute or more, giving us a chance to see the warm yellow front, finchlike bill, black streak at each side of the throat, faint eye-ring, and light streak above the eye. We did not notice the chestnut wing-patches. Since we saw no black on the lower throat, we assumed that the bird was a female.

This observation represents the fourth winter record for the Dickcissel in Washington County, Oklahoma. For other Washington County records, see Delap, Ella, 1979, Bull. Oklahoma Orn. Soc., 12:34.—Emma H. Messerly, 344 S.E. Elmhurst, Bartlesville, Oklahoma 74003, 25 January 1979.

Subspecies of Savannah Sparrow found in Oklahoma.—When I examined the seven Savannah Sparrows (*Passerculus sandwichensis*) that James L. Norman had found dead under the TV