

The jaeger that I observed for about an hour on 12 November 1979 kept well out from shore. It flew strongly and seemed to be in good health. From time to time it chased one of the several Ring-billed Gulls (*Larus delawarensis*) that were flying about the lake. Not while I was watching it did it force any gull to disgorge food. I did not hear it cry out. At rest on the water it was dark all over except for light markings on the flanks and under tail coverts. When it was flying, light flashed occasionally from the under side of its wings.

I saw the jaeger almost every day between 12 and 18 November — a week of unusually fine weather throughout central Oklahoma. Others who also observed it were my wife Diane, Wesley S. Isaacs, John G. Newell, Ernest E. Wilson and his son Craig, Kathryn Belcher, and Gwen Field.

The bird was less active and less wary as the days passed. Gradually it spent more time idly floating on the water, drifting closer and closer to shore, though never quite to it. On 17 November it surprised me by swimming to within a few yards of the water's edge to investigate sticks that I tossed in its direction. I could not help thinking that it mistook these for something to eat. I photographed it several times that day. On the following day Ernest Wilson also photographed it.

On the evening of 18 November the jaeger was not on the lake proper but just north of it on one of the small "settling ponds" used by the Oklahoma City Water Department. On 19 November, at this same pond, I saw no flying or swimming jaeger, but presently I spied a dark carcass floating on water purification sludge about 30 yards out from shore. Convinced that this was the bird I had been seeing, I tried to snag it by casting a fishline — but in vain. The sludge was far too "boggy" for safe wading.

On 28 November, Warren D. Harden and I laid broad boards on the sludge and Harden, advancing precariously, finally reached and retrieved the carcass. Most of it was missing, for evidently a Great Horned Owl (*Bubo virginianus*) or other predator had fed upon it, but the wings and feet were there, and the bones of these proved to be those of a Pomarine Jaeger. The humeri, in particular, were much larger than those of adult Parasitic and Long-tailed jaegers collected on Baffin Island in the summer of 1953 by Dr. Sutton. Diagnostic remains are now at the Bird Range at the University of Oklahoma in Norman.

I am grateful to Warren Harden, who made the journey out to the carcass, and to D. Scott Wood, who compared the specimen's wing bones directly with those of the other jaeger species.

ROUTE 1, BOX 125, OKLAHOMA CITY, OKLAHOMA 73111. 4 DECEMBER 1979.

## A GREAT-TAILED GRACKLE COLONY IN WASHINGTON COUNTY, OKLAHOMA

By RANDALL A. PORTER

So far as I have been able to ascertain, the Great-tailed Grackle (*Quiscalus mexicanus*) was sighted only six times in Washington County, northeastern Oklahoma, prior to the year 1979. These early sightings were: on 7 May

1967, a single bird just north of Bartlesville, by Maryan Matuszak (see Davis, 1975, *Bull. Oklahoma Orn. Soc.*, 8: 13); on 11 May 1967, three birds just west of Dewey, by Marlin Lee (see Davis, *loc. cit.*); on 8 May 1969, a male and female just west of Dewey, by Dotty M. Goard; on 23 April 1976, three males just north of the Tulsa County line west of Vera, by Odie McReynolds; on 11 March 1977, a male and two females 1 mile west of Dewey, by Ella Delap; and on 4 April 1978, a flock of about ten males and ten females just west of Dewey, by Dotty M. Goard *et al.* None of these sightings was believed to represent a breeding population.

On the morning of 28 April 1979, however, at a pond near the so-called Washington County Barn, 2 miles west of Dewey, Paul Hefty observed a sizeable company of male and female birds that obviously had established themselves for the season. One of the females was carrying nest material. The pond, which was about 2 feet deep, with muddy bottom, measured about 50 x 75 feet. In it grew a lush stand of cattails.

That evening, Ella Delap and I counted five male and ten female Great-tailed Grackles at the pond, but saw no further evidence of nesting.

On 18 May, accompanied by several members of the Bartlesville Audubon Society, I visited the pond, finding there three male birds and about 25 females. All of the males were displaying and several females were carrying food. A fourth male was in a pasture about a mile away. The six nests that we found were along the edge of the cattail stand. One of these held at least two recently hatched chicks, another four eggs, another two eggs. Three of the nests we could not see into, and we felt sure that there were still other nests back from the edge of the cattails. Nests that we examined were 2 to 3 feet above water, supported wholly by the cattail stalks.

On 28 May, I counted six adult males and 28 adult females at the pond. None of the males was carrying food, but of the females that flew up from the cattails, 13 were carrying food. About ten young birds jumped from nests as I waded along the edge of the cattails. One fledgling flew fairly well for about 6 feet.

On 3 June, the colony was thriving and noisy. Many young birds had by this time left the cattails and were being fed on a grassy slope bordering a road close by. Watching the adult females closely, I could tell that many of them were taking food to young ones still in the cattails — though not necessarily in nests. Every adult male seemed to be giving his attention chiefly to displaying. With body plumage fluffed up and wings drooping, each would strut before a female, uttering grating cries. In response some females fluttered their wings a little, as if begging for food, but most of them ignored the protestations of the males. When I approached the cattails closely, about 40 young birds flew out. Most of these flew so well that I found myself wondering whether the ardent displaying of the adult males indicated the beginning of a second egg-laying for the season.

By 10 June, however, activity at the pond had subsided noticeably. As I

approached the cattails about 20 grackles flew out, four of them adult males, the rest adult females and young birds. The young were indistinguishable in color from the adult females. A film of oil, especially noticeable near the cattails, may have been caused by rock-crushing operations not far from the pond.

On 17 June, the whole area was quiet. When I first approached the pond, I saw one adult male grackle and three females (or females and fully fledged young). Four very young birds that I flushed from the cattails could fly only a little. At another pond about 150 yards away, I saw a flock of about 15 grackles, all females or females and fully fledged young.

On 1 July, I saw four adult females, three of them carrying food to nests or young in the cattails, one giving food to a young bird fully as large as herself along a creek about 100 yards west of the pond.

5307 RANCH ROAD, BARTLESVILLE, OKLAHOMA 74003, 12 SEPTEMBER 1979.

### GENERAL NOTES

**Roseate Spoonbill in Comanche County, Oklahoma.** — At 1100 on 22 August 1979, along the south shore of the Public Service Company's storage lake, 7 miles southeast of Lawton, Comanche County, southwestern Oklahoma, we discovered a large, unfamiliar wading bird. It was about three-quarters the size of a Great Blue Heron (*Ardea herodias*) standing not far from it, and it was white instead of blue-gray. Suspecting that it was a Roseate Spoonbill (*Ajaia ajaja*), we drove back to Lawton for photographic equipment. When we returned a few hours later, Janet M. McGee and Jack D. Tyler were with us.

Examined carefully through a telescope, the bird revealed several facts: 1. When it raised its wings to preen, a suffusion of shell-pink showed in their linings. 2. The long, flesh-colored bill was spoon-shaped at its tip. 3. The long legs were pale flesh-color. 4. The head was completely covered with white feathers. We concluded that the bird could be nothing but an immature Roseate Spoonbill, a species that Dr. Tyler had seen many times on the Gulf Coast of Texas.

Approaching the surprisingly unwary bird to within about 35 yards, and using telephoto lenses, Clemons and Tyler took several photos. For long stretches of time, the spoonbill stood motionless. When feeding, it dragged its bill back and forth through the soft mud. Occasionally it preened vigorously. We observed no interaction between it and the several herons and shorebirds that were feeding nearby. Advancing toward it, we flushed first the herons, then the spoonbill, which came to rest on a small peninsula about 200 yards east of us. When flushed a second time, the spoonbill left the lake.

The bird did not, however, leave the area for good. On at least seven occasions between 22 August and 12 September (on the whole a not unusually hot period) it was observed by several persons, among them David Allison and his wife Joy, Leonard Beavers and his wife Esther, and Michael Morgan. Invariably it was seen along the lake's south shore, a dependence on feeding area that confirms the following statement, made as long ago as 1840 — in his famed "Birds of America" — by John James Audubon, and quoted by Bent