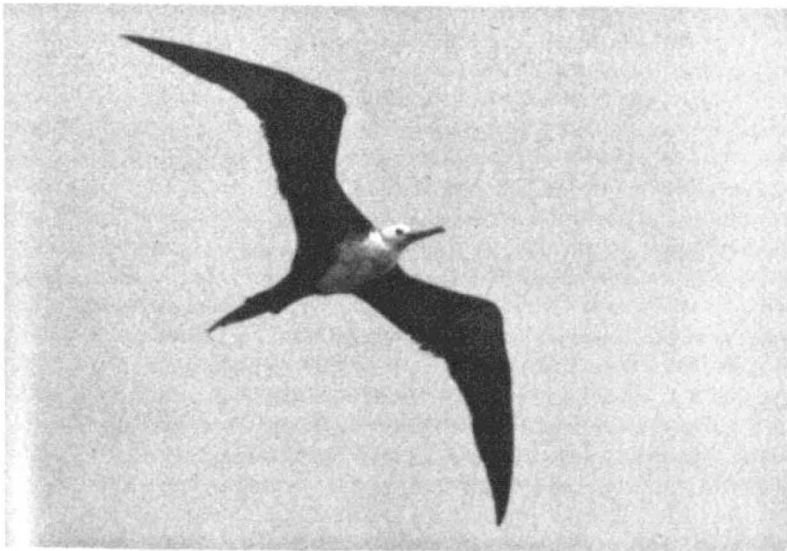


A FRIGATEBIRD AT THE GREAT SALT PLAINS

BY HOWARD W. GOARD AND DOTTY M. GOARD

The Magnificent Frigatebird (*Fregata magnificens*), a species found on the "Atlantic and Pacific coasts of America . . . breeding on the Pacific side from the Gulf of Guayaquil, Ecuador, to Central America . . . and on the Atlantic side from the vicinity of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil to Florida and the Bahamas . . ." (Murphy, 1936, *Oceanic birds of South America*, Am. Mus. Nat. Hist., New York 2:928), is known to occur regularly along the coast of southern Florida the year round, though it has never been found nesting there, and irregularly along the United States coast of the Gulf of Mexico in summer and fall (Palmer, 1962, *Handb. North American birds*, Yale Univ. Press, New Haven, Connecticut 1:371). It is sometimes seen far inland, particularly after storms. It has heretofore been reported from Oklahoma four times: on 12 August 1933, one taken in Woods County near Alva; on 18 April 1936, one found crippled near Anadarko, Caddo County;



FRIGATEBIRD

Photographed on 31 August 1980 by Howard W. Goard at the Salt Plains National Wildlife Refuge in north-central Oklahoma. The bird was probably an immature female Magnificent Frigatebird, a species known to visit the Gulf of Mexico from time to time.

on 29 September 1956, one seen on Lake Murray presumably near Ardmore; on 6 June 1965, one seen on Lake Texoma near Willis, Marshall County (Sutton, 1967, Oklahoma birds, Univ. Oklahoma Press, Norman, p. 23). The 12 August 1933 and 18 April 1936 specimens were too large for the Giant Frigatebird (*F. minor*), a species similar to *F. magnificens* but smaller, that has, in the opinion of George M. Sutton, been taken once in Oklahoma — an adult male found exhausted in Perry, Noble County, on 3 November 1975 (see Heller and Barclay, 1977, Bull. Oklahoma Orn. Soc. 10:9-10). *Minor* and *magnificens* both breed on the Galápagos Archipelago off the coast of Ecuador. Whether the birds seen in Oklahoma on 29 September 1956 and 6 June 1965 were *magnificens* or *minor* can never be settled finally, but the chances are good that they were *magnificens* since that species is known to visit the Gulf of Mexico occasionally whereas *minor* is not, and the Gulf of Mexico is less than half as far removed from Oklahoma as the closest point to ocean on the Pacific side.

The sixth frigatebird for the state, one seen on 30 and 31 August 1980 at the main reservoir (impounded Salt Fork of the Arkansas River) on the Salt Plains National Wildlife Refuge in Alfalfa County, north-central Oklahoma, was reported by J. L. Norman and D. Vannoy (1981, Amer. Birds 35:198), though several other persons, including us, saw it. Quite possibly it was blown inland from the Gulf of Mexico coast by Hurricane Allen, which struck southern Texas on 10 August. Certain important details, given below, should be part of the record.

At about 0900 on 30 August, as we were walking near Cottonwood Point just west of the big reservoir's dam, the shadow of a large bird suddenly passed over us. Looking up, we were startled to see a frigatebird, a bird familiar to us from our visits to southern Florida, soaring directly overhead. It was obviously not an adult male for its head, neck, breast, and belly were largely white. Dusky markings on the white of the underparts suggested that its plumage was in a state of transition (Bent, 1922, U.S. Natl. Mus. Bull. 121, p. 310; Palmer, *op. cit.*, p. 368). That it was molting was obvious because the tail was not deeply furcate, its outer rectrices being short. Its long, hooked bill was light grayish blue. We could not see its feet, which always seemed to be drawn up into the belly plumage.

We watched the bird cruise the reservoir's shoreline for two days. Most of the time it was about 100 feet above the water, but occasionally it was much higher than that and over land rather than water. Never did we see it flap its wings, nor did we see it eating anything. Seeing fish in the reservoir's turbid water would have been difficult, if not impossible. Food might, we thought, be obtainable through harassing the many Ring-billed Gulls (*Larus delawarensis*), Franklin's Gulls (*L. pipixcan*), Forster's Terns (*Sterna forsteri*) or Black Terns (*Chlidonias niger*) that were present, but we never saw it near any of these birds.

Temperatures that Labor Day weekend ranged from about 70° F. at

night to near 100° F. during the afternoon. A prairie storm with strong north winds blew in about dusk on 31 August and the frigatebird disappeared. Several Tulsa birders searched thoroughly for it during the next few days, but without success.

We have recently come upon a line drawing in Murphy (*op. cit.*, p. 923) of a "young female" *magnificens* that the bird in our photograph resembles so closely that we would be tempted to say that the Salt Plains bird was surely of that species but for the fact that no one seems to have made clear how young female *minor* of the same age and plumage stage look.

2117 S. DEWEY, BARTLESVILLE, OKLAHOMA 74003, 7 APRIL 1982.

THE COWETA TV TOWER KILL

BY JAMES L. NORMAN

During five consecutive fall seasons (1974-78), my wife Marion and I made a point of collecting the birds that killed themselves flying into the TV tower 2 miles north of Coweta, Wagoner County, northeastern Oklahoma. Personnel at the tower helped greatly with the project by notifying us whenever birds had struck the tower. Predators, most of them probably nocturnal, consumed some carcasses on the spot or carried them off. Ants badly mutilated some of them. Most remains were, however, quite identifiable. The most valuable specimens — e.g., one of the Yellow Rails (*Coturnicops noveboracensis*), ten of the Philadelphia Vireos (*Vireo philadelphicus*), the one Golden-winged Warbler (*Vermivora chrysoptera*), and the one Sharp-tailed Sparrow (*Ammospiza caudacuta*) — were preserved as skins, and most of the others as skeletons. The 41 species found in 1974 were reported on formally the following year (Norman, 1975, Bull. Oklahoma Orn. Soc. 8:25-27). The 27 species found in 1975 were reported on in 1976 (Norman, 1976, Bull. Oklahoma Orn. Soc. 9:20). The 47 species found in 1976 were reported on in 1977 (Norman, 1977, Bull. Oklahoma Orn. Soc. 10:6-8). The 29 species found in 1977 and the 41 species found in 1978 have not heretofore been reported on anywhere. For the numbers of all species found during the five-year period, see Table I.

Virtually all of the birds found dead or crippled had hit the tower at night. A very few, however, may not have. The Carolina Wren (*Thryothorus ludovicianus*) is believed to be strictly non-migratory, hence the two individuals of that species found may well have struck the tower during territorial chasing. The Common Flicker (*Colaptes auratus*) is known to migrate by day, sometimes in spectacular numbers (see Sutton, 1967, Oklahoma birds, Univ. Oklahoma Press, Norman, pp. 299-300). The fact that four Red-headed Woodpeckers (*Melanerpes erythrocephalus*) were picked up on one morning in 1976 strongly suggests, however, that some woodpecker migration takes place at night, while the fact that no resident species such as the Red-bellied Woodpecker (*M. carolinus*), Hairy Woodpecker (*Picoides villosus*), or Downy Woodpecker (*P. pubescens*) were found supports the sus-