

surely one of the commonest of Oklahoma's transient parulids. No other species found during the period was killed in such numbers, though the Red-eyed Vireo (72 specimens) and Ruby-crowned Kinglet (40 specimens) were well represented.

Why some species were *not* found is puzzling. Harris's Sparrow (*Zonotrichia querula*) is an abundant winter visitant in central Oklahoma and it is not really rare at that season anywhere in Oklahoma except in the Panhandle. The Prairie Warbler (*Dendroica discolor*), Scarlet Tanager (*Piranga olivacea*), Summer Tanager (*P. rubra*), Blue Grosbeak (*Guiraca caerulea*), and Painted Bunting (*Passerina ciris*) all nest in eastern Oklahoma, yet not one specimen representing these species was found. One is tempted to guess that some of the above-named birds move southward by day more than has previously been believed. Careful work at other TV towers in the state needs to be done.

502 N. 14th STREET, MUSKOGEE, OKLAHOMA 74401. 22 MARCH 1980.

## LIFE AND DEATH OF A HERONRY

BY ROBERT A. CARL

In the summer of 1981 I witnessed the beginning and the end of a small colony of Little Blue Herons (*Florida caerulea*) and Cattle Egrets (*Bubulcus ibis*) that bred in a stand of young black locust trees about 100 yards from the house in which I live near Tecumseh, Pottawatomie County, central Oklahoma. The attempt of the colony to rear young was 100% unsuccessful.

The colony started as a roost. On the evening of 8 May I saw a small flock of adult Little Blue Herons flying into the trees. They spent the night there. From 8 to 15 May the flock, which came each evening, became gradually larger, eventually including a few piebald immature birds. On 17 May a company of Cattle Egrets joined the Little Blues. On 25 May I counted about 125 Little Blues, most of them adult, and 45 Cattle Egrets at the roost. The two species arrived in separate groups, each group of about 15 birds, but mingled once they had alighted.

The coming of the herons surprised me, for about 350 Great-tailed Grackles (*Quiscalus mexicanus*) were nesting in the locusts and masses of Starlings (*Sturnus vulgaris*) and Brown-headed Cowbirds (*Molothrus ater*) were roosting in trees close by. While obtaining permission from the landowner to watch the herons, I learned that great numbers of "blackbirds" had been roosting there for years, but that the herons were newcomers. After receiving permission, I was able to observe the herons at a distance of about 60 feet from my vehicle. The vehicle's presence did not seem to alarm them.

While the Great-tailed Grackles were in the locust grove they spent all of their time in the very tops of the trees. They occasionally chased the herons and egrets as the larger birds were attempting to alight. On 27 May I observed that the heron and egret activity was all below the canopy. The birds visited neighboring trees (oaks, green ash, pecans) that day, returning with dead

sticks carried in their bills. On 3 June I again observed that the herons avoided the canopy, centering their activities below it. The grackles, on the other hand, stayed in the upper parts of the trees where their nests were.

High southerly winds, with gusts in excess of 20 miles per hour, prevailed during the first half of June. When I entered the locust grove on 14 June the wind was very strong. On seeing me, the grackles sounded their alarm and the herons that were on nests left hurriedly. All of the heron nests were well down from the treetops. In several trees that held both heron and grackle nests, the grackle nests were invariably higher than those of the herons. The trees were so slender that they did not afford much support for the nests when the wind was high. The shallow stick platforms that the herons had built were especially vulnerable. When my coming caused the herons to leave, I realized that the wind was bending the trees over so violently that the eggs were rolling from the nests and falling to the ground. I left the grove immediately when I saw what was happening.

By 23 June the wind had subsided. Once again the grackles' alarm cries made it impossible for me to enter the grove without disturbing the herons. When two of the herons that were on nests saw me they flew off. I counted 24 shallow platform nests that day, all well below the canopy. I did not climb to any of them, but four whose contents I could see from the ground held a total of nine nestlings, all recently hatched. I could not, of course, be sure which nests were those of the Little Blue and which of the Cattle Egret. Three thin-bottomed nests that I could see through held eggs, though I could not count the eggs from where I stood. The ground under the nests was virtually carpeted with broken pale blue eggs.

I returned to the rookery on 27 June. I was alarmed when I realized that the nests that had held young on the 23rd were now empty. I climbed to one nest (about 12 feet up) and found three eggs in it but saw no sign of an incubating bird. In the trees were many young grackles out of nests but none quite capable of flight. The parent grackles were noisy and aggressive.

I returned on 28 June and again on 30 June, but saw no sign of young herons in any of the nests. On 30 June I climbed again to the nest that had held three eggs on the 27th. The eggs were gone. From 25 June to the end of the month, fewer and fewer herons frequented the locust grove. On 1 July no heron of either species flew in to the stand of locust trees.

ROUTE 4, BOX 453, TECUMSEH, OKLAHOMA 74873, 15 MARCH 1982.

### GENERAL NOTES

**Eight Mallard broods in Cimarron County, Oklahoma, one date, one locality.** — On 13 June 1980, on the largest of several sewage ponds 1 mile northeast of Boise City, Cimarron County, far western Oklahoma, I saw eight hen Mallards (*Anas platyrhynchos*) and carefully counted their chicks. Broods of 1, 2, 2, 4, 5, 6, 9, and 11, a total of 40 chicks, all of them quite small, were in sight at one time from one position. At the ponds I saw