

NESTING OF VERMILION FLYCATCHER
IN CIMARRON COUNTY, OKLAHOMA

BY JOHN S. TOMER

At 1030 on 8 May 1982, during a scheduled spring meeting of the Oklahoma Ornithological Society, Frances Peters, Mary Avolyn Johns, and Constance E. Taylor found a male Vermilion Flycatcher (*Pyrocephalus rubinus*) about 3 miles north and 1½ miles east of Kenton, Cimarron County, in far western Oklahoma. The bird was among cottonwood trees near the point at which North Carrizozo Creek joins the Cimarron River. At 1130 that same morning Dr. Taylor led John S. Shackford and me to the area. We looked in vain for a male bird, but did find a female. She was busy hawking for insects. Following her through the trees near the creek, we saw her fly to a medium-sized cottonwood and settle on her nest.



VERMILION FLYCATCHERS

Adult male with one of three young birds at first of two successful nests built in adjacent cottonwood trees along North Carrizozo Creek in Cimarron County, Oklahoma, during spring of 1982. Photo by Wesley S. Isaacs on 26 May 1982.

The nest was about 10 feet from the ground in a horizontal fork of a dead branch well out from the tree's main trunk. I photographed the nest and nest-site and noted carefully just where the nest-tree was. The woods were typical of that part of the State. Among the cottonwoods were scattered junipers, none of them very large. Near the streams grew intermittent stands of salt cedar (*Tamarix gallica*). So well hidden was the nest that we might never have found it had we not seen the bird go to it.

Later that day I returned with Warren D. Harden, Forrest S. Romero, and John F. Messerly to see the flycatchers. We saw both male and female birds. I climbed to the nest, finding that it contained three eggs. They were cream-colored, marked with thinly scattered rust-red dots and, chiefly at the larger end, with light gray splotches. Still later that afternoon, many persons who were attending the meeting came to see the flycatchers and their nest.

On 26 May, Wesley S. Isaacs photographed the male bird near the nest in which there were three chicks too young for banding, netted and banded the female bird, and photographed the female at the nest. On 11 June, John S.



The two Cimarron County nests of Vermilion Flycatcher found in the spring of 1982. Left - photo by Wesley S. Isaacs showing nest discovered on 8 May about 10 feet off the ground in a cottonwood; from this nest three young fledged. Right - photo by John S. Shackford of second nest discovered by him about 35 feet up in a nearby cottonwood on 11 June, 1982; this nest probably held eggs.

Shackford photographed the male parent and the three recently fledged chicks. He found the pair's second nest for the season, this one about 35 feet up and well concealed in the crotch of a live oblique limb in a nearby cottonwood and photographed the banded female on the nest, which probably held eggs.

The Vermilion Flycatcher was first recorded in Oklahoma on 21 September 1949 by A. M. Mery and his wife Sophia, who observed an adult male, an adult female, and a "duller bird, possibly an immature of the same species" at their home in the southeastern residential part of Tulsa, Tulsa County, northeastern Oklahoma; the Merys and "at least 50 members of the Tulsa Audubon Society and other ornithologists" saw the birds repeatedly thereabouts until 1 January 1950 (Baumgartner, F.M., 1950, Aud. Field Notes 4: 23, 209). Since 1950 the species has been recorded 27 times. It was first discovered nesting in May of 1955 in Major County, northwestern Oklahoma, by R. L. Downing. That nesting was unsuccessful, though the female built two nests, the second of which held eggs. A pair twice nested successfully in Lincoln County, central Oklahoma, in May and June 1960; Ruby E. Ray and W. Marvin Davis saw the nests (Sutton, G.M., 1967, Oklahoma birds, Univ. Oklahoma Press, Norman, p. 350), one of which has been preserved. The Cimarron County nesting reported above is, then, the third for the state.

5911 EAST 46TH STREET, TULSA, OKLAHOMA 74135, 15 AUGUST 1982.

GENERAL NOTES

Second specimen of American Black Duck from Comanche County, Oklahoma.—At the north end of Lake Lawtonka, 2 miles north of Medicine Park, Comanche County, southwestern Oklahoma, David Jameson, Randolph Rushing and I have a blind from which we shoot ducks. The area is ideal habitat for migrating waterfowl. The water is shallow. A profuse tangle of aquatic plants, notably smartweed (*Polygonum* sp.), pondweed (*Potamogeton* sp.), and water milfoil (*Myriophyllum* sp.), growing among scattered dead willow (*Salix* sp.) saplings, affords excellent food and cover. At about 0745 on 28 November 1976 (north wind gusting up to 25 m.p.h., temperature 20°F., ice up to 4 inches thick extending out from shore for 200 yards), I called two American Black Ducks (*Anas rubripes*) in to our decoys. As the birds bank in, I shot one of them. The specimen, a male, had red legs and feet and light olive-green bill. It is now a skin (CUMZ 686) in the collection of the Cameron University Museum of Zoology in Lawton.

Anas rubripes has been recorded in eastern and central Oklahoma from 20 September to 22 April; specimens from Osage, Payne, Oklahoma, Comanche, and Woods counties have been preserved (Sutton, G.M., 1974, A check-list of Oklahoma birds, Stovall Mus. Sci. & Hist., Univ. Oklahoma, Norman, p. 6). The first Comanche County specimen (UOMZ 8291) was collected by Frank Rush Sr. on 28 November 1914 from a flock of Mallards (*A. platyrhynchos*) in