

breed by 1928, but that the species had continued to be "strictly migratory" (Sutton, G.M., 1961, Iceland summer, Univ. Oklahoma Press, Norman, p. 219). Peter Harrison states that there is "a westwards drift of a few individuals from southwards-migrating Icelandic population probably accounts for the regular, but small wintering population which now passes through Newfoundland, in America, wintering S to Florida" (Harrison, P., 1983, Seabirds, Croom-Helm Ltd., London, p.340). The species "has been seen in North America with increasing regularity, especially among flocks of migrating and wintering gulls . . . most North American records from Atlantic coastal plain but reports increasing in Midwest and Gulf States. Recorded in Northwest Territories, Manitoba, California, and Colorado." (Wilds, C., in Farrand, J., Jr., ed.), 1983, The Audubon Society master guide to birding, Vol. 2, Alfred A. Knopf, N.Y., pp. 64,66). Although they do not breed on the American side of the Atlantic, small numbers have been seen there even during the summer in recent years (Stokes, T., 1968, Birds of the Atlantic Ocean, Macmillan Co., N.Y., p. 106). Virtually all North American records of the Lesser Black-back are of the *graellsii* race (Wilds, *loc. cit.*).

The gull was remarkably easy to observe. Quite active and moving about considerably, it often chased and out-manuevered other gulls for food. Occasionally it returned to rest along the shoreline mudflats with the numerous Ring-billed and Herring gulls where direct comparison with them was possible. The last day we saw the gull was 2 April. I presume that it left with the general exodus of our wintering gulls.

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## THE CAROLINA CHICKADEE IN THE PALO DURO CANYON OF TEXAS

BY KENNETH D. SEYFFERT

In the Texas Panhandle, the Carolina Chickadee (*Parus carolinensis*) is primarily a bird of the easternmost tier of counties. But it occasionally and sparingly wanders farther west along the thickly wooded streamsides of the Canadian River and its tributaries as far as the Boys Ranch area in northeastern Oldham County. Rarely has it been seen outside these riparian habitats. During the course of the last 30 years or so, it has been reported only nine times in Amarillo (Potter and Randall counties), and then only in the older and more wooded sections of the city. The dates of these sightings range from 7 January to 4 December, with intervening dates in April, June, July, August, September, October, and November. All sightings have been of single birds and seldom did any remain in a given area more than a day. Only once during this period was a chickadee seen in the Palo Duro Canyon system in Randall County (on 27 December 1958, by Peggy Acord), and then it was listed simply as a "chickadee".

On 31 October 1982 I observed two chickadees, which after careful observation I decided were Carolina Chickadees. This was in the Christian Church Camp located in the upper reaches of South Ceta Canyon of the Palo Duro, in southeastern Randall County. Rather narrow and secluded, this canyon is

well-watered by South Ceta Creek and is dominated by many majestic cottonwood trees (*Populus deltoides*) as well as hackberry (*Celtis reticulata*), soapberry (*Sapindus drummondii*), and willow (*Salix* sp.) trees and, on the sloping higher elevations, junipers (*Juniperus* sp.) and mesquites (*Prosopis juliflora*) are common. The brushy vegetation along the banks of much of the creek is covered with grape (*Vitis longii*) and creepers (*Parthenocissus* sp.). With Barry Zimmer, I found two chickadees at this location on 15 January 1983 and on 11 September 1983, Rena and George Ross, Ester and George Waddill and I again saw two birds there.

On 4 and 7 May 1983, a Carolina Chickadee was found at the Palo Duro Club, located in the upper reaches of the main canyon of the Palo Duro in central Randall County, by Peggy Acord, Rena Ross, and Ester Waddill. This canyon is traversed by the Prairie Dog Town Fork of the Red River, and its habitat is similar to that of South Ceta Canyon. These locations, as well as other like areas of the Palo Duro Canyon, should be watched closely for nesting chickadees.

Area observers speculate from time to time as to whether all the chickadees seen in the Texas Panhandle are, in fact, *P. carolinensis*. These speculations arise because of the nearness of those chickadees in the western Panhandle to areas where the Black-capped Chickadee (*P. atricapillus*) has been reported. In New Mexico the Black-capped Chickadee is a "resident in the northern highlands and vicinity . . ." that during migration and winter casually to occasionally moves into adjacent areas as far east as the Clayton area of Union County in the northeastern corner of the state (Hubbard, J.P., 1978, Revised check-list of the birds of New Mexico, New Mexico Orn. Soc. Publ. No. 6, pp. 54-55). Specimens have also been collected in southwestern Colorado (Bailey, A.M., and R.J. Niedrach, 1965, Birds of Colorado, Vol. 2, Denver Mus. Nat. Hist., pp. 573-574). P.A. Johnsgard (1979, Birds of the Great Plains, Univ. Nebraska Press, Lincoln, p. 293) indicates that the breeding range in Kansas extends southward to the southernmost tier of counties, including the Arkansas River Valley. G.M. Sutton (1967, Oklahoma birds, Univ. Oklahoma Press, Norman, pp. 384-385) reported the status of *P. atricapillus* in Oklahoma as "uncertain" and stated that no unequivocal specimen has ever been collected in the state.

Chickadee specimens thus far collected in the Texas Panhandle have proved to be *P. carolinensis*; however, all of these were taken in the eastern counties. The observations of chickadees cited above for the western Panhandle are not far distant from where *P. atricapillus* has been reported in New Mexico, Colorado, and Kansas. Both of the Oldham County sightings were in fall: I observed two on 19 November 1967 and Ester Waddill and others saw "several" on 10 November 1968. However, it has never been reported there in summer. Could fall and winter chickadees in the far western Panhandle be drifters from the northwest and north coming down the Canadian River and the Punta de Agua and Rita Blanca Creek drainages? The speculation is worthy of attention and specimens should be collected to clarify the question.