

Oklahoma Press, Norman, p. 176). The species nested in Union County, north-eastern New Mexico, in June 1974, but there appears to be no evidence of recent breeding in Kansas (Graul and Webster, 1976, *op. cit.*).

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GENERAL NOTES

A hybrid quail from Morton County, Kansas.—There have been few documentations of Scaled Quail (*Callipepla squamata*) and Northern Bobwhites (*Colinus virginianus*) interbreeding in the wild. R. A. McCabe (1954, Auk 71:293-297) reported that J. A. Loomis shot a hybrid in Concho County, Texas, in January 1890 and that another was produced by a pair of captive quail in Wisconsin in 1940. G. M. Sutton (1963, Southwest. Nat. 8:108-111), described in detail two hybrids collected from the vicinity of Aspermont, Stonewall County, northwestern Texas, in January 1959 and alluded to another specimen taken in December 1959 in Motley County, 75 miles northwest of Aspermont.

During latter November or early December of the 1981 hunting season, Lawrence R. Smith shot a hybrid in a sandsage prairie 7½ miles west and 1 mile north of Elkhart, in Morton County, southwestern Kansas. Morton County lies immediately north of western Texas County in the Oklahoma Panhandle. The specimen was frozen and later donated to the Cameron University Museum of Zoology (CUMZ 955). Its measurements (in mm) are: total 251; tail 85; wing 127; tarsus 36; and culmen 7. In overall appearance, the bird closely resembles a *Callipepla*. It has a light slaty-gray general coloration, a scaly breast and abdomen, and the throat is buffy-gray. Only a few buffy feathers are present in the small topknot. The tail is the color of a Scaled Quail's (gray) and a few of its outermost feathers have very narrow light edges subtended by a fine dark line. Some of the lower scapular feathers and a few tertials and coverts in the right wing are typical of *Colinus* but, oddly, there are several of these bobwhite-like tertial and covert feathers in the left wing.

Smith (pers. comm.) had shot three other hybrid quail in Morton County in the 10 years or so prior to 1981. The first he killed a few miles west of Elkhart in the early 1970's, and it resembled a Northern Bobwhite except that the wings were gray and the breast scaled. The second and third hybrids were killed during the late fall of 1980 in a sandsage grassland next to a field of milo (*Sorghum vulgare*) 10½ miles east and a half mile south of Elkhart. Both birds came from the same covey, both were rather small, and both were decidedly Scaled Quail-like in appearance. Except for their prominent topknots, they were similar to the Cameron specimen.

Scaled Quail usually spend the daytime in shortgrass areas or around piles of fenceposts, machinery, or similar "junk", while Northern Bobwhites prefer to loaf and dust beneath trees or in brushy places. R. Reid (1979, Proc. Ann. Conf. S.E. Assoc. Fish & Wildl. Agencies 33:146-153) stated that these two quail are sympatric in several areas of western Texas. Extensive agricultural changes there have decreased available habitat, forcing the two species to compete for the remaining resources. Similarly, farm practices in the High Plains of south-

western Kansas have replaced or removed most of the natural cover, forcing Northern Bobwhites to occupy marginal areas with short vegetative cover. This brings them into direct competition with Scaled Quail for breeding habitat. Smith has observed that the two species frequently roost not far apart, but in different types of habitat.

The hybrids are probably sterile. At the State Game Farm near El Reno, Oklahoma, five male and two female Scaled Quail × Northern Bobwhite hybrids were produced and reared in captivity (Wint, G. B., 1960, Proc. Oklahoma Acad. Sci. 40:151-152). Attempts to breed the crosses with other hybrids and with their parents were unsuccessful, for not a single embryo developed in any of the nearly 200 eggs laid.

To date, no hybrid quail from Oklahoma has been validated, although reports of them are not uncommon. Along the western edge of the state and in the Panhandle, where these two quail are sympatric, hybrids are to be looked for. Those most likely to encounter them will be quail hunters.—Lori J. Smith Coles, Box 841, Elkhart, Kansas 67950, 5 March 1985.

Black-necked Stilts in Oklahoma during May and June.—The Black-necked Stilt (*Himantopus mexicanus*) is a rare “summer visitant” in Oklahoma (Sutton, G.M., 1967, Oklahoma birds, Univ. Oklahoma Press, Norman, p. 208). However, records on file from 1943 to 1979 show occurrences only in expected spring and fall migration periods: 14 dates from 13 April through 27 May and six dates from 31 August through 22 September (Sutton Summary of Bird Records, Stovall Mus. Sci. & Hist., Univ. Oklahoma, Norman). In July 1901, the species was collected (male and female, UOMZ old nos. 3395, 3394) and reported to be “common” along the Red River in “Old Greer County”, i.e., along the southern border of present-day Harmon and Jackson counties (Nice, M. M., 1931, The birds of Oklahoma, Rev. ed., Publ. Univ. Oklahoma Biol. Surv. 3(1):43,95).

On 24 May 1983 I drove from Roman Nose State Park, Blaine County, northward on State Highway 51A to where the road traversed a playa lake of perhaps two acres. In the smaller body of water north of the highway, I saw two Black-necked Stilts, a species that I had never before encountered in Oklahoma. From 1145 to 1200, I watched them intermittently rest and feed. While I watched the stilts, one flock of about 30 and another of 40 White-rumped Sandpipers (*Calidris fuscicollis*) briefly alighted nearby.

The next day at about 1000, I arrived at Black Mesa State Park, Cimarron County, and discovered one Black-necked Stilt standing on the southeast shore of Lake Carl Etling. No other migrant shorebirds did I observe at the lake. There is one other record for the county: on 9 and 10 May 1973, J. G. Newell, V. J. Vacin and several other members of the Oklahoma Ornithological Society saw a single bird at the sewerponds in Boise City (J. G. Newell field notes).

On the early afternoon of 2 June, I re-entered Oklahoma from Colorado, determined to recheck the Blaine County pond before dark, if possible. I reached it some minutes after sunset and heard several stilts calling loudly from the south side of the road, another from the north side: the sharp, yelping cry was still fairly fresh in my mind from hearing it on 24 May. I finally spotted one

bird on the north side, "hunkered down" and difficult to see in the failing light. It was hard to separate the voices of all the birds that were calling from the south side of the road, but I am confident that more than two stilts were. On an impulse, I drove back northwestward to another location where water covered both sides of the road; here I heard loud call notes from at least two more stilts. Regrettably, my schedule did not permit me to return the next day. When the Blaine County ponds were visited by John G. Newell and John S. Shackford on 11 June, they found no stilts; the lake had risen significantly, so that water overlapped the very edge of the blacktop.

The 2 June record is the latest spring date for the state. The species is not known to breed in Oklahoma, but there are "occasional" breeding records near Clayton, in northeastern New Mexico, fewer than 15 miles southwest of Cimarron County, Oklahoma (Hubbard, J. P., 1978, Revised check-list of the birds of New Mexico, New Mexico Ornith. Soc. Publ. No. 6, p. 27).—W. Marvin Davis, *School of Pharmacy, University of Mississippi, University, Mississippi 38677, 18 October 1983.*

The lined snake as food for the Great Horned Owl.—On 6 June 1982, state game ranger Dean Elliott was called to rescue a Great Horned Owl (*Bubo virginianus*) that had become entangled with kite string in a large elm tree southeast of Tecumseh in Pottawatomie County, central Oklahoma. Subsequently, he brought the subadult owl to me for treatment of wounds on its wings and legs. The bird was kept for three days, then released.

As the nylon string was being removed from its wings, the owl regurgitated a solid mass of lined snakes (*Tropidoclonion lineatum*). After I had separated them, I counted 13, including several that were too badly decomposed for accurate measurement. Six were adults and ranged from 320 to 370 mm in total length (TL); four were young (ca. 100 mm TL); and three were intermediate in size (ca. 200 mm TL). Dried grasses, one complete body and the head of a June beetle (*Phyllophaga* sp.) were also separated from the gastric mass.

The lined snake is a small, primarily nocturnal species that may be found beneath rocks, boards, and debris. It is quite common throughout the oak woodland-prairie ecotone of central Oklahoma. *Tropidoclonion* is especially tolerant of urban areas. Edith R. Force (Copeia 1931 (2):51) found the lined snake to be abundant in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and Black (1976, Bull. Oklahoma Orn. Soc. 9:17-18) stated that it is the most common species of snake within the city limits of Shawnee; he estimated one population in that city to be between 233 and 249 individuals in a 523 m² (625 yd²) area.

This snake is a source of food for several birds in Oklahoma. Rusty Grimpe (1984, Bull. Oklahoma Herp. Soc. 9:27) observed a Brown Thrasher (*Toxostoma rufum*) attacking one in Tulsa, and Black (1976, *op. cit.*) found that Loggerhead Shrikes (*Lanius ludovicianus*), Blue Jays (*Cyanocitta cristata*), meadowlarks (*Sturnella* spp.), and American Kestrels (*Falco sparverius*) utilized them as prey in Pottawatomie County. G. M. Sutton (1967, Oklahoma birds, Univ. Oklahoma Press, Norman, p. 257; and 1977, Fifty common birds of Oklahoma, Univ. Oklahoma Press, Norman, p. 16) listed a wide variety of animals known to have been consumed by the Great Horned Owl, including several genera of

small mammals, cottontails (*Sylvilagus* spp.), striped skunks (*Mephitis mephitis*), free-tailed bats (*Tadarida brasiliensis*), ducks, hawks, American Coots (*Fulica americana*), Greater Yellowlegs (*Tringa melanoleuca*), meadow-larks, snakes, frogs, fish, crayfish and beetles. The lined snake can now be added to the list.—Jeffrey H. Black, *Department of Biology, Oklahoma Baptist University, Shawnee, Oklahoma 74801, 10 April, 1985.*

Brown Towhee in Quartz Mountain State Park.—On the afternoon of 19 March 1976, Brooks and Thula Parkhill and I were studying birds below the dam of Lake Altus in Quartz Mountain State Park which is located 7 miles southeast of Granite in Greer County, southwestern Oklahoma. As we approached the dam from the west, we noticed several birds on a rocky, well-thicketed hillside to one side of the trail. A very active bird about the size of a Gray Catbird (*Dumetella carolinensis*) caught our attention for, unlike the others, it kept on or near the ground. We observed it closely for several minutes through our binoculars, noting its plain brown back and tail, russet cap, and buffy throat that was faintly streaked. All soon agreed that the bird was a Brown Towhee (*Pipilo fuscus*). Twice the next day we attempted to find it again, but were unsuccessful. Both the bird's behavior and the habitat where we found it were typical of Brown Towhees I had previously observed at lower elevations of the Sandia Mountains of New Mexico and in the Big Bend country of southwest Texas. In those places, it is common and has become quite tame.

Pipilo fuscus is a resident of the rough country adjacent to the Black Mesa in far northwestern Oklahoma (Sutton, G. M., 1974, A check-list of Oklahoma birds, Stovall Mus. Sci. & Hist., Univ. Oklahoma, Norman, p. 44). J. D. Tyler (1979, Birds of southwestern Oklahoma, Stovall Mus. Sci. & Hist., Univ. Oklahoma, Norman, p. 51) considered it to be accidental in the 13 counties (including Greer County) encompassed in his publication and listed only two other sight records, both in the Wichita Mountains National Wildlife Refuge.—Henry Walter, 8201 Northwest 36th St., Bethany, Oklahoma 73008, 28 March 1977.

Early date for Rufous-crowned Sparrow nest in Oklahoma. — At about 1000 on 7 April 1985, while Allen Ratzlaff and I were walking down a small rocky canyon on the West Range of the Fort Sill Military Reservation in Comanche County, southwestern Oklahoma, we flushed a sparrow from a tussock of little bluestem grass (*Schizachyrium scoparius*) about five feet in front of us. Positive identification of the bird could not be made, but closer inspection of the spot where it flushed revealed a neat, compact nest that contained four newly-hatched, naked chicks. The nest bowl was lined with fine stems and rootlets, measured $2\frac{3}{4}$ inches inside diameter, 2 inches in depth, and was sunk into the grass at the base of the tussock. Grass standing eight or nine inches above the nest shaded it on the west and south sides. A good-sized granite stone lying a few inches northeast of it protected the nest on that quarter, and to the east (downslope), it was open.

We returned on 10 April with Louis and Janet McGee. After about five minutes of observation, a Rufous-crowned Sparrow (*Aimophila ruficeps*) carrying insects in its bill appeared on a branch about 35 yards southeast of the

nest. Although we kept it in view for approximately 25 minutes, this bird refused to approach the nest. We retreated to a distance of about 60 or 70 yards and watched for another half hour, but no visit to the nest was observed. The chicks by now were largely covered with down.

When I returned on 12 April, I hid about 20 yards east of and above the nest. Soon, two Rufous-crowned Sparrows began foraging alongside the small, clear stream flowing about 18 feet from the nest. I was able to keep both parent birds in sight most of the time. Once, one of the pair perched on a small blackjack oak about 15 feet away from the nest, holding a caterpillar in its bill. It remained there for at least 25 minutes! Finally, after some 2½ hours of observation, I saw one of the adult birds, its beak crammed with insects, cautiously sneak through the grass to the nest and feed the chicks.

Jack D. Tyler, Kevin McCurdy and I paid the nest another visit on 17 April. All the chicks were gone, apparently having fledged. The length of incubation and time required to fledge after hatching are not known for this species (Bent, A. C., *et al.*, 1968, Life histories of North American birds, USNM Bull. 237, Pt. 2, p. 935, Wash., D.C.). Previously, the earliest breeding date for the Rufous-crowned Sparrow in Oklahoma was 17 April 1954, when G. M. Sutton collected a female with well-developed brood patch and observed several adults carrying food in the Arbuckle Mountains (Sutton, G. M., 1967, Oklahoma birds, Univ. Oklahoma Press, Norman, p.614). J. D. Tyler (1979, Birds of southwestern Oklahoma, Stovall Mus. Sci. & Hist., Univ. Oklahoma, Norman, p. 52) listed only a single Comanche County nesting record: on 10 July 1965, a nest containing three eggs was discovered in the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge by D. Allen and C. Nicely. — Jay K. Banta, *DEH, Fish and Wildlife Branch, Fort Sill, Oklahoma 73503, 16 April 1985.*

FROM THE EDITOR.—Because of higher publication costs, John Newell and John Shackford graciously volunteered to pay for the Lesser Goldfinch color plate fronting the March 1985 issue of the O.O.S. Bulletin. For their generous support we should all be thankful. It would indeed be a shame to have to sacrifice the color photo that has always accompanied the spring Bulletin.

The membership is also indebted to Dr. Walter D. Graul of Fort Collins, Colorado, for furnishing the Mountain Plover halftone used in this issue. Dr. Graul, who is a recognized authority on the species, also proofread the lead paper. Sam Orr of Lawton lent technical assistance in preparing the photo for publication, and for this the society is grateful.

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