lahoma". It was his wish that there could be more work done on this problem in southwestern Oklahoma. Thus, any successful nestings south or west of Elk City should be carefully documented and reported.

[As this paper was in final preparation, John S. Shackford photographed a pair of nesting House Wrens in Duncan, Stephens County, southwestern Oklahoma. On 7 June 1985 he discovered a singing male in the front yard of Helen Howland, 709 North 10th Street, and two days later found a pair of birds nesting there in a mimosa tree *(Albizzia julibrissin)*. The nest, nine feet up, was in an excavated cavity of a broken-off stub, with an entrance hole slightly over an inch in diameter (see cover photo). Using a small mirror and flashlight, Shackford could discern at least one nearly naked young and one whitish egg with dark speckles in the nest. During the next hour he was able to take photos of the female on several occasions as she brought small food items to the nest. The male, however, sang intermittently not far from the nest and visited it but once, and then with no food visible in his bill.

Also on 7 and 9 June, Shackford detected another singing male at and near 1207 West Cedar, about three blocks to the west of the nest tree. On the latter date, he photographed a singing male which brought twigs to a nestbox at 1219 West Elder, the home of Ernest and Frances Neeld, less than a half mile northwest of the nesting pair. The Neelds reported that they had noticed no second bird this spring, but a male wren which "sang the same song" and its mate had nested in their birdhouses most years since they had moved to this address in 1971. On one occasion several years ago they had even caught flightless young on the ground and returned them to the nestbox.

Shackford observed all the wrens in well-established neighborhoods with admixtures of dense shrubbery, mature shade trees, and small backyard gardens. This breeding record represents the southernmost for this species known in Oklahoma, although whether or not young fledged successfully from it was not determined.]

GENERAL NOTES

Green-backed Heron feeding on dragonflies.—On the afternoon of 13 September, 1980, my wife Emma and I were sitting on a boat dock at the University of Oklahoma Biological Station on the north shore of Lake Texoma near Willis in Marshall County, south central Oklahoma, when we noticed a Green-backed Heron *(Butorides striatus)* feeding on the bank just 30 feet from us. We observed it for perhaps 20 minutes through 7 × 35 binoculars. First, it caught and devoured a crayfish. Then, to our amazement, it "picked off" a dragonfly from its perch. Other dragonflies closeby moved down the bank away from us, and the heron followed. Our attention by this time was focused intently on this bird's queer foraging behavior: a stealthy approach, a quick thrust of the head, and several more of the odonates were "snapped up" in quick succession.

Later in the day, we returned to watch the heron further. Now his hunting strategy had changed. Rather than wait for the dragonflies to land, he stood very still, waiting for one to fly near enough that he could snatch it in *midair!* This we witnessed several times.

Behavior of this sort has apparently not been described previously for *B. striatus*. R. S. Palmer (1962, Handbook of North American birds, Vol. I, Yale Univ. Press, New Haven, Connecticut, p. 427) lists dragonflies and their larvae as food for this species, but feeding behavior is not mentioned. Dr. Douglas Mock of the University of Oklahoma, who has studied the New World ardeids rather extensively, expressed surprise at our encounter as well (pers. comm.).—John F. Messerly, *344 Southeast Elmhurst, Bartlesville, Oklahoma 74006, 9 November 1983.*

Early date for Sanderling in Oklahoma.—At 10:00 on 16 July 1985, during a routine survey of Lake Hefner, I discovered four Sanderlings *(Calidris alba)* feeding along a sandy stretch of the shoreline. All were clad in typical breeding plumage. When I looked for them again next day, they were gone.

G. M. Sutton (1974, A check-list of Oklahoma birds, Stovall Mus. Sci. & Hist., Univ. Oklahoma, Norman, p. 16) gave 26 July as the earliest previous date in the state.—John G. Newell, *8304 Lakeaire Drive, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73132, 23 July, 1985.*

Laughing Gulls in Ellis County, Oklahoma.—A few miles southeast of the little town of Arnett in northwestern Oklahoma is a tract of native grassland wherein the Department of Wildlife Conservation maintains a blind from which Lesser Prairie Chickens *(Tympanuchus pallidicintus)* may be easily seen. En-route to that spot at about 10:00 on 3 June 1982, my wife and I stopped at a place 1½ miles south and one mile east of town. A light intermittent drizzle was falling, but the atmosphere was otherwise clear.

While scanning the surrounding fields, I was suddenly aware of three gulls whose heads were completely black, flying directly toward me. They were about 100 yards away when first observed, flying at an altitude of about 50 feet. As they passed me, flying in a desultory, meandering fashion in a northerly direction, I observed them for a moment or so with Zeiss 10 × 40 binoculars. When they veered off about 40 or 50 yards away, I was startled to see that their upper wing surfaces were dark gray, becoming black near the tips, and that there was no white bar separating the black tip from the gray inner wing (such as might be seen on Franklin's Gull, *Larus pipixcan*). Their tails, rumps and underparts however, were white. They were fully adult Laughing Gulls *(Larus atricilla)*, a coastal species with which I am familiar, having observed hundreds of them about one month previously in Florida. I have also photographed Franklin's Gulls in nesting colonies.—Gerald Maisel, *4600 Maleza Place, Tarzana, California 91356, 4 July 1982.*

A late winter sighting of Forster's Tern in Oklahoma.—At 1030 on 2 March 1985 (temperature about 60° F, winds calm, skies clear) during a field trip organized by the Bartlesville Audubon Society, Mike Gray and I were

crossing Oologah Lake on the Winganon Causeway in Rogers County, northeastern Oklahoma, when we spied a tern immediately south of us and near the east shore. Knowing that a tern of any sort is unusual in Oklahoma during winter, we decided to study it more carefully. The tern worked the same circular route over the water, sometimes coming as close as 50 feet, allowing us to see it well and to photograph it. After about 10 minutes, it flew north out of view. Somewhat smaller than the nearby Ring-billed Gulls *(Larus delawarensis)*, the tern had wings that were angular and noticeably pointed at their tips. The bill was held straight down as the bird sailed low above the water, searching for fish. Other obvious field marks included the deeply forked tail, thin black bill, and black eye stripe. I noted also that the nape and crown had no black marks or coloration. The primaries were tipped with gray beneath so that the trailing edge of the outer wing appeared dark. Otherwise, the plumage was white to light gray. This bird was a Forster's Tern *(Sterna forsteri)* in winter plumage.

G. M. Sutton (Sutton Summary of Bird Records, Stovall Mus. Sci. & Hist., Univ. Oklahoma, Norman) reported two winter records: C. D. Riggs collected three birds at Lake Texoma, Marshall County, in 1955, two on 1 January and one on 5 February. The earliest spring occurrence on record for the state was of six birds seen on 2 April 1959 at Mohawk Park in Tulsa, Tulsa County, by Anne Reynolds.—Don Verser, *P. O. Box 1494, Bartlesville, Oklahoma 74005, 22 March, 1985.*

Eastern Screech-Owl eats Red Bat.—At about 0630 on 25 September 1980 (while it was still quite dark), as Police Officer Paul T. Ramsey was driving along State Highway 9 near Norman, Cleveland County, central Oklahoma, his car struck and killed a gray-phase Eastern Screech Owl *(Otus asio)*. The specimen (UOMZ 16584; weight 155.1 grams) proved to be a not-at-all fat immature female in almost complete first winter plumage. Parallel rows of small, silky feathers bordering the narrow ventral apterium were still sheathed at the base and some flank feathers and under tail coverts were of the loose, vaguely barred plumage that follows the natal down. In the well packed stomach, which was about the size of a golf ball before I cut it open, were the whole head, parts of the wings, and other remains of a Red Bat *(Lasiurus borealis)* —the first proof that I have ever come upon personally that screech owls eat bats.

I hasten to say that what I found was not proof that the owl had *caught* the bat, for the bat itself may have been killed by traffic along the highway. According to J. Keever Greer, who has been good enough to confirm my identification of the remains, the prey item was a male (testes clearly discernible). The skull (UOMZ 13853) was dented, as if by the owl's bill, but such a dent is hardly proof that the owl killed the bat for the mere grasping and pulling off of the head before ingestion might cause such a dent.

Bats are obviously not often eaten by screech owls. In not one of the 254 screech owl stomachs examined about 100 years ago did A. K. Fisher (1893, Hawks and owls of the United States, U. S. Dept. Agri. Bull. 3:169-172) find remains of any species of bat. According to Bent (1938, U. S. Natl. Mus. Bull. 170:251), who gives no details, screech owls eat "an occasional bat."

The importance of *Otus asio* as a destroyer of mice has been so widely touted that some attention should be given to the fact that the species also eats many "valuable" insectivorous birds — to say nothing of such insectivorous mammals as bats. After a careful study of screech owls that caught many small birds during the breeding season at Ithaca, New York, A. A. Allen (1924, Auk 41:16) had this to say: "There can be little doubt that the number of insects and small mammals destroyed by this pair of owls could never compensate for the destruction of one tenth of the insectivorous birds eaten by the young." The statement is thought provoking. Is it not another way of saying that we want screech owls near us not because they eat mice but because they are beautiful and because their habits, whether "good" or "bad," are interesting?—George M. Sutton (deceased), *Stovall Mus. Sci. & Hist., Univ. Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma 73069, 29 September 1980.*

Partial albino American Robin in Cleveland County, Oklahoma.—On 8 April 1983 Neil Garrison called to tell me of an albino American Robin *(Turdus migratorius)* at the home of Mr. James Fendrych in Moore, Oklahoma. At 0600 the next morning, we arrived at Mr. Fendrych's home. Our plan was to net the bird so that we might band it. We put up two mist nets. Right away, the robin flew into one of them, but bounced out. In two hours of trying, we didn't come that close to capturing it again. We did take several photographs, however (see inset). The bird had white upper parts, including the hood, back, tail and wings. Its underside, from crissum to upper breast, was a very pale "washed out" orange, flecked with white. Obvious also was a white mid-ventral streak. The eye was dark. The bird was last observed on 11 April 1983.—Wesley S. Isaacs, *1304 LaFayette Drive, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73119, 26 May 1983.*

Worm-eating Warbler at Fort Sill, Oklahoma.— On 12 March, 1985, at approximately 0900, Wayne Stancil, Mark Trail, Mark Eddings, and I, while checking quail traps near Medicine Creek, on Fort Sill, Comanche County, Oklahoma, noticed a small bird about 16 feet up in a tree near White Wolf Crossing. We approached to a distance of about 20 to 25 feet, assuming that the bird was a Carolina Chickadee *(Parus carolinensis)*, though it appeared to be somewhat longer and thinner. Through binoculars, we could see its crown was not black as in a chickadee, but *striped*. Desiring a closer look, we set up a Bushnell 25× telescope, which revealed that the prominent head stripes were yellow-buff alternating with black, and that the back and tail were olive. For approximately two minutes we watched the little bird busily searching the dead limbs for food before it flew eastward down the creek and out of sight. Not having seen this species before, we immediately consulted our field guides: all concurred that the moot bird was a Worm-eating Warbler *(Helmitheros vermivorus)*. We returned 20 minutes later, but were unable to find the warbler again.

This species is rare so far west. Although a few recent sightings have been reported in New Mexico, it is still considered hypothetical there (Hubbard, J. P., 1978, Revised check-list of the birds of New Mexico, New Mexico Orn. Soc. Publ. No. 6, p. 71). It has been observed sparingly in eastern Oklahoma (Delaware, Cherokee, Muskogee, McCurtain, Okfuskee and Washington counties), as a transient and summer resident from 8 April to 13 September (Sutton, G. M., 1974, A check-list of Oklahoma birds, Stovall Mus. Sci. & Hist., Univ. Oklahoma, Norman, p. 35). One specimen has been collected in Cimarron County at the western extreme of the Panhandle: on 15 May, 1966, J. S. Weske shot a female (UOMZ 5896) 9 miles east of Kenton (Sutton, G. M., 1967, Oklahoma birds, Univ. Oklahoma Press, Norman, p. 491).—Allen Ratzlaff, *923 W. 4th, Stillwater, Oklahoma 74074, 22 July 1985.*

Lawrence's Goldfinches in Beaver County, Oklahoma.—My son Edward and I observed five Lawrence's Goldfinches *(Carduelis lawrencei)* 6 miles north of Gate, Beaver County, Oklahoma, on 14 November 1984. At 1530, we were talking with a hunter who was "dry-picking" a wild Turkey *(Meleagris gallopavo)* that he had just shot along the nearby Cimarron River. All at once, five tiny sparrow-like birds flew into a stand of sunflowers about 20 feet away, and began to feed on the seed-heads. Something about them struck me as being different from the American Goldfinches *(C. tristis)* and Pine Siskins *(C. pinus)* that were commonly seen in similar habitat, though they resembled the former a great deal. Noting their black throats, a character lacking in the American Goldfinch, I borrowed the hunter's binoculars for a better look. I could tell from their conspicuous markings that two were adult males and that the other three, duller of plumage, were females or young birds. The males' wings showed pale yellow, whereas those of the others were essentially gray. With their bold black caps and throats, accented by the lighter bills in the center, the males were strikingly handsome.

These birds stayed about 20 minutes until an approaching car flushed them. With the help of a bird book, I later identified them. I returned the next day, but was unable to find the unusual finches again. Apparently, this constitutes the first sighting for Oklahoma.—Laurence Dunn, *Gate, Oklahoma 73844, 17 May 1985.*

FROM THE EDITOR: All who knew him were sad to learn that Wesley Sidney Isaacs, a frequent contributor of excellent photographs and articles to the OOS Bulletin, died on June 15, 1985 in Oklahoma City. His contributions to Oklahoma ornithology were remarkable, particularly so when one realizes that he did not become interested in birds, and bird photography, until after the age of 50. Wes was our friend, a man of his word who freely extended his humor and good nature to everyone with whom he came in contact. He made birding fun, and we will miss him.—John S. Shackford, associate editor.

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