

BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE IN OKLAHOMA

BY JOHN S. SHACKFORD AND SEBASTIAN T. PATTI

On the morning of 29 December 1985, while participating in the Kenton, Oklahoma, (Black Mesa) Christmas Bird Count in northwest Cimarron County, the junior author and Lawrence Smith found a Black-capped Chickadee (*Parus atricapillus*) at a feeder behind the Laurance Regnier ranch house 4½ miles south of Kenton. The species is common around Patti's home near Chicago, Illinois, and it was he who first noticed the bird. Both observers carefully noted that it lacked a light superciliary stripe when compared to several Mountain Chickadees (*P. gambeli*) also frequenting the feeder. More importantly, they twice heard a whistled two-note "fee-beee," a call not ordinarily given by the closely related Carolina Chickadee (*P. carolinensis*). That species has a call consisting of four notes (see, e.g., Pough 1946, but also Robbins *et al.* 1986). A few hours afterward, Wallace Champeny and George Neavoll also observed the bird at the feeder, but did not hear the distinctive "fee-beee" call.



BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE

Both photos taken by John S. Shackford on 30 January 1986 in Cimarron County, Oklahoma, 4½ miles south of Kenton.

A month later, on the afternoon of 30 January 1986, the senior author and Jack D. Tyler, aware of the earlier sighting, found the chickadee in the same place and captured it with a mist-net. After measuring, banding, and photographing the bird (Figs. 1 and 2), they released it. The wing chord measured 67mm, the tail 63. Band number 1590-88320 was placed on the chickadee's left leg. At about 1030 the next day, Tyler and Shackford again saw the bird (with band) at the feeder. Subsequently, Laurance Regnier and his wife Carrie saw it from time-to-time until at least 10 February.

Although Shackford and Tyler listened carefully for the diagnostic "fee-bee" call, they heard only the regular "chick-a-dee-dee-dee" song, which seemed (to Shackford) slightly more languid than a typical Carolina's. The relatively longer tail of *atricapillus* is frequently used to aid in differentiating it from *carolinensis*. Information presented by Robbins *et al.* (1986) indicate that chickadees with a tail/wing ratio of 93% or higher are Black-caps, while those with ratios of 88% or below are Carolinas. The tail/wing ratio of the Kenton bird (94%) falls well within the range for *atricapillus*.

For *P. carolinensis*, there is but one specimen known from the Oklahoma Panhandle: on 13 May 1961, J. David Ligon collected a male (UOMZ 4889) five miles northeast of Guymon in Texas County. There are also recent sight records at the easternmost end of the Panhandle. Along Kiowa Creek 10½ miles south and 2 east of Gate in Beaver County, Shackford saw what he took to be three family groups on 22 June 1985; the next day he observed five birds together, plus a singleton. At the same place on 2 February 1986, Shackford, Lawrence E. Dunn, and Jack D. Tyler saw at least 33 birds (Shackford field notes). However, this species has never been found as far west as Cimarron County.

George M. Sutton (1967) stated that, of over 100 chickadee specimens amassed in a "determined effort" to obtain a Black-cap in Oklahoma, "only one can conceivably be called *atricapillus*, and this bird does not represent the species unequivocally." The specimen (UOMZ 2553, male, testes somewhat enlarged) is in the University of Oklahoma collection and was taken 28 April 1956 at Doby Springs in Harper County, near the east end of the Panhandle, by C. A. Ely. Its tail/wing ratio (93.2%) falls within the range of *atricapillus* (tail 62, wing 66.5). Also according to Sutton (1967) its wings show the "white or nearly white secondary edgings of *atricapillus*." W. A. Lunk of the University of Michigan carefully identified this bird as *P. atricapillus septentrionalis*. In September 1986, Shackford examined the specimen and found the whitish feather edgings somewhat subdued (possibly due to fading with age) when compared to photographs of the Kenton bird. A recent study by Robbins *et al.* (1986) of hybrid chickadees in southwest Missouri suggests that the O.U. specimen may need to be critically re-examined. If it proves to be a hybrid, the Kenton bird would be the first *bona fide* record for *P. atricapillus* in Oklahoma. The latter bird is the first from the state for which all crucial field marks, measurements, and calls have been documented: (1) the "fee-bee" call, (2) an appropriate tail/wing ratio, (3) very white or whitish feather edgings on wings and tail (Figs. 1 and 2) as opposed to gray or grayish edges in *P. carolinensis*, and (4) black at lower edge of bib less sharply defined than in *P. carolinensis* (Fig. 2).

Interbreeding between *P. atricapillus* and *P. carolinensis* does occur else-

where (Brewer 1963, Johnston 1971, Robbins *et al.* 1986). Dr. Max Thompson has assembled a fine series of some 30 putative hybrid specimens at Southwestern College in Winfield, southeastern Kansas, that show considerable individual variation. All were collected along a 15-mile stretch of the Arkansas River northwest of Winfield along the interface of the two species' ranges. Multivariate comparisons in Kansas by Rising (1968) suggest that these two species may produce a viable F2 generation. If so, the two species may yet be taxonomically "lumped" (see also Braun and Robbins 1986, Mack *et al.* 1986).

Although the relationships between the two species in Oklahoma are still unclear, we now know that at least an occasional Black-cap wanders into western sections of the state in winter. We have yet to determine how often or exactly where this takes place, the numbers of birds involved, or the extent of their sojourn here. Further study of these closely related parids is needed.

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PILEATED WOODPECKER IN WOODWARD COUNTY, OKLAHOMA

BY VERNON N. POWDERS

The Pileated Woodpecker (*Dryocopus pileatus*) is a resident principally of heavy woods in eastern sections of Oklahoma, but has been seen westward to Alfalfa, Major, Canadian, Caddo, Comanche, Stephens, and Jefferson counties. The westernmost record for breeding is from Stephens County (Sutton, G. M., 1974, A check-list of Oklahoma birds, Stovall Mus. Sci. & Hist., Univ. Oklahoma Press, Norman, p. 23), and the species is considered rare along this edge of its