

five more rectrices. The falcon had apparently been caught on its roost, killed and plucked by one of the adult owls, then fed to its young.

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GENERAL NOTES

Harris' Hawks in Oklahoma during fall and winter, 1986-87.—Harris' Hawk (*Parabuteo unicinctus*) is a resident of the New World Tropics northward to southern parts of Arizona and New Mexico east to central Texas; it is reported as "casual in northern and eastern Texas (and) Oklahoma . . ." (AOU Checklist of North American birds, 1983, p. 113). It spends at least some winters along the Red River of extreme southwestern Oklahoma in the vicinity of Eldorado, in Jackson County (see Ault, J. W., 1975, Bull. Oklahoma Orn. Soc. 8:34-36), and there are published sight records for Comanche, Oklahoma, and Murray counties (Sutton, G. M. [1982], Species summaries of Oklahoma bird records, Oklahoma Mus. Nat. Hist., Univ. Oklahoma, Norman).

On 15 November 1986 at about 1030, Jay K. Banta, a biologist at the Fort Sill Military Reservation, discovered a Harris' Hawk on the post's East Range in Comanche County, southwest Oklahoma. The day was mild and calm, if somewhat overcast, and the temperature rose to around 55°F (13°C). At the time, Banta had been driving westward along Fort Sill's South Boundary Road, near its intersection with Northeast 45th Street, a north-south thoroughfare within the eastern city limits of Lawton. The dark hawk was perched atop a utility pole and was rather tame, allowing Banta to approach to within about 15 yards (13 m) before lifting up and drifting southward out of view.

During the 20 or so seconds accorded him for scrutinizing the hawk, Banta made several important observations. First, though his initial impression was that the bird was a Northern Harrier (*Circus cyaneus*), it was simply too black for that species. Second, the perch was unlikely for a harrier: of hundreds he had watched over the years, not one had Banta ever noticed resting on top of a telephone pole. Third, the bird's rather short tail was shaped more like a *buteo*'s than a harrier's. Blackish for most of its length, it was not narrowly banded, as on a harrier. Yet the tail's most glaringly obvious feature was its pure white base that contrasted so sharply with the blackness of the body plumage. Finally, near the bend of the wings, Banta noticed a rather extensive area of rich chestnut. This combination of field marks clinched his identification: the puzzling bird was most certainly a Harris' Hawk.

Less than 15 minutes later, another Fort Sill biologist, Kevin McCurdy, happened by and also noticed this unusual raptor in the same area. More surprisingly still was the later revelation that yet another person had encountered the bird here at least a week earlier! That observer, C. Brian Aldrich from Lawton, was an apprentice falconer.

At about 1640 that same day, Sam J. Orr, a local bird bander, and his friend Wally Breden, captured the hawk using a bal-chatri trap. Orr determined that the bird was an adult female in partial molt. The outer rectrices, still sheathed at their bases, were only about two and one-half inches long. The crop was empty, and the hawk readily accepted a mouse offered by its captors.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service band number 877-95024 was placed on one leg, then the bird was photographed and released. It flew unerringly to a little grove of Osage orange trees (*Maclura pomifera*) about 100 yards (90 m) south of the Fort Sill boundary, where it spent the night.

During the ensuing 100 days, the Harris' Hawk was observed frequently, always near the spot where first seen. To the south of this place stretches grazing land dotted with Osage oranges and mesquites (*Prosopis juliflora*), whereas ungrazed mixedgrass prairie lies northward on Fort Sill. Small intermittent streams drain the area and support a few large but widely dispersed cottonwoods (*Populus deltoides*). Several cattle-ponds are scattered about.

Among others who observed the hawk were James P. and Nelda Bowen, Larry L. Choate, Richard F. Brown, Art W. Breaden, Chris Moore, Jack D. Tyler, and his son Jeff. On 19 January 1987, Tyler also photographed this bird. He was the last to see it, on 22 February.

In northeastern Oklahoma, another Harris' Hawk spent the winter. On 3 December 1986, at about 1600, Jeri McMahon was driving home to Fort Gibson, Oklahoma, when she noticed a dark brown hawk with rusty shoulder patches resting on a "yield" sign next to U.S. Highway 62, approximately 5 miles east of Muskogee, in Muskogee County, Oklahoma. She drove on to her house 3 miles away, retrieved her binoculars, and quickly returned to the spot. Soon she relocated the hawk in a small tree north of Highway 62, not far from the Fort Gibson Nursery. As it departed, McMahon could see the white above and below the base of its tail clearly, as well as the rust-colored shoulders on its otherwise dark wings. She then knew for certain that this was a Harris' Hawk. A few members of the Indian Nations Audubon Society were shortly notified of her exceptional find. The next day, after seeing this bird near the same place, Vera Jennings concurred with the earlier identification.

On 5 December, McMahon saw the hawk again, and photographed it several times in good light. One of these photos (CUMZ 999) is on file in the Cameron University Museum of Zoology in Lawton. After studying it with greater care, she realized that the hawk was a subadult because of its streaked breast, noticeable ventral tail barring, and the light wing linings it revealed in flight.

The next day, Jennings and Helen Davidson watched the Harris' Hawk capture a rat. Tom Alford, Indian Nations Audubon president, and Mark Green saw it on 7 December. On 8 December, McMahon observed the bird for some time as it clung precariously to a telephone wire paralleling the south side of Highway 62 a little distance from the nursery. Not until the Fort Gibson Christmas Count of 27 December was it to be seen again, however. James L. Norman, David Gill, and Jon Benedetti, all of Muskogee, discovered it in its usual haunts that morning. Where it had been for the intervening three weeks was a mystery to us all.

Many other observers viewed the Harris' Hawk during January of 1987. McMahon saw it in its "territory" for the last time on 8 March, but Jennings spied it six days later (14 March) on a fencepost along U.S. Highway 69, about 8 miles south of Muskogee. No one saw it again.

As a postnote, John W. Ault III observed still a different Harris' Hawk, this one an adult, at a place 1½ miles south of Eldorado in Jackson County,

on 29 January 1987. The next day he saw probably the same bird there again (letter to Jack D. Tyler of 9 February 1987 on file at CUMZ).—Jay K. Banta, DEH, Fish and Wildlife Branch, Fort Sill, Oklahoma 73503 and Jeri McMahon, Rt. 1, Box 50, Fort Gibson, Oklahoma 74434, 25 March 1987.

An Osprey carrying mammalian prey.—On the afternoon of 29 November 1986, while driving through the open tallgrass prairies about 13 miles north of downtown Tulsa in Tulsa County, Oklahoma, my friend Pat Seibert and I saw a large flying raptor. A noticeable “crook” in each wing, the dark-over-white general coloration, and a black “slash” through each of the bird’s eyes confirmed our initial suspicion that it was an Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*). At one point it was only about 100 feet (30 m) off. Through binoculars, we espied in the bird’s talons a fair-sized rodent, possibly a cotton rat (*Sigmodon hispidus*). The Osprey was carrying it head-forward, and we could see its moderately long tail flapping in the breeze. Presently, the big bird sailed up and landed atop a utility pole, where it commenced to devour its prey. Having visited this area frequently in the past, we knew that the nearest sizable body of water where the Osprey could catch fish was at least 9 miles (16 km) distant. The day was mild and clear, with a high of about 60°F.

Sherrod (Raptor Res. 12 (3/4):92, 1978) reviewed diets of North American Falconiform birds, and among 10 major studies on Ospreys, only one reported mammalian prey: three cotton rats and five unidentified small mammals were taken by birds in Florida (Wiley, J. W., and F. E. Lohrer, 1973, Wilson Bull. 85:468-70). Findings of these studies agreed that Ospreys rely almost exclusively on live fish as food. Rarely, an Osprey will prey on other vertebrates, a subject reviewed well by Wiley and Lohrer (1973, *op. cit.*), who listed references reporting the capture of ground squirrels, mice, steppe voles (*Lagurus* sp.), marsh rabbits (*Sylvilagus palustris*), and rice rats (*Oryzomys palustris*). Since 1973, Proctor (Wilson Bull. 89:625, 1977) has recorded the taking of a meadow vole (*Microtus pennsylvanicus*) in a Connecticut salt marsh, Castrale and McCall (Raptor Res. 17(3):92, 1983) the capture of what appeared to be an eastern mole (*Scalopus aquaticus*) near an Indiana soybean field; and Taylor (Raptor Res. 20(2):76, 1986) watched an Osprey snatch a gray squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*) from the ground in Florida.—Jo Loyd, 6736 E. 28th St., Tulsa, Oklahoma 73129, 1 December 1986.

Late nesting of Purple Martins in central Oklahoma.—On 18 July 1987, while routinely inspecting a Purple Martin (*Progne subis*) house in my yard 4 miles southeast of Middleberg in Grady County, central Oklahoma, I was surprised to find two nests that were still active. One held three young martins about ready to fledge, and the other, four good-sized nestlings whose wing feathers were still ensheathed.

When I next visited the martin house on 24 July, the first nest was empty. Immature birds that were begging for food as they perched atop the roof and on nearby power lines led me to conclude that they had successfully fledged from this nest earlier. As for the four young still in the second nest, departure appeared imminent. I was not able to check this nest again until 27 July,

wherein I discovered only a single dead nestling. It is possible that one or both of these broods may not have fledged, but suffered some other fate, such as predation. However, the martin house was situated in an open area atop a metal pole 11 feet 8 inches from the ground so that access by mammalian predators or snakes would have been very difficult. Of course, an avian predator cannot be ruled out, but in the six seasons Purple Martins have nested here, there have been no apparent disturbances of any nest. These facts, and the noticeable increase in the number of birds in the flock at this time, led me to believe that both of these nests were successful.

Because of differences in age and experience, not all Purple Martins in a colony nest synchronously (Johnston, R. F., and J. W. Hardy, 1962, *Wilson Bull.* 74:260-1). The latest date reported for fledging in Oklahoma is 4 July (Sutton, G. M., 1967, *Oklahoma birds*, Univ. Oklahoma Press, Norman, p. 364). Although I cannot pinpoint the exact date that the young birds left the second nest, they were in it on 24 July, a date that should now be considered the latest for young Purple Martins still in the nest in Oklahoma.—Larry P. Mays, *Route 3, Box 555, Blanchard, Oklahoma 73010, 15 September 1987.*

When did the Great-tailed Grackle first invade northeastern New Mexico?—Having inhabited Clayton, New Mexico, for many years, and the bird-life of the region being of more than passing interest to them, the authors are keenly aware of any changes therein. Clayton lies in Union County in extreme northeastern New Mexico, only a dozen miles southwest of the Oklahoma Panhandle.

On 23 March 1954, Paul Snoeberger saw a male Great-tailed Grackle (*Quiscalus mexicanus*) at an overflow pond on his farm 20 miles south-southeast of Clayton. It was the first time that this species had ever been seen locally. Then, in 1958, Cook found a pair at an irrigated farm 10 miles east of town. At the time, J. Stokeley Ligon was writing his book, *Birds of New Mexico* (Univ. New Mexico Press, Albuquerque, 1961; see p. 265) and requested that one of these be procured, packed in dry ice, and sent to him at Carlsbad. On 24 April, Cook reluctantly did so, for he felt certain that the grackles would have nested. No other Great-tails were sighted until 1982, when Buck Curry observed one at a sanitation pond near town. In 1983, Cook and Marty Mayfield discovered a female in a pasture that was under irrigation 1½ miles southeast of the city. On 17 July 1983, the authors discovered a flock of eight grackles (both sexes) at the place where the first pair turned up in 1958. From that time until August of 1985, there are no other sightings on record for the Clayton area.

It was first seen in the Texas Panhandle in 1958 when Peggy Acord saw three; by 1967, it was on the increase there (Oberholser, H. C., 1974, *The bird life of Texas*, Vol. 2, Univ. Texas Press, Austin, p. 834). For New Mexico, the species has bred in Tucumcari, 100 miles south-southwest of Clayton, since 1971 and is "resident in the south, northward . . . locally to . . . the lower Canadian (river valley) . . . and vicinities — occasional in summer farther north . . ." (Hubbard, J. P., 1978, *Revised check-list of the birds of New Mexico*, *New Mexico Orn. Soc. Publ. No. 6*, pp. 83-84).

This species was first seen in Oklahoma in 1953. That year, a single bird

appeared in northwestern Oklahoma, another in the central part of the state (Davis, W. M., 1975, Bull. Oklahoma Orn. Soc. 8:9-18). By 1957, sizeable flocks were being reported. The first breeding record was documented in central Oklahoma in 1958. However, nesting was strongly suspected to have occurred in southern sections of the state in 1957 or earlier (Davis, 1975, *op. cit.*). In 1978, John S. Shackford found two pairs nesting at the sewage ponds in Boise City, Oklahoma, near the west end of the Oklahoma Panhandle (Bull. Oklahoma Orn. Soc. 16:16, 1983). This location is only 60 air-miles northeast of Clayton, New Mexico.—Wes Cook, 20 Poplar St., and Adolph Krehbiel, 621 Walnut St., Clayton, New Mexico 88415, 4 August 1985.

Monofilament line hazardous to Northern Oriole.—On 22 May 1986, I discovered a female Northern Oriole (*Icterus galbula*) hanging from the limb of a Siberian elm (*Ulmus pumila*) in the northwestern part of Borden Park in Chickasha, Grady County, Oklahoma. On 24 May I returned to the site with a ladder and a long-handled limb pruner to examine the dead oriole in greater detail. In an advanced state of decay, it was teeming with maggots and hanging 4.1 m high from an exposed, drooping branch, a typical Northern Oriole nest site. A simple slip knot of monofilament line was secure around its neck. Much of the monofilament had been interwoven among several adjacent twigs, together with some artificial grass of the type used in Easter baskets. About 150 m away was a lake of several acres. Apparently, the bird had found a mass of tangled fishing line at the lake and carried it to the tree for nest building. In the process of weaving the nest, the bird must have snared its head in a loop of the line, and in struggling to escape only succeeded in tightening the noose. A similar case was reported in Connecticut by Kerry Pado (1986, Bird watcher's digest 8(6):89), who suggested chopping monofilament line into small pieces before discarding it. — Charles M. Mather, Box 82517, University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma, Chickasha, Oklahoma 73018, 21 August 1986.

The Scott's Oriole in the Texas Panhandle.—The Scott's Oriole (*Icterus parisorum*) is a bird of the southwestern United States whose breeding range in Texas spans the Trans-Pecos and southern half of the Edwards Plateau (Texas Ornithological Society, 1984, The T.O.S. checklist of the birds of Texas, 2nd ed., Austin). During the recent past, there have been three reported spring sightings of male transients in the Texas Panhandle: on 27 May 1979 an adult male in a residential part of Amarillo, Potter County, was followed about for some time by Barry R. Zimmer (Williams, F., 1979, Amer. Birds, 33:786); on 27 April 1984 another adult male was found by Peggy Acord and Fern Cain in southwestern Randall County at the Buffalo Lake National Wildlife Refuge; and on the following day, Fern Cain, Joe Cepeda and I discovered yet another male in the Christian Church camp at Ceta Glen in South Ceta Canyon, a part of the Palo Duro Canyon complex in southeastern Randall County, about 25 miles east of the refuge (Williams, F., 1984, Amer. Birds 38:931). The latter bird was first seen as it flew overhead and lit in the top of a nearby cottonwood tree (*Populus* sp.) Its black hood, wings, and tail contrasted sharply with the lemon yellow of the rest of its body. For several minutes we watched it feeding among the catkins.

It bent down on occasion and exposed its black upper back; from time to time we heard it give a soft, low, whistled note. Prior to 1978, there were no known records for this species anywhere in the Panhandle during fall.

On 23 September 1978 I observed a male Scott's Oriole on the Buffalo Lake refuge (Williams, F., 1979, *Amer. Birds* 33:193). For perhaps 30 minutes I studied it carefully as it worked its way through a grove of medium-sized cottonwood trees surrounded by shortgrass prairie. Most of the oriole's time was spent preening. I suspected that it was an immature bird, because its crown and back were not intensely black, but appeared to have an olive sheen. Furthermore, the lower front edge of its black hood was broken, and the bright yellow of its belly shaded into faint olive along the flanks.

In recent years, this species has begun to expand its range into northwestern sections of the Edwards Plateau and has nested in juniper-dominated plant associations in Cook and Irion counties (Terry Maxwell letter of 27 May 1981 to Seyffert). The above records are approximately 250 miles north-northwest of even these northern reaches of the known range for this bird, and about 500 miles from that specified in the latest AOU Check-list (1983, American Ornithologists' Union, p. 739). Observers in western Oklahoma need to be aware of the information contained herein.—Kenneth D. Seyffert, 2206 S. Lipscomb St., Amarillo, Texas 79109, 12 September 1987.

INDEX OF BIRD NAMES

BY LOUIS E. MCGEE AND JANET M. MCGEE

- | | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| <i>Accipiter cooperii</i> : 15 | <i>Cistothorus palustris</i> : 20 |
| <i>Agelaius phoeniceus</i> : 9, 10 | <i>platensis</i> : 20 |
| <i>Ammodramus caudacutus</i> : 22 | <i>Coccyzus americanus</i> : 20 |
| <i>leconteii</i> : 22 | <i>erythrophthalmus</i> : 20 |
| <i>savannarum</i> : 22 | <i>Colaptes auratus</i> : 20 |
| <i>Anas acuta</i> : 5 | <i>Contopus virens</i> : 20 |
| <i>cyanoptera</i> : 4-5 | Coot, American: 20 |
| <i>platyrhynchos</i> : 5 | <i>Coturnicops noveboracensis</i> : |
| <i>strepera</i> : 5-6 | 18, 20 |
| <i>Ardea herodias</i> : 10, 15 | Cowbird, Brown-headed: 3-4, |
| <i>Aythya affinis</i> : 1 | 22 |
| <i>collaris</i> : 20 | Creeper, Brown: 20 |
| Blackbird, Red-winged: 9, 10 | Cuckoo, Black-billed: 20 |
| Yellow-headed: 9-12 | Yellow-billed: 20 |
| Bobolink: 22 | <i>Dendroica castanea</i> : 18, 21 |
| <i>Branta canadensis</i> : 12 | <i>coronata</i> : 18, 21 |
| <i>Bubo virginianus</i> : 28, 29 | <i>fusca</i> : 21 |
| Bunting, Indigo: 21 | <i>magnolia</i> : 21 |
| <i>Buteo jamaicensis</i> : 16 | <i>pennsylvanica</i> : 18, 21 |
| <i>Calidris canutus</i> : 22-24 | <i>petechia</i> : 21 |
| <i>himantopus</i> : 24 | <i>virens</i> : 21 |
| <i>Campephilus principalis</i> : 8 | Dickcissel: 21 |
| <i>Carduelis pinus</i> : 22 | <i>Dolichonyx oryzivorus</i> : 22 |
| Catbird, Gray: 18, 20 | Dove, Mourning: 20, 25, 26 |
| <i>Cathartes aura</i> : 6, 14 | White-winged: 25-26 |
| <i>Catharus ustulatus</i> : 20 | Duck, Ring-necked: 20 |
| <i>Certhia americana</i> : 20 | <i>Dumetella carolinensis</i> : 18, 20 |
| <i>Ceryle alcyon</i> : 15-16 | Eagle, Bald: 16 |
| <i>Chaetura pelagica</i> : 7, 20 | Egret, Snowy: 15 |
| <i>Charadrius vociferus</i> : 15 | <i>Egretta thula</i> : 15 |
| Chat, Yellow-breasted 3-4, 21 | <i>Empidonax flaviventris</i> : 20 |
| <i>Chordeiles minor</i> : 20 | <i>minimus</i> : 20 |
| <i>Circus cyaneus</i> : 29 | <i>traillii</i> : 20 |