

Oklahoma during the critical fall and winter months. In Cimarron County, another area of sympatry, Schemnitz (*op. cit.*) also observed the similarity of foods in these species during early winter.

Hybridization in the wild has been reported from Morton County, Kansas (Coles, L. S., 1985, Bull. Oklahoma Orn. Soc. 18:12-13), and Concho, Motley, and Stonewall counties of Texas (McCabe, R. A., 1954, Auk 71:293-97; Sutton, G. M., 1963, Southwest. Nat. 8:108-11), but never heretofore from Oklahoma.

Two recent Texas records are also worthy of note. In Howard County, several hybrids trapped in 1978 were suspected to have been the direct result of removal of more than 90% of the male bobwhites from the area by state wildlife personnel (letter of 1 April 1984 to Dr. Warren M. Pulich, University of Dallas, Irving, from Bill E. DelMonte; copy on file in CUMZ). E. D. Dorchester shot a hybrid cock that was with a covey of Scaled Quail in a mesquite pasture near Midland, Midland County, on 27 December, 1986. It is similar to the Oklahoma specimens in plumage, except that the gular area is washed with chestnut. Photos of it are on file at Cameron University.

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**Breeding status of the Eared Grebe in the Texas Panhandle.** — The Eared Grebe (*Podiceps nigricollis*) is generally considered as strictly migratory in the Texas Panhandle. My personal records show that north-bound migrants arrive in late March or early April and all have departed by late May (extreme dates: 11 March-28 May), while dates of southward migration fall between mid-August and late October or early November (extreme dates: 5 August-26 November). On rare occasions, it lingers into mid-winter. Published references to its summer status in the area are few. H. C. Oberholser (1974, The bird life of Texas, Univ. Texas Press, Austin, pp. 61-63) shows a summer sight record on his range map for the southcentral sector of the Panhandle, but makes no mention of it in his statewide summary of summer sightings. For Oklahoma, G. M. Sutton (1967, Oklahoma birds, Univ. Oklahoma Press, Norman, p. 10) cited one mid-summer sighting (20 July 1958, Oklahoma County). At least three birds in nuptial plumage were observed in Texas County in the Oklahoma Panhandle by W. M. Davis (1970, Bull. Oklahoma Orn. Soc. 3:14-15) on 3 June 1969. J. D. Tyler (1979, Birds of southwestern Oklahoma, Stovall Mus. Sci. & Hist., Univ. Oklahoma, Norman, p. 10) mentioned a single early summer sighting on 13 June. A nesting record, reported in Kingfisher County, northwestern Oklahoma, in 1984 (A. Ratzlaff, 1986, Bull. Oklahoma Orn. Soc. 19:9-11) was not accepted by the Oklahoma Bird Records Committee. The first documented case of breeding occurred in Cimarron County in June 1987 (Shackford, J. S., 1988, Bull. Oklahoma Orn. Soc. 21:1-2).

In New Mexico, J. P. Hubbard (1978, Revised check-list of the birds of New Mexico, New Mexico Orn. Soc. Publ. No. 6, p. 1) placed its breeding range in that state no nearer the Texas Panhandle than the northcentral section. He further stated that "spring migrants irregularly persist in non-breeding areas

into June." In summarizing the Eared Grebe's breeding range in the Great Plains, P. A. Johnsgard (1979, *Birds of the Great Plains*, Univ. Nebraska Press, Lincoln, pp. 8-9) defined it as "nearly all of North and South Dakota, northwestern and southwestern Minnesota, northwestern Iowa, the northwestern part of Nebraska, and probably adjacent Colorado." The purpose of this note is to publish breeding records for the Texas Panhandle.

The first reported nesting of the Eared Grebe in the Texas Panhandle is that of A. S. Hawkins (1945, *Bird life of the Texas Panhandle*, *Panhandle Plains Hist. Rev.* 8:111-12). On 6 August 1945 he observed two adult birds and four "quarter-grown" young on a playa lake near Washburn, northwestern Armstrong County. Furthermore, "Floating among the rushes in about eighteen inches of water, four nests were found. One nest contained nothing but chips of egg shell, another held seven warm eggs lightly covered with rush stems, the third was empty, and the fourth is known to have had on July 26 two eggs, one of which was pipped." Because at least one pair of Pied-billed Grebes (*Podilymbus podiceps*) also summered on the playa, he could not be sure to which species the nests belonged.

During the early summer of 1972 a nesting colony of Eared Grebes was reported at the upper end of the Buffalo Lake National Wildlife Refuge, southwestern Randall County, by then assistant refuge manager, Milton Suthers. I visited the area on 2 July and found 19 adult grebes; however, because of a rapid fall in water level, their nesting site was inaccessible. On 16 July I found 12 adults, and on 30 July, 16. By this latter date the area was more or less dry, but not too far away I spied an adult Eared Grebe swimming close to shore, accompanied by one chick in downy plumage (Williams, F., 1972, *Amer. Birds* 26:873). On 6 and 20 August, respectively, I observed one and two adult grebes.

On 5 September 1982, E. B. Ellis found a breeding colony on a playa lake 4½ miles southeast of Kingsmill, in northwestern Gray County. This permanent lake receives effluent from the nearby Celanese Chemical Corporation plant. Ellis counted at least 40 adult grebes with young birds. Two adults he saw had chicks riding on their backs.

D. H. Fischer, *et al.* (1982, Checklist of birds from the playa lakes of the southern Texas Panhandle, *Bull. Texas Orn. Soc.* 15:2-7) classified the Eared Grebe as a "summer resident" with breeding records known for Castro and Swisher counties. However, specific nesting locations were not given.

On numerous other occasions I have recorded this species during summer as follows: south of Amarillo, Randall County, 4 July 1968 (1); southwestern Sherman County, 22 June 1975 (pair); west-central Parmer County, 7 June 1977 (pair); playa in southwestern Castro County, 4 June 1978 (10); playa in southwestern Ochiltree County, 16 June 1979 (6); and southeast of Amarillo, Randall County, 12 June 1984 (pair). Peggy Acord reported pairs at Buffalo Lake NWR, Randall County, on 10 and 18 July 1958, and south of Amarillo, Randall County, on 25 and 26 June 1968. Finally, Fern Cain observed one in Ochiltree County on 13 June 1976. — Kenneth D. Seyffert, 2206 S. Lipscomb St., Amarillo, Texas 79109, 9 July 1985.

**Loggerhead Shrike preys on Horned Lark.**—On 21 December 1985, at about 0915, as I drove along a country road 2¼ miles south and 2 miles east of Middleberg, Grady County, Oklahoma, a Loggerhead Shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus*) flew across the road in front of me, burdened by a large prey item carried in its beak. It dropped its prize on the road, flew on to a roadside plum thicket, perched, and glared back intently. What the shrike had jettisoned proved to be a freshly killed Horned Lark (*Eremophila alpestris*) that lacked visible wounds or bloodstains. I placed the lark back in the road and drove away.

When I returned at about 1000, a shrike was watching me closely from a nearby electric line, and the Horned Lark's headless body lay beside the plum bushes. Comer (Bull. Oklahoma Orn. Soc. 13:13-15, 1980) described a similar incident involving the decapitation and carrying of a Northern Cardinal (*Cardinalis cardinalis*) by a shrike in northeastern Oklahoma. This is apparently the heaviest species known to have been transported in flight by a shrike (Ingold, J. J., and D. A. Ingold, 1987, J. Field Orn. 58:66-68).

I came back about 1130 to find the Horned Lark nowhere in sight, nor did I find any feathers strewn about. The shrike probably removed its prey, but another predator, such as the house cat whose tracks I found nearby, might have done so.

The weather on 21 December was quite cold, with a low temperature of 23°F accompanied by a north wind of 6-9 mph. Perhaps these stark conditions diminished the shrike's chances of obtaining smaller invertebrates, forcing it to tackle such large prey. Ingold and Ingold (*op. cit.*) reported the mean weight of the Loggerhead Shrike as  $47.4 \pm 3.26$  g and of the Horned Lark, 31.9 g. Therefore, its prey would have weighed about 67% as much as the shrike.

There are few records of this species falling prey to a Loggerhead Shrike. Wiggins (Condor 64:78-79, 1962) saw a shrike take one in flight during late March 1961 in Baja California, Mexico, and Conley (Southwest. Nat. 27:367, 1982) reported a shrike carrying a Horned Lark in its "talons" near Cloverdale, in Hidalgo County, New Mexico, on 23 July 1980. — Larry P. Mays, *Route 3, Box 555, Blanchard, Oklahoma 73010, 3 November 1987.*

**Unusual food of Purple Finches.** — On 12 January 1986, at approximately 1500, I was walking through an upland area near Hogshooter Creek 6 miles east of Bartlesville, Washington County, Oklahoma. The day was mild (about 55°F), sunny and calm. I came upon an open glade in the woods and decided to sit by a little stream. Suddenly, out of a nearby brushpile burst forth a flock of about 12 Purple Finches (*Carpodacus mexicanus*) of which three were bright raspberry-colored adult males, at least five less colorful subadult males, and the remainder brown females. This was surprising, as I had not thus far seen a single Purple Finch at my nearby feeders this winter, although Evening Grosbeaks (*Coccothraustes vespertinus*) and other finches had been fairly common visitors.

Three of the immature male finches perched near the top of a 30-foot honey locust tree (*Gleditsia triacanthos*) were eating what I assumed to be seeds from

the long brown pods. But when I focused my binocular on them, I was amazed by what I saw. The finches were snapping off and actually *eating* the sharp spines from the tree's limbs, but I could not tell whether they were being swallowed point-first or not.

I inspected the spines attached to the lower branches. The older thorns were brittle while newer ones bent under pressure and were a reddish color. Some measured as much as two to three inches long, and all were extremely fine-tipped. I tried breaking them as the finches had done with so much apparent ease. I could snap the old thorns and remove them with much twisting, but had no success in breaking off the younger spines because of their pliability. I could not tell whether the finches were eating the old thorns or the new.

John K. Terres (1980, *Encyclopedia of North American birds*, Alfred A. Knopf Co., New York, p. 328) lists the Purple Finch's foods as "seeds of weeds, grasses, elm, white ash, red maple, sycamore, sweet gum, cedar berries, winter-berry, buds of apple, aspen, maple and birch." Indeed, Terres does not list any of the larger-billed finches as eating honey locust spines. However, many species enjoy the beanlike seeds and even the "sweetish pulp of the pods, like honey, is consumed by livestock and wildlife" (1981, *Forest trees of Oklahoma*, Oklahoma Forestry Division, Oklahoma City, p. 139).

Though I could find nothing in the literature relevant to the poison contained in the needle-pointed honey locust spines, anyone who has been pierced by one will agree that it has a slight paralytic effect. I returned the next day, fully expecting to find some dead Purple Finches. I hoped to determine whether they had been perforated or poisoned. I found none, either dead or alive. — Melinda Droege, *Rt. 1, Box 516AA, Bartlesville, Oklahoma 74006, 13 February 1986.*

FROM THE EDITOR: Many persons, unheralded in print, contributed to Volume 20 (1987). Dr. John P. Hubbard of the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish made helpful comments on the December Great-tailed Grackle note. In the present issue, three widely recognized grebe experts were consulted, and I wish to extend the society's appreciation to each of them: Drs. Gary Nuechterlein, Department of Zoology, North Dakota State University; John T. Ratti, Department of Zoology, Washington State University; and Robert W. Storer, Museum of Zoology, University of Michigan.

There may be rekindled hope for the Eskimo Curlew (*Numenius borealis*), considered all but extinct until recently. It has been reported in migration several times during the 1980's in the central and southern U.S. In late May of 1987, biologists discovered a pair (possibly at a nest) in the Canadian Arctic (USDI Endangered Species Tech. Bull. 12(8), 1987). — Jack D. Tyler.

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THE BULLETIN, the official organ of the Oklahoma Ornithological Society, is published quarterly in March, June, September, and December, at Norman, Oklahoma. Subscription is by membership in the OOS: \$5 student, \$7.50 regular, \$10 family, \$15 or more sustaining, per year. Life membership \$125. Treasurer, Bill Dirck, Box 65, Ada, Oklahoma 74820. Editor, Jack D. Tyler, Department of Biology, Cameron University, Lawton, Oklahoma 73505. Associate editors, John S. Shackford, 6008A N.W. Expressway, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73132, Dr. William Radke, Department of Biology, Central State University, Edmond, Oklahoma 73060, and Melinda Droege, Rt. 1, Box 516AA, Bartlesville, Oklahoma 74006. Questions regarding subscription, replacement copies, or back issues should be directed to the treasurer. ISSN 0474-0750.