

I wish to thank Dr. Ronald J. Hill for allowing me to draw freely from his field notes and to present his slides to the Oklahoma Bird Records Committee. Dr. Jack D. Tyler gratefully provided me the data on the Tulsa sighting, and Greg Lasley of Austin alerted me to the San Marcos records.

BIOLOGY DEPARTMENT, UNIVERSITY OF DALLAS, IRVING, TEXAS 75060, 19 FEBRUARY 1988.

A PILEATED WOODPECKER NEST IN WOODWARD COUNTY, OKLAHOMA

BY STACI AND RANDALL HOBLET

During the warm midafternoon of 15 May 1987, as we were making camp at Boiling Springs State Park near Woodward, Woodward County, northwestern Oklahoma, we heard a dull *tap-tap-tap* coming from a damp, low-lying wooded area behind our tent. Upon investigation, we saw an adult male Pileated Woodpecker (*Dryocopus pileatus*) clinging to the shaded eastern side of a towering cottonwood tree (*Populus deltoides*). The old tree, perhaps 65 feet tall, and long since dead, was devoid of bark on its upper trunk and branches. Other species making up these moist woods, part of the lush riparian habitat in the valley of the North Canadian River, included predominantly American elm (*Ulmus americana*), but also some Eastern red cedars (*Juniperus virginiana*), soapberries (*Sapindus drummondii*), walnuts (*Juglans* sp.), buckbrush (*Symphoricarpos orbiculatus*) and Virginia creeper (*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*). A well-shaded pool lay approximately 60 yards north of the big cottonwood.

Dissecting the woodland, and affording us a closer view of the woodpecker, was a hiking trail from which we noticed several oblong cavities in the western side of the cottonwood. After watching us for several moments, the bird edged around the trunk and stationed himself at one of these holes, about 35 feet above ground level. As he made this move, we became aware of activity within the nesting cavity, and suddenly realized that what we were seeing there were the sharp little bills of at least two Pileated nestlings. Soon we could see protruding from the nest hole the heads of two young woodpeckers about ready to fledge. Their crest feathers were pinkish instead of brilliant red as in the adult, and we could see some downy feathers among them.

This woodpecker quickly fed the chicks, then flew away. Soon, the adult female, with darker head lacking the red "whiskers" of the male, put in an appearance. She seemed unconcerned about our proximity, less than 30 feet from the base of the tree, and tended to the chicks without delay. She joined them inside the cavity for a very brief time, then emerged with what we believed to be a fecal sac in her bill.

Because we were attending the spring field meeting of the Oklahoma Ornithological Society, many expert birders shared our sighting. First on the scene was John G. Newell, who told us that this represented the most westerly breeding record of the Pileated Woodpecker for Oklahoma. Adult birds had previously been seen in the park during winter (Powders, V., 1986, Bull. Oklahoma Ornithol. Soc. 19:27-28).

For the next two days, the nest was studied and frequently photographed by numerous OOS members. Some felt that they might have seen three heads protruding from the cavity. Our photographs confirm only two, and we wonder if the third head might have been that of the female. Normal clutch size in this species is three to five (Reilly, E.M. Jr., 1968, The Audubon illustrated handbook of American birds, McGraw-Hill, N.Y., p. 272).

The chicks were fed every 30 to 40 minutes alternately by the parents, but we never saw both adults at the nest hole simultaneously. Several times we observed the male foraging, often low to the ground, on the trunks of larger trees nearby. Although the chicks became quite vociferous when the adults approached the nest, not once did we hear either of the old birds vocalize.

The nest tree protruded far above the surrounding woods and was popular with several other birds. Mississippi Kites (*Ictinia mississippiensis*), that were nesting at several other locations in the park, used the uppermost branches as a roost, and a pair of Red-headed Woodpeckers (*Melanerpes erythrocephalus*) had a nest cavity in an upper fork of the tree.

Pileated Woodpeckers, fairly common to eastern Oklahoma, become increasingly rare westward, where mature hardwood forests are confined to riparian situations. The western limit of range is more-or-less delineated by records from Alfalfa, Major, Canadian, Caddo, Comanche, and Jefferson counties (Sutton, G.M., 1974, A check-list of Oklahoma birds, Stovall Mus. Sci. & Hist., Univ. Oklahoma Press, Norman, p. 23). The westernmost breeding record heretofore was in northeast Stephens County, 165 miles to the southeast (McGee, L.E., and F. Neeld, 1972, Bull. Oklahoma Ornithol. Soc. 5:5-7). Our findings extend the nesting range in Oklahoma westward about 100 miles.

7664 S. RACE ST., LITTLETON, COLORADO 80122, 14 SEPTEMBER 1987.

GENERAL NOTES

First Northern Harrier nest in southwestern Oklahoma. — At approximately 0830 on 14 April 1986, Craig Bitler and I discovered the nest of a Northern Harrier (*Circus cyaneus*) from a helicopter in which we were searching for coyotes over Fort Sill's East Range. The nest, located about 9 miles northeast of the main post office, contained four white eggs, but we saw no adult near it at the time, nor when we returned a few minutes later. The nest lay only about 75 yards north of a heavily used blacktop road, but was otherwise encompassed by mature mixedgrass prairie. It was situated on the open, east-facing side of a gentle slope, fairly well hidden amid leadplants (*Amorpha fruticosa*) two to three feet tall, numerous milkweeds (*Asclepias* sp.) and little bluestem grass (*Schizachyrium scoparium*) that averaged about a foot high. Scattered dead stalks of big bluestem grass (*Andropogon gerardii*) three feet high, and a few other forbs we also noted around the site. The nest itself was a flattened mat of dried grasses and grass stems possibly two feet across. Some 40 yards east of it, a few small cottonwoods (*Populus deltoides*) and black willows (*Salix nigra*) lined a little ravine.