

Oklahoma, but on 27 March 1988, M. Gustafson, J. Hoffman, *et al.* reported one at the Kaw Lake dam on the Kay-Osage County border (1988, *The Scissor-tail*, 38(3):37).

Early in 1989, there appeared what has probably become the most thoroughly documented Black-legged Kittiwake sighting ever in Oklahoma. On 18 February, John Newell spied a kittiwake that he felt was a first winter bird standing on ice near the Lake Overholser dam in Oklahoma City (pers. comm.). He informed me of it the next day, and I immediately began searching for the bird. On 24 February I finally located it, again near the dam. During the next few weeks, scarcely a day went by on which someone failed to observe the kittiwake. With a video camcorder I obtained more than an hour of footage of the bird flying about, sometimes passing by only a few feet away. Steve Metz took several excellent photographs of it in flight, one of which was published in *American Birds* (1989, 43:231).

On the morning of 19 March 1989 — the last day the bird was seen — Esther A. Key and I were watching the kittiwake from the dam as it made wide circles overhead, occasionally swooping down almost close enough to touch, when, to our astonishment, it suddenly landed on one of the dam's concrete buttresses which face downstream. Here it remained for about 15 minutes while we photographed it with both still and video cameras from as close as 20 feet. It was very tame, as if affording us one last opportunity to study this visitor from afar. Despite intensive searching during the next few days, we never found it again.

A review of the historical record of Black-legged Kittiwake sightings in Oklahoma has revealed that during the last 30 years, 13 birds have shown up in the state, an average of more than one sighting every three years. Most (if not all) of these were in their first winter feather. The dates of occurrence have ranged from 12 October to 5 April (Sutton [1982], *op. cit.*). Thus, the Black-legged Kittiwake may be described as a rare transient or winter resident in Oklahoma. It is to be looked for around any large impoundment in the state.

3116 N. VIRGINIA, OKLAHOMA CITY, OKLAHOMA 73118, 2 NOVEMBER 1989

GENERAL NOTES

Ringed Turtle Dove in Oklahoma. — On 24 February 1989 at about 0730, I noticed a very pale dove in the branches of a large silver maple tree (*Acer saccharinum*) in our backyard in Norman, Cleveland County, Oklahoma. Upon closer examination with 8x40X binoculars, the black half-ring about the back of the neck identified the bird as a Ringed Turtle Dove (*Streptopelia risoria*). It flew off shortly thereafter. About two weeks later, on 12 March 1989, apparently the same bird again appeared in our backyard. This time, I obtained photographs of it on the ground where various songbirds had scattered sunflower seeds from our feeder. I also heard its distinctive, trilled "coo." During the next two months I saw or heard this bird six times more, the last on the morning of 14 April 1989.

D. Goodwin (1983, *Pigeons and doves of the world*, Brit. Mus., London, pp. 117–119) describes *S. risoria* as: "Domesticated. Often locally established in a

feral or semi-feral condition but such colonies seldom prosper." It is established in the United States in the Los Angeles region, west-central Florida and the Houston area (American Ornithologists' Union, 1983, Check-list of North American birds, 6th ed., Lawrence, Kansas, p. 254). There is no mention of this species by G. M. Sutton (1967, Oklahoma birds, Univ. Oklahoma Press, Norman) or by authors of similar texts in surrounding states except for Texas. There, W. M. Pulich (1988, The birds of north central Texas, Texas A & M Univ. Press, College Station, p. 408) says: "This popular cage bird is frequently reported around large cities, as the result of an intentional release or escape from captivity. It has not established itself in the north central Texas study area."

It is almost certain that this dove was an escapee as described by Pulich. However, this still seems to be the first recorded sighting of *S. risoria* in Oklahoma. If other Ringed Turtle Doves appear subsequently, each sighting should be thoroughly documented; the establishment of a colony in Oklahoma is not beyond possibility. — Andrew N. Feldt, 1627 Denison Drive, Norman, Oklahoma 73069, 25 September 1989.

Additional summer records for the Rufous-sided Towhee in Oklahoma. — The Rufous-sided Towhee (*Pipilo erythrophthalmus*) is a migrant and winter resident throughout Oklahoma. In most localities this species has been reported to be an uncommon to common bird depending upon the amount of woodland border and brush, especially in riparian habitat. Sutton (1967, Oklahoma birds, Univ. Oklahoma Press, Norman, pp. 599–602) summarized the status of this species according to evaluations given by observers throughout Oklahoma.

Evidence of the actual nesting in the state is very limited. In 1979, I reviewed early records and reported two recent nestings in Delaware County, northeastern Oklahoma. One of these was in 1977 and the other in 1978 (Bull. Oklahoma Ornithol. Soc. 12:9–11).

During July and early August 1985, I found a male and female towhee together regularly in a new area on the Little Lewis Whirlwind Nature Sanctuary, several km from the nesting sites described in 1979. The sanctuary is located about 4.5 miles south of Jay, Oklahoma.

The following records represent the entire nesting season. On 25 May 1985, I heard a towhee singing in a location considerably south of where the 1977 and 1978 nests had been. This was my first early summer record in this locality during 10 years of observation. I was away from the Jay area during the entire month of June.

At 0502 on 9 July, Laurel K. Stevenson and I heard a towhee scolding in a patch of scrub oak-hickory woods west of the county road that transects our property. This upland timber bordered a deep ravine dominated by large oaks, elms and black gums (*Nyssa sylvatica*). South of the ravine a more open oak savanna completed the range which the birds occupied. The entire area encompassed about nine acres (22 hectares).

Both male and female birds were found close together. The male showed

very little white spotting on its back and wings, but the female was not seen well enough to determine her amount of spotting. Both birds began to move away from us and soon reached the north rim of the ravine. At 0724, we relocated them just south of the ravine where the male sang and then called several times. Between 0726 and 0825, one bird (sex unknown) called infrequently near the ravine, chiefly on the north side. At 0925 we departed.

On 10 July at 0453, the female towhee called several times from near the north edge of the ravine approximately 200 ft. (60 m) from the point where the birds had been found the previous day. The male towhee sang at the head of the ravine system about 500 ft. (150 m) from the road between 0459 and 0503. Intermittent singing and scolding were heard to the west and northwest in scrub woods from 0503 to 0528. Between 14 and 18 July, the male sang three or four mornings in the same location.

Four days later (22 July), a bird sang briefly from along the north rim of the wooded gully about 650–800 ft. (200–250 m) west of the earlier observation sites, from 0625 until 0644. Beginning at 0705, a towhee called from the south side of the same ravine for five minutes, then moved down into it a bit later. I saw the male again at 0749 near the place where it first sang.

At 0615 on 2 August, one towhee (sex uncertain) called a few times near a grassy opening around an old mobile home site about 900 ft. (275 m) southwest of where the earlier sightings had taken place.

A towhee called a few times each morning on 5, 11, and 28 August, and on 2 September near the mobile home area, then moved northward toward the ravine; it could not be located again. I did not, however, actually see a towhee on these dates. Although there were no further records, I believe that a pair of Rufous-sided Towhees attempted to nest in the area described above during 1985. — Frederick M. Baumgartner, *Route 2, Box 51A, Jay, Oklahoma 74346, 13 October 1985.*

Meadowlarks prey on Pine Siskins and American Goldfinches. — Starting at approximately 1330 on 4 February and continuing until 8 February 1985, I witnessed meadowlarks attacking and killing Pine Siskins (*Carduelis pinus*) and American Goldfinches (*C. tristis*) at a pole feeder in my front yard located 3 miles east of Wynnewood in Garvin County, southcentral Oklahoma. Prior to this date, I had not seen meadowlarks at my feeders, but after four days in which snow had accumulated to a depth of eight inches, there were several. Weather conditions during the five-day period of observation were severe. Daytime high temperatures dropped from 51°F on 30 January to 6°F the next day. By 3 February, the minimal temperature had reached -1°F. But a warming trend began on this date and lasted through 8 February, when temperatures climbed to 38°F. An additional two inches of snow fell on 5 February.

I watched intently as one meadowlark ran and pounced at the smaller birds; at least twice, they escaped. A captured bird was killed by pecks to the back of the head and then left intact while the meadowlark returned to the feeder and ate sunflower seeds scattered about on the ground. Later, the meadowlark came back, ate the brain first, and then the remainder of the carcass. Other meadowlarks also fed on the dead finches but were not observed to make

any attacks of their own. At the end of the first day, I counted 11 pine siskin carcasses, plus some unidentified wings.

On 5 February, one siskin and one goldfinch were found dead and on 6 February, the tally was four siskins and two goldfinches. Only two new carcasses were present on 7 February but they were so thoroughly eaten upon that identification was not possible. The last date on which I found dead finches was 8 February, when I saw one or two (they were not complete, having been heavily fed upon). Also on this date, one meadowlark took a carcass away from another, then carried it approximately two feet away before feeding upon it. After 8 February I saw no more carcasses and no meadowlark around the feeders.

I could determine neither whether these were Eastern or Western meadowlarks (*Sturnella magna* or *S. neglecta*) nor if only one meadowlark was responsible for killing the smaller birds. I did note, however, that several different meadowlarks partook of the finch carcasses.

Common Grackles (*Quiscalus quiscula*) have been observed consuming goldfinches during a blizzard in Wichita Falls, Texas (Cummings, 1989, Bull. Oklahoma Ornithol. Soc. 22:29–30) but few other instances are known of members of the blackbird family feeding on goldfinches (but see Messerly, 1979, Bull. Oklahoma Ornithol. Soc. 12:6–7). On the other hand, meadowlarks attacked, killed and ate Tree Sparrows (*Spizella arborea*) in Osage County, Oklahoma, after a heavy snowstorm (Schrack, 1979, Bull. Oklahoma Ornithol. Soc. 12:33–34). — Luann Sewell Waters, *Bax 457, Wynnewood, Oklahoma 73098, 1 January 1990.*

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