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P.O. BOX 1494, HARTLESVILLE, OKLAHOMA 74005, 13 APRIL 1990.

GENERAL NOTES

Red-Tailed Hawk captures Great-Tailed Grackle in mid-air. — At 1108 on the humid, overcast day of 1 February 1990 (54°F, SW winds blowing at 3 mph) I was watching a Red-tailed Hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*) circling above a small creek less than a mile west of Cameron University in Lawton, Comanche County, Oklahoma. The hawk was soaring almost directly over a large cottonwood tree (*Populus deltoides*) growing near the creek. It apparently put to flight a flock of approximately 25 Great-tailed Grackles (*Quiscalus mexicanus*) that had been perched in the tree. Suddenly, the raptor swooped downward, not at the flock, but toward a single male grackle that had belatedly left the tree, desperately attempting to rejoin the flock. The hawk struck from above and behind; after contact, it levelled off, swung around and returned to the same cottonwood. It then proceeded to consume its prey.

Buteo jamaicensis depends chiefly on small rodents as prey. Fisher (1893, Hawks and owls of the United States in their relation to agriculture, Wash. D.C., p. 50) found remains of 105 birds of at least 20 species in 562 Red-tailed Hawk stomachs from the eastern United States (chiefly Maryland and Pennsylvania). About half were game birds or poultry. Behavior and food habits of this hawk were studied in the San Joaquin Experimental Range in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada Mountains in Madera County, California, during 1939, 1940 and 1941 (Fitch, H.S., et. al., 1946, Condor 48:205-237). A total of 169 birds were recovered from 2094 pellets collected during the nesting season. Of these, 117 were unidentifiable, 14 were jays, 13 woodpeckers, 10 finches, 6 quail, 5 meadowlarks, 2 hawks, 1 warbler and 1 bluebird. Of 625 food items brought to 14 nests by parent hawks, only 23 were birds (11 quail, 4 jays, 4 finches, 1 roadrunner, 1 screech owl, 1 kingbird, and 1 unknown). Therefore, it is clear that Red-tails rarely prey on small birds of any kind, and

very seldom on grackles. — Gerard A. Clyde Jr., 4103 Currell Dr., Lawton Oklahoma 73505, 14 February 1990.

First Common Poorwill nest for Comanche County, Oklahoma. — A sudden flutter of wings startled us as several birds flushed from near a small boulder not far away. They flew rapidly and low into a nearby oak copse. The surprise and speed of their flight rendered identification uncertain. My wife Janet had seen two birds, I counted three. They were approximately the size of Northern Bobwhites (*Colinus virginianus*). One bird that she concentrated on displayed short rounded wings and white spots at the corners of its tail. My impression was "nightjar."

The date was 26 May 1989, the time midmorning. My wife Janet and I were making a reconnaissance of the Hollis Canyon area (34°45'33" N., 98°45'15" W.) of the Wichita Mountains National Wildlife Refuge in Comanche County, southwestern Oklahoma.

By the boulder we found a small egg resting on a mat of spike moss (*Selaginella* sp.). There was no evidence of nest preparation. On the larger end were very faint blotches only slightly darker than the base color. The creamy white egg measured 26x19 mm. The eggs of the Common Poorwill are smaller and much less distinctively marked than those of either of the other two species of caprimulgids found in southwestern Oklahoma (Bent, A. C., 1940, Life histories of North American birds, U. S. Natl. Mus. Bull. 176, pp. 150, 189, 212). Averages for the three species' eggs are: Common Poorwill (*Phalaenoptilus nuttallii*), 26.3x19.9 mm; Common Nighthawk (*Chordeiles minor*), 30.0x21.8 mm; and Chuck-will's Widow (*Caprimulgus carolinensis*), 35.6x25.6 mm.

That afternoon we returned to the nest with refuge staff member Claudine Daniel. We approached to within about 10 meters of the incubating bird before it flushed. The short rounded tail showed faint beige tips on the outer rectrices and the bird's wings were rounded and uniformly dark. We could see a white band separating the dark throat from the poor-will's mottled underparts, and that its back was variegated with brown and gray.

On 27 May, assistant refuge manager Bill McCoy and I checked the nest and found the female bird still incubating the egg. We made several 35 mm photographs at varying distances both before and after she flushed.

My wife and I returned on 28 May. Using a video camera, we taped the nest and adjacent habitat. We also took additional pictures with our still camera. When the female finally took flight, we found two eggs. Photographs of the eggs were taken after a scale had been positioned next to one.

Not wanting to disturb the nesting bird unnecessarily, we did not return to the location until 14 June 1989, at which time we found neither bird nor eggs. In the interim, nearly 10 inches (25 cm) of rain had fallen. At refuge headquarters, about five kilometers southeast of the nest, rainfall (in inches) was as follows: 31 May, 0.10; 1 June, 0.25; 4 June, 2.90; 7 June, 2.00; 8 June, 0.87; 11 June, 0.40; 12 June, 1.45; 13 June, 1.80; and 14 June, 0.04. Flooding of the hillside may have washed the eggs away.

The above observations, together with the photographs, constitute the third

Common Poorwill nesting record for the state, and the first for southwestern Oklahoma. Photos have been deposited in the Oklahoma Ornithological Society bird records archives at the University of Oklahoma. There are only two previous breeding records for the state. "Nest (two eggs) found on July 9, 1954, in opening among junipers and small oaks in rough country near Cogar, Caddo County; nest held one egg and one chick, July 22, two chicks, July 24 (R. R. Graber, Jean W. Graber)" (Sutton, 1967, Oklahoma birds, Univ. Oklahoma Press, Norman, p. 272). John S. Weske discovered another poorwill nest on a mesa slope near Kenton in Cimarron County, far western Oklahoma, on 21 May 1972 that contained two chicks (Weske, 1973, Bull. Oklahoma Ornithol. Soc. 6:22). — Louis E. McGee, 1703 NW 43rd St., Lawton, Oklahoma 73505, 15 November 1989.

Early nesting of Eastern Meadowlark in Oklahoma County, Oklahoma. — In north Oklahoma City, on the early date of 11 April 1986, I found the nest of an Eastern Meadowlark (*Sturnella magna*). The location was about ½ mile north-northeast of the intersection of U.S. Highway 77 (Broadway Extension) and Wilshire Boulevard.

Shortly after noon on that date, as I stopped for a moment in an open pasture, a meadowlark fluttered off a nest six feet away. Presumably this was the female, for Bent (1958, Life histories of North American blackbirds, orioles, tanagers, and allies, U.S. Natl. Mus. Bull. 211, p. 63) reported that it is probable that only the female incubates. The nest held four spotted eggs.

Located on the north bank of a ravine which ran southwest to northeast, the nest was about 8–10 feet from the top. The ravine sloped downward approximately 30 feet at an angle of perhaps 25 percent. The opening of the nest faced southeastward toward the bottom of the ravine and was domed over with strands of grass. Weather that day was cloudy and cool (ca. 65°F). Although I heard only Eastern Meadowlarks singing in the area that day, I was unable to positively identify the incubating bird as it left the nest.

The following day, 12 April, and on 15 April, I revisited the nest, which still contained four eggs. On the 15th the (presumed) female fluttered from the nest, but I was once again unsuccessful at identifying her to species, although a male Eastern Meadowlark singing nearby showed concern at my presence. On 18 April the nest held four young, their eyes closed, but with tufts of down present. At 1700 no adult was at the nest, but about 40–50 feet from it, at 1830, I saw a female Eastern Meadowlark with food in her bill through a 15X spotting scope. She showed no yellow in the malar region (as does the Western Meadowlark, *S. neglecta*), and gave the typical "spriggity" call of the eastern species. Because she was close to the nest and accompanied by a male which gave the typical four-note call of the Eastern Meadowlark, there could be little doubt that she, too, was an Eastern Meadowlark and that this was *her* nest. A second male in the area was also singing the Eastern's song.

Sutton (1967, Oklahoma birds, Univ. Oklahoma Press, Norman, pp. 537–539) stated that the Eastern species is found in "eastern and central Oklahoma . . . [and] Breeds westward in low-lying areas bordering rivers to Beaver, Ellis, Greer, and Harmon counties." The Western Meadowlark is "Found all

year in western and central Oklahoma” and “Has been heard singing . . . eastward . . . in summer to Payne, Oklahoma, Cleveland, and Marshall counties.” One of these nestings was a mixed pair of *S. magna* and *S. neglecta* in Cleveland County, the only known instance of interbreeding in Oklahoma (Sutton, G. M., and G. W. Dickson, 1965, *Southwest. Nat.* 10:307–310).

The earliest known nesting for the Eastern Meadowlark in the state heretofore was on 25 April 1965, when a nest with five eggs was discovered in Cleveland County by John S. Weske (Sutton 1967). Thus, the Eastern Meadowlark nest I found in Oklahoma City on 11 April 1986 was at least two weeks earlier. — John S. Shackford, 6008-A Northwest Expressway, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73132, 13 March 1990.

Second record of Northern Cardinal in Cimarron County, Oklahoma. — On 13 May 1989, Florence Wass of Stillwater, Oklahoma, a few members of the New Mexico Ornithological Society and I observed a Northern Cardinal (*Cardinalis cardinalis*) in the yard of the Laurance Regnier ranch house situated on Texakeet Creek about 4 miles south of Kenton, in Cimarron County, Oklahoma. We were attending a joint meeting of the Oklahoma and New Mexico Ornithological societies at nearby Black Mesa State Park.

We were waiting for various birds to come to a backyard feeder and, among others, I could hear a number of American Goldfinches (*Carduelis tristis*) singing from surrounding trees. The New Mexico group was anxious to get good looks at the goldfinches because this species is uncommon in their state. A few of these black and yellow birds dropped down to the feeder where they were quite easily observed. As we continued to watch them, a male cardinal flew into the yard and perched on a water well pump. A few seconds later, it came to the feeder for sunflower seeds, providing us excellent views at very close range. This bird's solid red plumage and black facial patch clearly distinguished it from the closely related Pyrrhuloxia (*C. sinuatus*) which has been reported once in Oklahoma, and from this very locale (see Patti, S. T., 1976, *Bull. Oklahoma Ornithol. Soc.* 9:28–30). The New Mexicans were delighted; within moments, most had added two new birds to their life lists.

The only other published record for Cimarron County is that of a female (CUMZ 4543) collected by Lewis W. Oring on 27 November 1960 along the Cimarron River 13 miles north of Boise City (Sutton, 1967, *Oklahoma birds*, Univ. Oklahoma Press, Norman, p. 572); Sutton stated that the cardinal “appears to be making way westward across Panhandle following Beaver and Cimarron rivers, being fairly well established locally in Beaver and Texas counties.” This species is known to have bred as far west as Guymon in Texas County (Sutton, 1974, *A check-list of Oklahoma birds*, *Contrib. Stovall Mus. Sci. & Hist.* No. 1, Univ. Oklahoma Press, Norman, p. 41).

Farther west in New Mexico, J. Stokley Ligon wrote that cardinals are “very rare in the eastern part of the state” (1961, *New Mexico birds and where to find them*, Univ. New Mexico Press, Albuquerque, p. 269). South of the Oklahoma Panhandle, Oberholser's map of Texas shows no record of the cardinal

for any of the four northernmost Panhandle counties (1974, *The bird life of Texas*, Univ. Texas Press, Austin, p. 853).—Dorothy B. Newell, 8304 Lakeaire Dr., Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73132, 15 February 1990.

Impaled Grasshopper Sparrow in Jefferson County, Oklahoma. — On 2 July 1987, as I was driving a few miles east of Temple, Cotton County, Oklahoma, a sparrow-sized bird suddenly darted in front of my pickup from roadside sunflowers (*Helianthus* sp.) and Johnson grass (*Sorghum halapense*). Unfortunately, the bird bounced off the passenger side of my windshield and over the cab. Immediately, I looked into the rearview mirror and saw the bird flopping around in the road. Due to oncoming traffic, I was forced to drive another quarter mile before turning around. When I finally got back to the spot where I had last seen the wounded bird, I did not find it. However, a Loggerhead Shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus*) was perched on the top strand of a nearby barbed-wire fence, pecking at a small bird it had impaled there. I pulled off the roadway and walked over to the skewered bird. To my amazement, it was a recently-killed fledgling sparrow, undoubtedly the same bird I had hit moments before. So fresh was this kill that blood was still dripping from the barbed-wire. The little bird had been impaled through the neck, from nape to throat, and hung facing the road. I returned to the truck, which was parked approximately four m from the fence, and watched the carcass. The shrike soon returned and began to peck savagely at the sparrow's neck. I watched this activity for 30 or 40 seconds, then walked back over to the fence and removed the little sparrow under the watchful gaze of the shrike, which was perched about 13 m away.

I froze the sparrow, and later had it identified by Dr. Jack D. Tyler of Cameron University. It was an immature Grasshopper Sparrow (*Ammodramus saviannarum*), a fairly common resident of Oklahoma's grasslands in summer.

Bent (1950, *Life histories of North American birds*, U.S. Natl. Mus. Bull. 197, p. 136) states that for the Loggerhead: "Sparrows and warblers appear to make up the bulk of small-bird prey" but does not mention an instance of predation on the Grasshopper Sparrow. Leppla and Gordon (1978, *Bull. Oklahoma Ornithol. Soc.* 11:33) however, found a Grasshopper Sparrow impaled through the forehead on a barbed-wire fence in Noble County, Oklahoma, on 29 April 1978. — M. Earl Stewart, HC63, Box 5080, Hodgen, Oklahoma 74939, 15 August 1987.

FROM THE EDITOR. — Special thanks are extended to John G. Newell, who paid for the color photos of the Royal Tern that appeared in the December 1989 Bulletin.—Jack D. Tyler.

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