After Shackford had begun "squeaking" to attract birds, we suddenly heard an abrupt series of four or five loud, descending "grunts" from the marsh. When we investigated the source, we caught several glimpses of a dark bird about the size of a Northern Bobwhite (*Colinus virginianus*) as it darted in and out of the rank cattail growth. When we finally saw it well, we noted its reddish-brown upperparts, grayish venter, and vertical white bars on the black flanks. The stubby tail was held upright. The bill was about two inches long and showed much orange, especially on the lower mandible. Once in a while, a second Virginia Rail, which we managed to observe several times, sounded off from farther out in the marsh. We presumed it to be the male.

Tyler waded out into the cattails. His close approach to the nearest bird (presumed female) evoked fanned, lowered wings and "bark-like" scoldings. "Squeaking" also triggered this display, which we instigated several times. Unlike the usually shy behavior of rails, these birds sometimes stood totally exposed only a few feet away. We therefore strongly suspected that the pair's eggs or young were close by. Tyler thoroughly searched the area most closely guarded by the first bird, but failed to find the nest. We left the area at 1330.

We returned to this location at 0930 on 29 May but failed to hear or see either rail. However, that evening at 2210 and 2225, we heard a Virginia Rail give a series of "grunts" from a marshy spot about 200 feet to the east. This bird was responding to the taped call of a Sora (*Porzana carolina*), after refusing to respond to that of its own species. We had no way of knowing for certain whether or not this latest rail was one of the original pair. Other listeners present that evening were James L. Norman, Jeri A. McMahon, John Sterling and Melissa M. Nagel.

6008-A N.W. EXPRESSWAY, OKLAHOMA CITY, OKLAHOMA 73132, AND DEPARTMENT OF BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES, CAMERON UNIVERSITY, LAWTON, OKLAHOMA 73505, 30 JUNE 1993.

GENERAL NOTES

Importance of playa lakes in the Oklahoma Panhandle to migratory water birds. — Temporary playa lakes form in the high plains after periods of heavy rainfall. These catch-basins are important feeding and resting stopover sites for migrating water birds. However, some current agricultural practices tend to eliminate their availability. A prior note (W.M. Davis, *Bull. Oklahoma Ornithol. Soc.* 22:27, 1989) described an extraordinary aggregation of migrating White-faced Ibises (*Plegadis chihi*) at a playa in Texas County, Oklahoma, on 16 August 1988. Additional species seen there concurrently are also of interest. The playa is located 6.4 km (4 mi) east of Hardesty and is bisected by State Highway 3. A description of its extent and conditions on that day is found in the above-cited report.

Remarkable besides the ibises was the presence of 15 species of plovers and sandpipers. The most noteworthy of these were four Piping Plovers (*Charadrius melodius*), which were identified at 20 m distance. There is little doubt that they were of the Northern Great Plains population, which is classified as "threatened." The species is rarely reported from northwestern Oklahoma (J.A. Grzybowski, *et al.* Date guide to the occurrences of birds in Oklahoma, 2nd. Ed., Oklahoma

Ornithol. Soc.,-1992). It was unreported from any Panhandle county before being found in Texas County in June 1986 at nearby Optima Lake, where it nested in 1987 and 1988 (R.L. Boyd, *Wilson Bull.* 103:305-308, 1991).

Also rarely reported from the Panhandle is the Pectoral Sandpiper (*Caladris melanotos*), of which five were seen at 10 m or less. Notable for unusual abundance were an estimated 1100 Wilson's Phalaropes (*Steganopus tricolor*) and about 1000 Lesser Yellowlegs (*Tringa flavipes*). Other shorebird species and numbers were: Semipalmated Plover (*Charadrius semipalmatus*), 1; Killdeer (*C. vociferus*), 50; American Avocet (*Recurvirostra americana*), 13; Greater Yellowlegs (*Tringa melanoleuca*), 50; Solitary Sandpiper (*T. solitaria*), 2; Spotted Sandpiper (*Actitis macularia*), 1; Western Sandpiper (*Calidris mauri*), 1; Least Sandpiper (*C. minutilla*), 2; Baird's Sandpiper (*C. bairdi*), 3; Stilt Sandpiper (*C. himantopus*), 4; and Long-billed Dowitcher (*Limnodromus scolopaceus*), 60.

During my 140-min observation period, an immature Yellow-crowned Night-Heron (*Nycticorax violaceus*) — another species seldom reported in the Panhandle counties, and not from Texas County until 1980 (G.W. Sallee, *Bull. Oklahoma Ornithol. Soc.* 21:29, 1988 — emerged from roadside vegetation into view. Earlier the same day I had seen two immatures at a more permanent lake on the south side of State Highway 3 about 2.5 km (1.5 mi) east of Hardesty. These sightings suggest an exceptional westward movement of this species in 1988, which is further supported by my finding one adult on 10 August near the dam of John Martin Reservoir in southeastern Colorado, where the species is even more exceptional.

Feeding over the playa were 25 Black Terns (*Chlidonias niger*) and on the water were over 200 ducks: 50 Mallards (*Anas platyrhynchos*), 25 Green-winged Teal (*A. crecca*), 2 Northern Pintails (*A. acuta*), 7 Northern Shovellers (*A. clypeata*) and 125 Blue-winged Teal (*A. discors*). The terns were in various stages of post-nuptial molt and most of the ducks were in eclipse plumage.

During my visit, the recently-collected rainwater was being pumped from the northeast quadrant of the playa, which included an excavated area that apparently served to collect more usable rainwater. In addition to food and rest stops, playa lakes fulfill a vital need for drinking water and perhaps also for cooling, which may be a critical physiological factor for birds migrating during a season when temperatures on the plains frequently reach 35-40°C (95-104°F). — W. Marvin Davis. *308 Lewis Lane, Oxford, Mississippi 38655, 29 January 1993.*

White Ibis in Johnston and Bryan counties, Oklahoma.—On 15 August 1991, while watching a flock of about 50 Wood Storks (*Mycteria americana*) at a place known as Big Bottom near Lake Texoma in Johnston County, Oklahoma, I noticed two immature White Ibises (*Eudócimus albus*) standing with them. Their reddish legs and bills were very distinctive. Both had brown upperparts, white bellies and heads, and necks that were brown mottled with white. In flight, their light underwings and white rumps could be seen well.

Many observers came to see these rare birds on 17 August, among them Vera Jennings, James L. and Marion Norman, Jeri McMahon, Kim Poitevent, and Mitchell Oliphant and his mother, Mary. Several observers watched at least one White Ibis flying over Big Bottom that day.

About 15 miles to the southeast, but still on the lake, I discovered an immature

White Ibis on 5 September, possibly a third bird. The habitat here was a backwater of the lake in Bryan County called Platter Flats.

The following year, on 6 August 1992, I spotted still another immature White Ibis flying over Platter Flats. On 14 August, I found what may have been a different immature bird on the Tishomingo National Wildlife Refuge at the East Flat. This is about a half-mile east of refuge headquarters, in Johnston County. The ibises were not reported after this date.—Jeffrey D. Webster, *3301 N. First St., Apt. 2-H, Durant, Oklahoma 74701, 3 February 1992.*

Common Poorwills nesting in Osage County, Oklahoma.—During a routine nest check of our study plots at The Nature Conservancy's Tallgrass Prairie Preserve about 25 km north of Pawhuska, in Osage County, northeast Oklahoma, we flushed a small caprimulgid from the ground at 0837 CST on 9 July 1993. At the edge of a low bluff surrounded by tallgrass prairie lay two unmarked eggs, glossy white with pinkish tints, on a level sandstone slab. They were protected from direct sunlight by the tall grasses nearby. Grasses dominating the immediate vicinity were switchgrass *(Panicum virgatum)*, big bluestem *(Andropogon gerardii)* and rough dropseed *(Sporobolus asper)*.

We believed that the startled bird was not a Common Nighthawk *(Chordeiles minor)*, a species which nested regularly on our study plots, for we saw no white spots in the outer wings. The unmarked eggs supported this conclusion. The possibility that the moot bird was a Whip-poor-will *(Caprimulgus vociferus)* was discounted because of that species' larger size, lack of gray, and greater amount of white in the outer corners of the tail. We concluded that the bird we saw was a Common Poorwill *(Phalaenoptilus nuttallii)*. Hendricks visited the nest at 1530 that same day and measured the eggs (27.0 x 19.3 and 26.1 x 18.7 mm), confirming that they were indeed poorwill eggs (Csada and Brigham 1992). Hendricks returned to the nest at 1115 on 11 July and was able to study the incubating bird from six meters with binoculars, noting that it was grayish overall and that there was no black on the throat. When flushed, the bird showed rufous primaries and white at the tips of the outer three rectrices. On subsequent visits (0704 on 13 July, 1700 on 15 July, 0748 on 16 July), an adult flushed from the two eggs. When last checked on 20 July, the nest was empty. Photographs of the eggs and nest site have been placed in the Prairie Birds Nest Records File at the Sutton Avian Research Center and with the Oklahoma Bird Records Committee.

The fate of this nest is uncertain. It was probably depredated. An active badger *(Taxidea taxus)* burrow was located nearby and snakes were not uncommon on the study plots. However, it is also possible that the eggs hatched and that the chicks wandered to some site nearby (see Swenson and Hendricks 1983). The incubation period for Common Poorwills is about three weeks (Csada and Brigham 1992). Therefore, the first egg in the nest we found must have been laid no earlier than about 26 June.

In Oklahoma, Common Poorwills are uncommon summer residents in appropriate habitat in western regions (Baumgartner and Baumgartner 1992), but Sutton (1986) foresaw the possibility of nesting in northeastern Oklahoma. The species breeds regularly among rocky outcrops in the Flint Hills in northeastern Kansas on the Konza Prairie Research Natural Area near the eastern limits of its range (Zim-

merman 1993 and pers. comm.), and a poorwill nest was found in 1975 on a rocky plateau near Arkansas City, in Cowley County, southcentral Kansas (Seibel 1975). This is about 45 km northwest of our site. Both Osage County, Oklahoma, and the Arkansas City area encompass the southern terminus of the Flint Hills.

There are few breeding records of poorwills for Oklahoma, despite their regular summer occurrence. These were summarized by McGee (1990): nests are known for Cimarron, Caddo, and Comanche counties. Two unpublishedComanche County records should be mentioned. The second nest known for the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge was discovered by Mike Stake about 26 May 1992. It contained two eggs when photographed on 2 June (J.A. Grzybowski 1992, pers. comm.; J.D. Tyler pers. comm.). Still a third probable nest was found on the Wichita Refuge during June 1991 when Jeffrey Parrish flushed an unidentified bird from two white eggs resting on a bare rock (J.A. Grzybowski, pers. comm.). The poorwill nest in Osage County represents the sixth and easternmost record for Oklahoma.

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——Claudia R. Glass, Paul Hendricks, Michael J. Phillips and Terri L. Waltman, *George M. Sutton Avian Research Center, P.O. Box 2007, Bartlesville, Oklahoma 74005, 15 November, 1993*

New late record for Common Poorwill in Oklahoma. — At 0956 on 9 November 1993, as I was driving near the western edge of Lawton in Comanche County, southwestern Oklahoma, I discovered a dead Common Poorwill *(Phalaenoptilus nuttallii)*. I thought it strange that an insectivorous bird would still be present so late in the year. Skies were cloudy, it was about 52°F, and there was a slight easterly breeze. When I examined the poorwill, its limp body was odorless and the eyes were only slightly glazed, indicating death not long before. The tail was missing. I took the bird to the Cameron University Museum of Zoology, where it was prepared as a study specimen (CUMZ 1082). The male specimen weighed 34 g and measured: body-108; wing-145; tarsus-22; and culmen-12 mm. The skull was not

completely ossified.

Tyler (1979, Birds of southwestern Oklahoma, Stovall Mus. Sci. & Hist. Contrib. No. 2, Univ. Oklahoma, Norman, p. 29) recorded the latest sighting of this species as 10 October 1976, when he and two students heard one or two birds calling along the Red River south of Olustee in Jackson County, but W.S. Bartush struck a poorwill with his car in the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge on 11 October 1976 (J.D. Tyler field notes). Baumgartner (1992, Oklahoma bird life, Univ. Oklahoma Press, Norman, p. 202) listed the latest statewide date as 27 October, when in 1985 John G. Newell spotted a poorwill at Lake Hefner in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma County (*Am. Birds*, 40:136, 1986). My discovery postdates the latest southwestern Oklahoma record by nearly four weeks and the statewide date by almost two weeks. — Michael D. Brown, *7109 S.W. Cherokee Ave., Lawton, OK 73505, 15 January 1994.*

First documented record of Western Wood-Pewee for Oklahoma east of the 100th meridian. — On the morning of 8 May 1992, I encountered a Western Wood-Pewee (*Contopus sordidulus*) at the western end of the Sunset Picnic Area on the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge, Comanche County, Oklahoma. The bird was first detected from its call, a diagnostic nasal "prrrrrt, pee-ee." I briefly glimpsed the flycatcher which soon disappeared, but called again a short distance away.

After a period of about 10 minutes, the bird came into view and perched about three meters above a small stream. It soon moved to an exposed perch among some dead limbs almost overhead at a distance of less than 10 meters. I studied its plumage carefully through Zeiss 10x40 binoculars, noting the dull but uniformly colored gray-green head, back and tail, and dull yellow-gray wingbars. No trace of an eye ring was evident, even at this close range. Both its upper and lower mandibles were blackish except for a yellowing evident at the very base of the lower when viewed from below. When the pewee turned on the perch with its chest toward me, I could see that the breast, belly and undertail coverts were washed with a uniform gray-green, and that the throat was slightly paler.

The pewee then returned to the exposed perch in a dead tree embedded in the forest edge where it had been first detected. From there it called occasionally and hawked for insects. I audio-taped the bird with a Sony TCM 5000 recorder and 80ME Sennheiser microphone. From these taped calls, the bird can be readily identified. After the pewee moved off upstream through the tall oak woods, it could still be heard occasionally for an additional five minutes.

The documentation for this observation was accepted by the Oklahoma Bird Records Committee and a copy of the tape deposited in their files. This appears to be the first acceptable record of the Western Wood-Pewee for Oklahoma outside Cimarron County in the Oklahoma Panhandle. Reports for 19 and 21 October 1953, and 4 and 18 September 1955 from Texas County (Baumgartner F.M., and A.M. Baumgartner, 1992, Oklahoma bird life, Univ. Oklahoma Press, Norman, p. 227) are undocumented. Silent pewees observed in Texas County 11 and 16 September 1959 by G.M. Sutton and J.D. Ligon may have been *C. sordidulus* (Sutton, G.M., 1967, Oklahoma birds, Univ. Oklahoma Press, Norman, p. 348). A silent, but dark-billed and well-vested pewee I noted 26 September 1987 in the Wichita Mountains may also have been a Western.

Two specimens of the Western Wood-Pewee exist for north-central Texas, one

taken 7 August 1954 in Tarrant County, and a second on 28 August 1956 in Young County (Pulich, W.M., 1988, The birds of north central Texas, Texas A&M Univ. Press, College Station, p. 207). Both were detected by Pulich when examining a tray of Eastern Wood-Pewees (*Contopus virens*) at the Dallas Museum of Natural History, and identified as *C. sordidulus veliei*. H.C. Oberholser (1974, Birds of Texas, [E. Kincaid, Ed.], Univ. Texas Press, Austin, pp. 562–563) lists a breeding record for Bosque County, Texas (southwest of Fort Worth), during 1967, but Pulich (*loc. cit.*) found no details to support this record.

M.C. Thompson and C. Ely (1992, Birds in Kansas, Vol. 2, Univ. Kansas Mus. Nat. Hist., Lawrence, pp. 7–8) indicated that the species most likely breeds along the Republican River in extreme northwestern Kansas and the Cimarron River of southwestern Kansas. Other records during migration are primarily from southwestern Kansas, mostly of non-singing individuals, and thus are suspect (see Kaufman, K., 1990, A field guide to advanced birding, Houghton Mifflin, Boston, pp. 180–183). Only two specimens have been collected in Kansas, both during migratory periods. One noted in Hitchcock County, southwestern Nebraska, by Richard and Dorothy Rosche was considered exceptional (*Am. Birds* 44:1153). All documented records in Kansas and Nebraska are still west of the 100th meridian.

Western Wood-Pewees appear to migrate regularly through Cimarron County, Oklahoma (Sutton, *loc. cit.*), and western portions of the Texas Panhandle (Oberholser, *loc. cit.*). In spring and fall, migrates have been observed in south Texas (rarely), and are occasionally seen along the coastal bend (Oberholser *loc. cit.*) all the way to southwestern Louisiana in fall (Lowery, G.H., Jr, 1974, Louisiana birds (3rd ed.), Louisiana State Univ. Press., Baton Rouge, p. 436). Given these fall migration records, *C. sordidulus* may be of more regular occurrence there and through the main body of Oklahoma than reports indicate. The ability to identify silent pewees, however, will continue to hamper a clear determination of this species' status, particularly in the fall.—Joseph A. Grzybowski, *715 Elmwood Dr., Norman, Oklahoma 73072, 24 March 1993.*

Underwater foraging by a Winter Wren. — On 21 December 1993 at approximately 1030 (skies clear, temperature about 55°F), while slowly driving through the Little River National Wildlife Refuge near Broken Bow, far southeastern Oklahoma, a Winter Wren (*Troglodytes troglodytes*) flew low across the road in front of my vehicle. The moist bottomland hardwood forest here was dominated by willow oaks (*Quercus phellos*) and water oaks (*Q. nigra*). Fallen limbs and tree trunks in various stages of decomposition were generously interspersed.

I stopped and waited until the wren had moved out of hiding and, apparently out of curiosity, it came near my vehicle. As I watched through a 10x28 binocular, the little bird, perched approximately 10 m away, burst forth with a lengthy, complex song. After scolding me, the bird dropped to the shallow roadside ditch and perched on a limb about two cm above the water. It leaned forward, peered intently into the clear water, then suddenly stabbed downward, immersing the upper half of its body. When it resurfaced, there was a slim white object approximately three cm long in its bill that appeared to be an insect larva. The wren beat its prey back and forth on the limb repeatedly before swallowing it. I saw it repeat this behavior twice more as I watched before it foraged out of sight into thick brush.

Each time, the wren was successful in capturing a "larva" within 5 seconds after staring into the water.

This species was observed procuring underwater food by E.H. Forbush (1929, Birds of Massachusetts and other New England States,Vol. 3, Massachusetts Dept. Agric. Boston, p. 348) who wrote: "The winter wren feeds along the banks of streams, frequently pecking at something in the water, and sometimes in its eagerness to secure its prey, it immerses the whole head. It may thus secure water insects." In New York, Peter Martin watched a Winter Wren capture three small fish, apparently trout fingerlings, as follows: "The bird suddenly dashed through several feet of ½ inch deep water, grabbed a small fish and rushed back to the bank. It then beat the fish against the ground several times and swallowed it head first" (P. Martin, 1991, Fishing by a Winter Wren, *Kingbird* 41(2):93). — Berlin A. Heck, *P.O. Box 340, Broken Bow, Oklahoma 74728, 22 February 1994.*

A third Oklahoma Brown Thrasher nest on the ground. — Tyler (1994, *Bull. Oklahoma Ornithol. Soc.* 27:4–6) found a pair of Brown Thrashers (*Toxostoma rufum*) at their ground nest on the Cimarron River floodplain 8 miles east of Kenton in Cimarron County, Oklahoma, on 29 May 1993. The thrashers were visibly agitated: a western coachwhip (*Masticophis flagellum*) had just consumed their two eggs. Tyler proposed that such predation by ground snakes probably precluded most ground nestings. At the time, this was thought to be only the second known thrasher nest built on the ground in Oklahoma. The first was reported by M.M. Nice (1931, The birds of Oklahoma, Rev. ed., *Publ. Univ. Oklahoma Biol. Survey*, Vol. 3, No. 1) among 86 other nests in Cleveland County.

Unbeknownst to Tyler, three days earlier, on 26 May 1993, a crew from the George M. Sutton Avian Research Center in Bartlesville, Oklahoma, had flushed another Brown Thrasher from a nest on the ground. Members of this team included Chris S. Snow, Kristine N. Arruda and David A. Zuwerink. The nest was on a small patch of bare ground in native tallgrass (maximum height: 68 cm) in a grazed pasture about 5 miles southeast of Bartlesville in Washington County. Near it stood seven black locust (*Robinia pseudo-acacia*) saplings from about four to twelve feet tall. The nest measured 18 cm in diameter and held four eggs. All hatched about 4–5 June and apparently fledged around 14–15 June. Egg sizes (25.1–26.6 mm x 18.3–18.9 mm) were typical for the species. Of interest is the fact that Sutton Center personnel monitored 139 Brown Thrasher nests during the 1992 and 1993 breeding seasons, but only this one had been built on the ground. — Chris S. Snow, *George M. Sutton Avian Research Center, P.O. Box 2007, Bartlesville, Oklahoma 74005, 25 January 1994.*

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