was not summering in the mountains of western North America is not known.

On 25 May 1992, I mist-netted an adult male Gray-headed Junco on the Fort Gibson State Waterfowl Refuge near Wagoner, in Wagoner County, Oklahoma, some 23 miles southeast of Catoosa. It was banded (No. 1760-83097) and photographed. Diagnostic characters included the black eye, dark gray head, upperparts and breast, white belly and outer tail feathers and, most importantly, a rusty triangular patch of feathers on the back (see Fig. 1). It weighed 21 g and the wing chord measured 77 mm. Before its capture at 0740, this bird appeared sporadically as early as 0630 that day and was apparently in good health. The surrounding habitat consisted of a recently burned and sparsely vegetated area of low brush near a small woodland within 50 yards of Fort Gibson reservoir. Others who observed the junco were Joyce Varner, David Gill, Jim Harmon, Jackie English and Charlotte Jernigan.

ROUTE 1, BOX 1, WELLING, OKLAHOMA 74471, 26 AUGUST 1992.

Mississippi Kite attacks Chimney Swift.—As I prepared to leave my home in west Lawton, Comanche County, Oklahoma, at 0845 on 16 July 1990, I noticed two large birds swooping towards the ground, one trailing the other. Then I heard a faint "thud." Before I could investigate, a cat ran by me in the direction of the impact. The two birds began swooping at the cat, which quickly retreated. I walked toward the spot I had heard the "thud" and found a Chimney Swift (*Chaetura pelagica*) lying still, breathing rapidly and shaking. The larger gray bird that had been in pursuit of it was a Mississippi Kite (*Ictinia mississippiensis*), but I could not identify the other. Possibly both were kites, but they flew away upon my arrival.

I gently picked up the swift, which had its eyes open but its feet drawn up and clenched. Finally, I managed to get it to cling to my finger, one foot at a time, in a crouched position. The swift appeared to be in shock and did not attempt to fly. I placed it on a log in my backyard woodpile and it remained in whatever position I placed it. When I returned in the late afternoon, the little bird had disappeared.—Howard R. Hopkins *304 Parkwood Lane, Lawton, Oklahoma 73505, 16 July 1990.*

Regular appearance of a hunting *Accipiter*.—Beginning on 12 December 1993, I monitored the bird populations that came to roost on the grounds of the Oklahoma Museum of Art in Nichols Hills, a suburban town about 5 miles north of downtown Oklahoma City, Oklahoma County, Oklahoma. In addition to the hundreds of European Starlings (*Sturnus vulgaris*) and American Robins (*Turdus migratorius*) roosting on the ten-acre grounds of this facility, a flock of approximately 50 House Finches (*Carpodacus mexicanus*) came to a grove of eastern red cedar trees (*Juniperus virginiana*) near the museum building.

Every evening for three evenings, while these finches were gathering from surrounding areas and aggregating in bare trees near the cedars, a curious incident occurred. At precisely five o'clock (1700 hrs), a dark, fast-moving form streaked across the sky from southwest to northeast, causing a spontaneous, explosive exodus of roosting birds. I assumed that the interloper was either a small *Accipiter* or falcon, judging from its size, speed, and flight pattern. Because of poor light and the bird's rapid flight, I was unable to identify it with certainty.

This incident recurred on 18 December 1993, the day of the Oklahoma City Audubon Society's annual Christmas Bird Count, but the hawk's flight direction was different, this time from southeast to northwest. Right on time, it careened by me, barely five feet above ground and about ten feet to my left, and quickly disappeared into some cedar trees not more than 50 yards away. For about 15 minutes the large aggregation of finches remained aloft, flying in broad sweeping circles, alternately breaking off into smaller groups or coalescing into larger ones, all the while dipping and circling above the roost. Frequently, some of them attempted to regain their roosting sites, only to abort at the last moment and rejoin the wheeling mass.

The finches eventually landed in the bare trees and cedars, only to erupt again as the raptor suddenly emerged from the dense cedar trees behind me, dashing headlong towards the roost not 50 yards away. Its efforts notwithstanding, the hawk missed its intended prey and settled on an open branch in full view, perhaps to watch for some unwary victim. It was then that I saw its red eye and the reddish bars upon its breast, thus confirming this to be either an adult Cooper's (*Accipiter cooperii*) or Sharp-shinned Hawk (*A. striatus*). Separating a male Cooper's from a female Sharp-shinned Hawk is a widely-recognized conundrum among ornithologists, and with this bird I could, with certainty, do no better. Nonetheless, I had witnessed interesting hunting behavior of the small *Accipiter* as it tried to outwit avian prey. Of particular interest was its precise arrival at 1700, just as dusk was settling and the flocks of birds were coming to roost in the cedars. — Samuel T. Moore, *7305 Nichols Road, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73120, 19 December 1993.*

Peregrine Falcon on cultivated field in Texas County.—At 2030 on 22 April 1994, I saw a Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*) in a large, recently-cultivated field in Texas County in the Oklahoma Panhandle, 4.5 miles south of Elkhart, Kansas. That afternoon I had been surveying fields in northwestern Texas County for Mountain Plovers (*Charadrius montanus*) as part of a continuing research project. Although I had found the plovers several miles north of Elkhart in Morton County, Kansas, I was yet to find them in Texas County, Oklahoma.

I was carefully scanning extensive plowed fields with a 15X telescope in late afternoon. Suddenly, I found myself staring directly at the falcon as it stood quietly facing me about 350 yards away. I clearly saw its jet black, crisply defined "helmet." Upon closer observation, I could see its strongly hooked beak, white upper breast and dark horizontal barring on the white belly. I assumed the falcon was an adult. During the next 20 minutes, I eased my car toward the bird, stopping often to check it with my telescope or binocular. From its small size, I suspected that this bird was a male, but I was unable to confirm this, as I could not see its back. Horned Larks (*Eremophila alpestris*) and Western Meadowlarks (*Sturnella neglecta*) were common in the fields. To my surprise, a few Horned Larks flew quite close to the falcon without eliciting a noticeable response. I believe this raptor had already selected the field as a roosting site for the night. When I was about 80 m away, the bird flew off into the twilight.

At about 0800 on 3 May 1992, I saw another Peregrine, this one an adult male with blue-gray back in Hamilton County, Kansas, about 13 miles north and 4 miles east of Coolidge. This falcon was also standing in a large cultivated field. At this

site I did find Mountain Plovers. In these large, very open expanses of plowed ground, the falcon probably has a decided edge when pursuing slower prey, since there is no cover available. Because Mountain Plovers are relatively swift flyers, they may be more difficult for the falcon to capture than Horned Larks and meadowlarks.—John S. Shackford, *Oklahoma Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit, Department of Zoology, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma 74078, 3 May 1994.*

Melanistic Mountain Plover in Cimarron County, Oklahoma. — On 29 July 1992, in eastern Cimarron County, Oklahoma, at the far western end of the Panhandle, I observed a Mountain Plover (*Charadrius montanus*) which I am confident was melanistic. During the previous months, I had spent many days searching for Mountain Plovers in cultivated fields, and was surprised when I discovered a dark plover among at least 135 in a loose flock. They were feeding throughout the northwest quarter of a plowed field that covered a square mile. Fortunately, the odd plover flew in my direction and landed only about 40 yards away, where I studied it for three or four minutes through a 15X scope and a 10X binocular. As it faced me, I thought at first it resembled a European Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*), in size and breast color. However, as I focused on the bird it was obviously not a starling, but a plover. The breast was coal black, but its entire dorsum was an even gray with just a hint of brown. Thus the dorsum, though noticeable lighter than the black breast, was considerably darker and sootier than the normal sandy brown color. When it flew, I could see a faintly visible wing stripe which was somewhat lighter than the rest of the dorsum, but certainly not a clear white. The normally white tone above the eye was also dark gray.

As I continued watching the bird I became certain that it was a Mountain Plover for it exhibited many characteristics of that species, including its "run-run-run-stop" gait (about six steps before a pause); the dusky white wing stripe; the bird's overall size and contours; the specific shape of its head, eye and bill; and its close association with other Mountain Plovers. Once, as it flew over with another plover, I heard a low typical plover "chatter," which I believed was emanating from both birds. The only other black-breasted plovers known for Oklahoma are the Black-bellied Plover (*Pluvialis squatarola*) and the Lesser Golden-Plover (*P. dominica*) in spring plumage, but I was familiar with them and it was obviously neither.

After identifying the bird, I wondered whether or not it was truly melanistic, or had been oiled or otherwise discolored. For several reasons, I concluded that it was probably a melanistic individual. For one thing, the normally white breast and belly were evenly coal black, and I doubted that a lightly oiled bird would have shown such a remarkably black belly. An oiled Spotted Sandpiper (*Actitis macularia*) I once collected in Cimarron County was reddish-brown on the upper breast, a result of reddish-brown soil which had adhered to the oily surface. Few, if any, soils are coal black. Moreover, an oiled bird might show limited areas of white on the breast or above the eye, or on one side of the body or the other, but this bird was a uniform black below and a uniform gray above, except for its slightly lighter wing stripes, and was colored symmetrically on both sides of its body. Furthermore, the line of demarcation between the black belly and the gray dorsum was crisp, a fact that would probably not have been true had the bird been oiled. In

addition, a heavily oiled individual probably would show signs of matting of feathers into clumps and/or labored flight. The individual in question flew easily and buoyantly, and its feathers appeared unmatted.

At the time I saw the dark plover, I was counting the birds in its flock, the largest I had seen all season. When the dark bird approached me closely, I did not have my cumbersome camera and telephoto lens ready, and therefore did not try to photograph it, although I was very tempted to abandon my count and try.

Sage (1962, Albinism and melanism in birds, *Brit. Birds* 55 (6): 201-222) reported that melanism is "much less frequent than albinism, even considering that it is more often overlooked." Gross (1965, Melanism in North American birds, *Bird-Banding* 36:240-242) reported only 29 species of North American birds that have exhibited melanism, but the same author reported 304 species known to show albinism (The incidence of albinism in North American birds, *Bird-Banding* 36:67-71). In some species, such as the Ferruginous Hawk (*Buteo regalis*), melanism is fairly common, but in shorebirds it appears to be decidedly rare. Compared to albinism, melanism is easier both to overlook and to confuse with adventitious discoloration, and is therefore not reported so often. Thus, special efforts should be made to report and document melanism when it is observed or suspected. — John S. Shackford, *429 Oak Cliff Drive, Edmond, Oklahoma 73034, 10 August 1992.*

Red Phalarope in Comanche County, Oklahoma.—While studying migratory waterbirds shortly past noon on 10 September 1977 at the Public Service Company Lake 7 miles southeast of Lawton, Comanche County, southwestern Oklahoma, I noticed an unfamiliar shorebird feeding near several Lesser Yellowlegs (*Tringa flavipes*) along shore. The moot bird's back and wings were dark, its underparts light, and it was smaller than a Killdeer (*Charadrius vociferus*). It neither took flight immediately when the yellowlegs did, nor later when I flushed some Baird's Sandpipers (*Calidris bairdii*) with which it had been associating. As it fed belly-deep in the shallows, its head bobbed nervously fore-and-aft, but I did not see it "whirligig" in the water to stir up food from the bottom. The conspicuous white wing-stripes across its dark wings, its blackish eye-patch, and its unusual behavior convinced me that this was one of the three species of phalaropes, a bird in dull fall plumage. Because of its black bill, which was short for a phalarope and rather stout basally, I ruled out the familiar Wilson's Phalarope (*Phalaropus tricolor*), since that bird has a bill that is quite long and very thin for its entire length. Nor was it a Red-necked Phalarope (*Phalaropus lobatus*), whose bill, although of comparable length, is needle-like and not stout toward its base. The unfamiliar bird was a Red Phalarope (*Phalaropus fulicaria*), a rare migrant through Oklahoma in fall.

The preceding night had been the coolest yet of the fall, dropping to 63°F, but daytime temperatures on this date were warm and accompanied by light northerly winds. The phalarope probably was ushered south just ahead of this cool front.

At 1700 I returned to collect the phalarope with Louis McGee and his wife Janet and Jack Orr and his young sons Doug and Gary. The specimen was deposited in the Cameron University Museum of Zoology (CUMZ 714). Close examination revealed that the tarsi and upper surfaces of the toes were bluish-gray, but the ventral sides of the toes and their lateral lobes, as well as the base of the mandible, were dull yellowish. The bird was molting into first winter plumage. Its scapular feath-

ers and those along its upper sides were blue-gray. The darkness of its crown extended posteriorly down the middle of the nape as a narrow stripe. A black "eye patch" below the white superciliary line extended back from the eye for about half an inch. The lower chest, belly, forehead, and throat all were white. A wide collar of dusky or "dirty brown" at the base of the throat continued onto the sides of the lower nape. The white outer halves of the greater secondary wing coverts formed a conspicuous diagonal wing-stripe. When I prepared the specimen, I could not determine the bird's sex, but it had little subcutaneous fat and the skull was incompletely ossified. Its stomach was packed with the remains of several types of aquatic beetles. Measurements in mm were: total length 224, wing 128, tail 63, tarsus 24, and culmen 22.

The status of the Red Phalarope in Oklahoma was summarized by G. M. Sutton (1969, *Bull. Oklahoma Ornithol. Soc.* 2:26-28), who collected the first specimen for the state in Cimarron County at the western end of the Panhandle on 4 October 1968 (1969, *Aud. Field Notes* 23:76). It has been observed between 7 September and 1 January in Oklahoma, but never during spring. Most records are from Oklahoma County, but this species has also been recorded in Canadian, Rogers and Tulsa counties (Baumgartner and Baumgartner, 1992, *Oklahoma bird life*, Univ. Oklahoma Press, Norman, p. 411).—Jack D. Tyler, *Department of Biological Sciences, Cameron University, Lawton, Oklahoma 73505, 24 August 1978.*

Carolina Wrens fledge Brown-headed Cowbird chick.—In May and June 1993, a pair of Carolina Wrens (*Thryothorus ludovicianus*) took residence in the tangles of a hanging geranium plant on the front entryway of my home in Norman, Cleveland County, Oklahoma. My family was in the process of moving into this house. At first, my wife Eileen and I noticed one of the pair hopping out of the planter on occasion when we left through the front door.

By 22 May, when we moved into the house, the cup of the nest had been formed. On 27 May the nest contained two Carolina Wren eggs, and on 1 June, six eggs.

The nest seemed under construction for a long time before the first eggs were laid, so we avoided disturbing it as much as possible, though my family and I routinely walked past it as we entered and left the house. Occasionally, the female wren would flush.

On 23 June, after returning from an extended trip, I heard what I thought were the food-soliciting calls of a Brown-headed Cowbird (*Molothrus ater*) chick coming from this nest. Remembering the six wren eggs present earlier, and presuming that the young wrens were simply begging loudly, I dismissed this possibility. However, that afternoon the wrens were excitedly attempting to coax a recently-fledged cowbird chick across my driveway. At this point, I captured the young cowbird and then inspected the nest, which contained two wren chicks. Both were still present on 25 June, but the nest was empty on the 28th. When I examined the nest, I found two Carolina Wren eggs buried in its floor. Given the expected incubation and nestling times for cowbirds (10-13 and 10-11 days, respectively; Ehrlich, P.R., D.S. Dobkin, and D. Wheye, 1988, *The birder's handbook*, Simon & Schuster, Inc., New York, p. 616), the cowbird egg was not laid later than 3 June, after the wren clutch was complete. The two wren eggs unaccounted for may have been removed by the female cowbird, or hatched and succumbed as chicks.

Carolina Wrens are rare hosts for cowbirds. Fewer than 30 cases are known (Friedmann, H., and L.F. Kiff, 1985, The parasitic cowbirds and their hosts, *Proc. West. Found. Vert. Zool.* 2 (4):248). In northeastern Oklahoma from 1910 to 1917, A.J.B. Kirn found four of 16 wren nests parasitized by cowbirds (Nice, M.M., 1931, *Birds of Oklahoma*, Rev. ed., Publ. Univ. Oklahoma Biol. Surv. 3 (1):136). G.M. Sutton (1967, *Oklahoma birds*, Univ. Oklahoma Press, Norman, p. 411) indicated that wrens attending fledged cowbirds have "not been reported for Oklahoma." However, Smith (1981, *Bull. Oklahoma Ornithol. Soc. 14:15-16*) later wrote of this occurance in Comanche County; therefore, the foregoing represents only the second observation for the state.—Joseph A. Grzybowski, *715 Elmwood Drive, Norman, Oklahoma 73072, 5 October 1993.*

Brown-headed Cowbird parasitism of Northern Mockingbirds in Oklahoma.—Northern Mockingbirds (*Mimus polyglottos*) are rarely reported as hosts of Brown-headed Cowbirds (*Molothrus ater*) (e.g., Friedmann 1929; 1963; Friedman *et al.* 1977; Friedmann and Kiff 1985). The low percentage of parasitized nests is generally assumed to be the result of egg ejection by the host. Friedmann and Kiff (1985) listed the Northern Mockingbird as a species known to have reared Brown-headed Cowbirds, but provided no supporting evidence; interestingly, Northern Mockingbirds were not so mentioned in any of Friedmann's earlier works. There may be geographical differences in rates of parasitism for mockingbirds, Goertz (1977) reported no parasitism among 607 Northern Mockingbird nests in Louisiana, while Johnston (1960) considered mockingbirds to be one of the 24 most frequently parasitized species in Kansas.

From 1992 through 1994, 50 Oklahoma mockingbird nests were monitored by personnel from the G.M. Sutton Avian Research Center in Bartlesville. On 22 June 1994, a nest containing two mockingbird eggs was found on the Fort Sill Military Reservation in Comanche County, Oklahoma, by Michael R. Nelson, Paul D. Kaufmann, and Gregory M. Biggins. On 29 June, the nest contained three host eggs and one Brown-headed Cowbird egg. This nest was later abandoned.

Another nest that held a single mockingbird egg was discovered 22 June 1994 about 4 miles south and 2 east of Bartlesville in Washington County, Oklahoma, by Paul A. Grindrod, Robyn A. Royer, and Matthew R. Nimmo. A second host egg was present the next day. On 27 June, the nest contained three mockingbird eggs and one Brown-headed Cowbird egg. By 8 July, two of the host eggs and the cowbird egg had hatched. All three of the young birds were banded on 14 July. On 18 July, only the unhatched mockingbird egg remained in the nest and both adults were nearby, giving distress calls. The age at fledging for Brown-headed Cowbirds is typically 10 to 11 days (Ehrlich *et al.* 1988), so it may safely be assumed that one or both of the mockingbird chicks and/or the cowbird chick fledged.

This may be the first documented account of a Brown-headed Cowbird being raised by Northern Mockingbirds, at least to six days of age. Also of interest is the apparent rate of parasitism in Oklahoma. Two (8.7%) of 23 mockingbird nests found in 1994 were parasitized, and two (4.0%) of 50 nests since 1992. By comparison, only five (2.3%) of 218 Brown Thrasher (*Toxostoma rufum*) nests found during this same time period were parasitized. Like mockingbirds, Brown Thrashers are considered rejecter species, although there have been several records of their hav-

ing raised cowbirds (e.g., Nickell 1955; Lowther 1983).

The only known prior record of parasitism in Northern Mockingbirds for Oklahoma was mentioned by Nice (1931). This nest, in Creek County, was reported by T.R. Beard in 1919, but there is no record of its outcome.

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—Donald H. Wolfe, *George M. Sutton Avian Research Center, P.O. Box 2007, Bartlesville, Oklahoma 74005, 8 September 1994.*

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