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**First breeding record of Spotted Towhee in Oklahoma.**—On 16 May 1997, while checking nest boxes approximately 6.4 km south of Kenton, Oklahoma, a female towhee flushed from the ground, just 1–2 m in front of 2 of us (DW and DP). Rather than follow the bird, which we took to be a Spotted Towhee (*Pipilo maculatus*), we immediately searched the area and easily located a nest with 4 eggs. The nest was a tightly woven structure of fine grasses set in a slight depression in the ground and surrounded by dead leaves. It was located about 0.5 m inside the edge of a small patch of oak (*Quercus spp.*) on a slight incline on the side of a small mesa. The eggs were pale white and spotted with light brown flecks. The nest and eggs were photographed, but the nest was not visited again. At the time, neither of us realized that we had discovered the first known nest of the Spotted Towhee in Oklahoma.

Spotted Towhees are a common winter resident in the mesa country of Cimarron County and range eastward in winter into central Oklahoma. In Cimarron County, they typically arrive in September and depart in April, but there are records of lingering individuals until early June (Sutton 1967, 1974). We (DW and DP) overlooked the importance of this record due to a number of circumstances. Spotted Towhees are a common bird in this area in late April and into early May (pers. obs.). In addition, males often sang in late April, further strengthening our assumption that they bred in the area. Nonetheless, a check of all of the relevant published literature (Nice 1931, Sutton 1967, Baumgartner 1979, Baumgartner and Baumgartner 1992) turned up no previous breeding records for Oklahoma.

During the recent Oklahoma breeding bird atlas period, Spotted Towhees were observed only in Cimarron County (Reinking, 2004), but breeding was not confirmed. The atlas records were made by SP and consisted of 2 observations, 1 in June 1996 and 1 in July 1997, of a male Spotted Towhee along the Cimarron River, north of Boise City in northcentral Cimarron County. In both cases, the behavior of the bird (e.g., calling, singing, chasing a Red-winged Blackbird) suggested local breeding.

In Colorado, the recent Breeding Bird Atlas program documented breeding Spotted Towhees just north of the Oklahoma border, in southwestern Baca County, and a substantial breeding population of Spotted Towhees further west in Las Animas County (Levad 1998). Determining the breeding status of Spotted Towhees in Kansas is problematic because recent atlas work there (Busby and Zimmerman 2001) only recognized the split of Spotted and Eastern Towhees (*P. erythroththalmus*) during the last year of the

atlas field work. Nonetheless, records of purported Spotted Towhees (or of hybrids; Busby and Zimmerman 2001) were scattered along the northwestern tier of counties, with a few records further south, including a confirmed breeding record in Grant County, Kansas (about 112 km northeast of Cimarron County, Oklahoma; Busby and Zimmerman 2001). Spotted Towhees breed widely in the northern and central parts of New Mexico. Although the exact breeding range in northeastern New Mexico is not known, there is a breeding record (Hubbard 1978) 4.8 km north of Clayton, Union County, about 40 km southwest of the Cimarron County line. In the Texas panhandle, there are no breeding records for Spotted Towhee, but a singing male was observed at Bitter Lake National Wildlife Refuge in late May, and a male was observed in July south of Amarillo (Seyffert 2001).

One potential problem with identifying towhees in the Great Plains is that there is an apparent zone of breeding overlap between Spotted and Eastern Towhees in western Nebraska and western Kansas (Rising 1983). Individuals in this region may show intermediate plumage characteristics and may also sing an intermediate song type. Although hybridization between Spotted and Eastern Towhees could occur in Oklahoma, the recent breeding bird atlas work showed the 2 species breeding in widely separated portions of the state (the far western panhandle and the extreme northeast; Revels *in press*, Reinking 2004). Thus, there appears to be little potential for hybridization among Spotted and Eastern Towhees in Oklahoma.

Spotted Towhees and Eastern Towhees are very secretive around the cryptic nest, which may explain the scarcity of confirmed nesting records for these 2 species in Oklahoma. Nevertheless, the presence of singing Spotted Towhees in May and June in the Black Mesa region, along with the close proximity of breeding populations in New Mexico and Colorado, suggests that breeding may occur in Cimarron County on a regular basis.

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