

WESTERN Tanager IN PONTOTOC COUNTY, OKLAHOMA

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While mist netting birds in the backyard of my Ada residence on 13 May 2003, I viewed a species I had not seen since summer 1993 at Grand Canyon, Arizona. The time was 1100 CST, and I had just taken down my mist nets after a morning of netting Cedar Waxwings (*Bombycilla cedrorum*) and House Finches (*Carpodacus mexicanus*) when I returned to the house. Peering out the kitchen window (which faces the back yard) I noticed something yellow moving through the red mulberry (*Morus rubra*) tree just a few feet from the window. At first it appeared to be an American Goldfinch (*Carduelis tristis*) because the wings were black, but this bird was much larger. As the bird came into better view, I could see prominent yellow wing bars and a distinctive red face of a male Western Tanager (*Piranga ludoviciana*; Fig. 1). Using a digital camera, I was able to take 5 photographs of the bird from a distance of approximately 1.5 m while standing at my backdoor. I watched the tanager for few more moments until it flew away into a clump of trees some distance away and disappeared.



Fig 1. Western Tanager photographed in Pontotoc County, Oklahoma, on 13 May 2003.

The Western Tanager is a rare Oklahoma visitor, likely only in the Panhandle region (Cimarron and Texas county) (Sutton 1967, 1974), where it may be encountered during the latter part of spring migration (10–26 May) or at the onset of fall migration (2–25 September) (Grzybowski et al. 1992). Other potential sightings in Oklahoma listed from earliest to latest are Tulsa County (7 May 1946), Rogers County (7–9 July 1969), Washington County (30 April 1970), Cleveland County (20 May 1972) and Carter County (14 May 1972). (Sutton 1974, Baumgartner and Baumgartner 1992). Sutton (1974) listed those sightings as “questionable” because none were verified with photographic evidence and could have been confused with a young male particolored Summer Tanager (*Piranga rubra*). This was not the case in my observation because I was able to take several photographs of the Western Tanager, which appeared to be a mature male (Fig. 1). The red facial coloring was fairly extensive over the front of the face. However, variation of this color pattern does occur and may vary from deep scarlet to light orange (Hudon 1999). There also are reports of the red color extending over the chest (Ridgway 1902).

In Texas, the Western Tanager is listed as an uncommon summer resident primarily in the mountains of the Trans-Pecos (Rappole and Blacklock 1994). A small number of records exists further east of its breeding range and includes New York, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia and Florida (Hudon 1999). The breeding range of the Western Tanager includes northern British Columbia, northern Alberta and Saskatchewan south to southern Arizona, New Mexico, and west Texas (Trans-Pecos). Wintering range includes Baja California and central and southern Mexico south to Costa Rica (Rappole and Blacklock 1994, DeGraaf and Rappole 1995). The Western Tanager primarily occurs in open pine or pine-oak forests but occasionally occurs in areas that are more dense. In mixed aspen (*Populus*) forests, presence of Western Tanagers was highly correlated with canopy height (Schieck and Nietfeld 1995). Nesting in most areas begins in late May through early June but in some rare occasions may be considerably later (Hudon 1999). Because the Western Tanager is a neotropical migrant, its migration strategy does not afford the time for second broods. However, some recorded second attempts may be attributed to a loss in an earlier clutch or to a late arrival on the breeding grounds (Hudon 1999).

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PREDICTING FREQUENCY OF MOCKINGBIRD CALLS USING THE WEATHER

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Abstract.—In this study, Northern Mockingbirds (*Mimus polyglottos*) in Norman, Noble, and Hall Park, Oklahoma, were observed for frequency of singing. Weather data were collected for times corresponding to singing observations. Data included temperature, dewpoint, wind speed and direction, and altimeter setting. Predictor variables were compared with data for mockingbird song using Poisson regression. About 37% of the variability in song frequency was accounted for by a Poisson model using temperature, east-west wind speed, and north-south wind speed as predictors. The level of prediction only increased to 43% when dewpoint, wind direction, and time of day were included as predictors.

Introduction.—Much folklore centers on the relationship between birds and weather, based on the notion that weather influences bird behavior