

**A WINTER RECORD FOR THE ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEEK
(*Pheucticus ludovicianus*) IN PONTOTOC COUNTY, OKLAHOMA**

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Abstract—We document the third winter record for the Rose-breasted Grosbeak (*Pheucticus ludovicianus*) in Oklahoma.

INTRODUCTION

The Rose-breasted Grosbeak (*Pheucticus ludovicianus*) is a Neotropical migrant, breeding in the eastern part of North America and in central and southern Canada. It is a regular spring migrant, and less common fall migrant in eastern Oklahoma, but with birds noted statewide. It is considered a rare summer breeder in Oklahoma (Sutton 1967, Baumgartner and Baumgartner 1992). The species winters from Mexico to Peru, and only rarely in North America (Wyatt and Francis 2002), so a wintering individual in Oklahoma is certainly a rare occurrence, with one published record occurring in Okmulgee County in 1968 (Williams 1969) and one sight record from Cleveland County in 1996 (J. Grzybowski pers. comm.).

OBSERVATIONS

On 9 January 2014, a single male Rose-breasted Grosbeak in definitive basic plumage (see Wyatt and Francis 2002) with a bright rose breast clearly visible (Figure 1) was observed feeding on the ground underneath a residential bird feeder in Ada (Pontotoc County). This individual bird visited again on 11 January and was last observed 16 January 2014. All sightings occurred in the afternoon hours (1300-1700 hrs CST) at a private residence where the bird was feeding on seeds and millet alongside Mourning Doves (*Zenaida macroura*), White-winged Dove (*Zenaida asiatica*), White-throated Sparrows (*Zonotrichia albicollis*) and on one occasion a hispid cotton rat (*Sigmodon hispidus*) (Figure 2). This particular male appeared to be a mature individual greater than 1-year of age based on the plumage characters of black and white wing coverts and the extent of rose in the breast (Figures 1 and 2).



Figure 1. Adult male Rose-breasted Grosbeak (*Pheucticus ludovicianus*), 11 January 2014, Pontotoc County, Oklahoma. Photograph by Fred Pfeffer.

DISCUSSION

We are only aware of two other Oklahoma winter records. One is from Okmulgee County in 1968, when a male Rose-breasted Grosbeak flew into a picture window in November and was recaptured in December in a sparrow trap. The bird was released and continued to visit a bird feeder through January 1969 and was last seen in April of that year (Williams 1969). The other is from Cleveland County (Norman), when one was observed at a feeder at the Paul Pjornen's residence on 7 January 1996. This individual was also an adult male (J. Grzybowski pers. comm.).

Winter occurrences of the Rose-breasted Grosbeak in the interior of North America are uncommon. In Oklahoma, the Rose-breasted Grosbeak may be encountered from 20 April through 24 May throughout the eastern half of the state (Oklahoma Bird Records Committee 2009), with the majority of these sightings probably being individuals migrating through to more northerly breeding grounds (Fantina 2004). Sightings from western counties are much less frequent, although it has been noted in the Black Mesa country in the far western Panhandle on multiple occasions (Sutton 1967, 1974, Tyler 1979).



Figure 2. Male Rose-breasted Grosbeak (*Pheucticus ludovicianus*), 11 January 2014, Pontotoc County, Oklahoma. White-throated Sparrow (*Zonotrichia albicollis*) is in the top right corner, hispid cotton rat (*Sigmodon hispidus*) is in the top left corner, Mourning Dove (*Zenaida macroura*) and White-winged Dove (*Zenaida asiatica*) are in left-center. Photograph by Fred Pfeffer.

Breeding in the state is also a rare occurrence, with records existing for Ponca City (Kay County) in 1954, Lake Overholser (Oklahoma County) in 1957 and 1964 (Sutton 1967), Dewey (Washington County) in 1975 (Baumgartner and Baumgartner 1992) and possibly at Silver Lake (Canadian County) in 1964, although an actual nest was never observed, only adults with young birds (Vacin 1968).

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