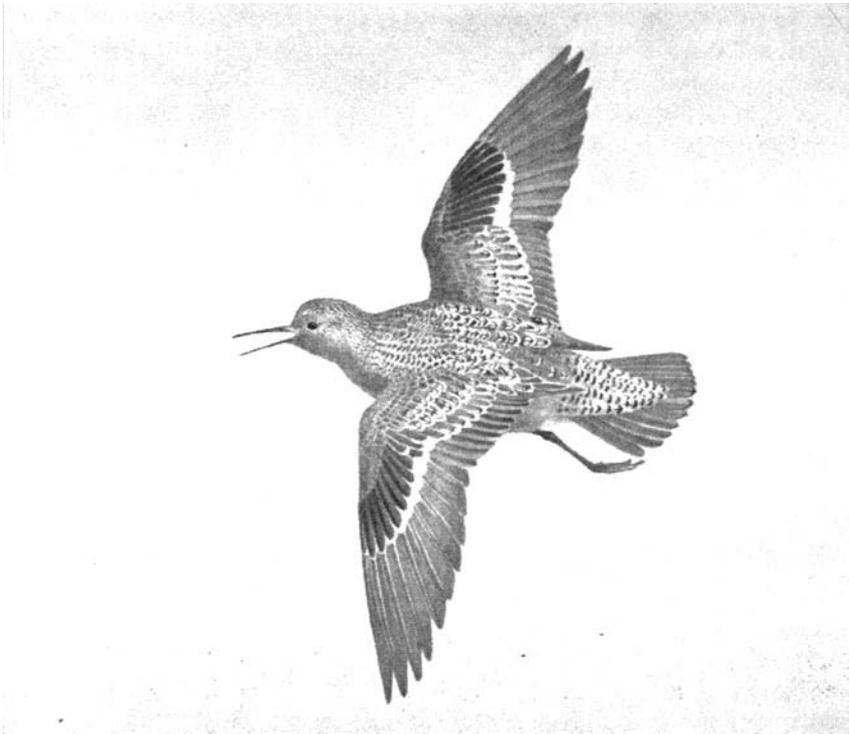


OKLAHOMA RECORDS FOR THE KNOT

BY JOHN G. NEWELL

THE KNOT (*Calidris canutus*) was first recorded in Oklahoma on September 19, 1941, when Seth H. Low and Wendell Taber saw a Knot with a small flock of Black-bellied Plovers (*Squatarola squatarola*) on the beach of the main reservoir



KNOT IN FLIGHT-DISPLAY OVER ITS NESTING GROUND
From a watercolor painted by George Miksch Sutton on Jenny Lind Island, in the Canadian Arctic Archipelago, in the summer of 1966

at the Salt Plains National Wildlife Refuge, in Alfalfa County. The following day, along the same stretch of shore, Low and Taber saw two Knots, this time separate from other shorebirds (Sutton, 1967, *Oklahoma Birds*, p. 193). All other Oklahoma records for *Calidris canutus* are, with one exception, for the vicinity of Oklahoma City, and all but two are for late summer and fall.

On the two large water-supply impoundments near Oklahoma City — Lake Hefner (surface area, when full, about four square miles) and Lake Overholser (surface area a little over two square miles), the former in Oklahoma County, the latter straddling the Oklahoma-Canadian county line just west of Oklahoma City — I have seen the Knot several times during and since the fall of 1962. The two impoundments fluctuate considerably in surface area depending on weather and withdrawals. Whenever extensive mud and sand flats are exposed during the season of bird migration, large numbers and many species of shorebirds are attracted, and the lively mixed populations sometimes linger for many days.

I have seen Knots at these impoundments only when the flats were extensive and — perhaps significantly — only during or following inclement weather. Knots that I have observed usually fed along the water's edge, where waves overran the flats far out from old high-water lines. Except when silhouetted against the water, summer and fall birds were hard to see, for the light gray of their upperparts blended well with the sandy mud, and their shadowed underparts reflected this very same color. In good light the pale edging of the feathers of the upperparts — the "scaly effect" referred to in published descriptions — was readily discernible. Some summer and fall birds had a uniform suffusion of pale pinkish buff on the flanks.

Since *Calidris canutus* has been recorded only infrequently in Oklahoma, the following records, arranged chronologically, are presented in some detail.

September 1, 1962. Observer J. G. Newell. The weather had been cool and rainy and there was a heavy influx of several species of shorebirds. I saw a single Knot in non-breeding feather on the southwest shore of Lake Hefner. It was wary and could not be approached closely. It flushed and circled the area, calling. It finally joined a Ruddy Turnstone (*Arenaria interpres*) and flew toward the south shore of the lake. I could not locate it again.

September 9, 1962. Observers W. Marvin Davis and J. G. Newell. A north wind was blowing rather steadily and the sky was overcast, threatening rain. We saw a single bird in non-breeding feather momentarily near the southwest shore of Lake Hefner. We flushed it before seeing it. It flew toward the south shore, and was lost to view.

October 18, 1964. Observers V. J. Vacin and J. G. Newell. It was mid-afternoon and a strong north wind was blowing. The sky was overcast. A cold front had entered the state the previous day. The Knot was with many other shorebirds, mostly dowitchers (probably *Limnodromus scolopaceus*), Pectoral Sandpipers (*Erolia melanotos*), and Killdeers (*Charadrius vociferus*), on a mud flat at the north end of Lake Overholser. We observed it at length in good light at distances of from fifty

to seventy-five feet. It was not wary and seemed to be very hungry. When finally we flushed it, to expose its flight pattern, it flew past us with a Black-bellied Plover, allowing close comparison with that bird.

May 14, 1967. Observer John S. Shackford. The sky was overcast; it had been raining lightly, and a north wind had been blowing for 24 hours. Shackford saw a single bird in bright breeding plumage along the southwest shore of Lake Hefner.

May 15, 1967. Observers V. J. Vacin, Nelson Hall, and J. G. Newell. About two hours before sunset we saw a single bird with bright brick-colored breast, probably the same individual as that discussed above, along the southwest shore of Lake Hefner. We walked to within one hundred feet before the bird flew off a short distance. It did not seem very wary and we studied it for about an hour. Toward sundown it flew off to the northwest with three Black-bellied Plovers and a Ruddy Turnstone.

August 27, 1967. Observer J. G. Newell. A cool front had passed through, the sky had cleared, and a light north wind was blowing. I found three Knots on the mud flats at the north end of Lake Overholser. Shorebirds of several species were abundant there. The Knots fed in shallow water in a close group with several Lesser Yellowlegs (*Totanus flavipes*) and Stilt Sandpipers (*Micropalama himantopus*). All of the Knots were in non-breeding feather, but at least one had a pale rusty or pinkish-buff tinge on the sides of the lower breast and flanks. I searched the entire area carefully the following day, but could not find the birds.

September 2, 1967. Observer J. G. Newell. The weather was cool; it rained lightly and intermittently all morning. Only a few shorebirds were on the mud flats at the north end of Lake Overholser, and most of these were "peeps". I found two Knots, each with a pinkish-buff tinge on the flanks. I checked the area thoroughly toward evening the same day, and again on September 3, but could not find the Knots.

September 4, 1967. Observers James L. Norman, Marion Norman, V. J. Vacin, and J. G. Newell. It rained most of the morning. We observed a single Knot at fairly close range on the flats at the north end of Lake Overholser. It was feeding with a few "peeps". Each of us noted the pinkish-buff tinge of the flanks.

July 26, 1968. Observers George M. Sutton, George A. Newman, and ten members of the University of Oklahoma Biological Station ornithology class. Day hot, calm, and bright; no inclement weather during preceding several days. Four Knots, all more or less rust-colored below, were observed along the shore of an almost-drained fishery pond near Durant, Bryan County. The birds flew in about 9:30 a.m. with several Lesser Yellowlegs, joining a mixed flock composed of several Killdeers, Least Sandpipers (*Erolia minutilla*), Semipalmated Sandpipers (*Ereunetes pusillus*), and Western Sandpipers (*E. macruri*), four Stilt Sandpipers, one Long-billed Dowitcher, and one Pectoral Sandpiper. While probing in the mud, all facing in the same direction, the Knots kept together but

did not move off as a group from the other shorebirds. Sutton collected two specimens, both adult females largely in breeding feather, neither very fat, each with ill-defined brood-patches and unenlarged ovary. The only food found in the stomachs were snails of the genus *Physa* (probably *P. anatina*), 68 of which had been eaten by the heavier bird (120.6 grams), 13 by the lighter (118.3 grams). The snails were identified by George V. Oliver, a member of the ornithology class. The fact that the two Knots were adult females coupled with the fact that the only adult specimens taken by D. F. Parmelee *et al.* on Jenny Lind Island, in the western American arctic, late in the breeding season of 1966, were *males*, lends weight to Sutton's belief that adult females move southward from the breeding ground in advance of their mates (see Parmelee, Stephens, and Schmidt, 1967, The birds of southeastern Victoria Island and adjacent small islands, *Natl. Mus. of Canada Bull.* 222, p. 221).

The Knot has been positively identified in Oklahoma on the several occasions cited above. Drawing conclusions from so few observations is somewhat presumptive; nevertheless the eleven records, supported by those from Barton and Greenwood counties in Kansas (Sutton, *op. cit.*), suggest that the Knot is a rare and irregular migrant in central Oklahoma and probably throughout the open grasslands of the Southern Great Plains from July 26 to October 18. Until more Knots are seen during the period of northward migration, the two Oklahoma City spring sightings, believed to be of the same individual, suggest that spring occurrence is accidental.

4129 NORTH EVEREST, OKLAHOMA CITY, OKLAHOMA 73111, 22 APRIL 1968

SUMMERING OF ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEAK NEAR OKLAHOMA CITY, OKLAHOMA

BY VICTOR J. VACIN

THE ROSE-BREASTED Grosbeak (*Pheucticus ludovicianus*), an "irregular summer resident in eastern and central Oklahoma," nested successfully along the east side of Lake Overholser, in a residential part of Oklahoma City, in the summer of 1957; the one breeding pair observed that year fledged three young about June 25 from a nest built 15 feet up in an elm at the edge of a lawn (Sutton, 1967, *Oklahoma Birds*, pp. 574-575).

At Silver Lake, a horseshoe-shaped, 40-acre impoundment just west of Lake Hefner, in the extreme northwestern part of Oklahoma City, several observers (including myself) have seen the Rose-breast each summer since 1964. We have not found a nest, but we have seen adult and young birds repeatedly. The properties of the tight-knit community known as the Silver Lake Association completely surround the impoundment; in the many yards (about 70) are fine elm, hackberry, willow, pine, and juniper trees, a few oaks, and much climax shrubbery.

In this somewhat parklike habitat the Rose-breast was first sighted by John

H. John on 5 May 1964. The bird, a male, was in the John yard. The John residence is about 300 yards north of our own cabin and banding station. The bird continued to frequent the John premises; it apparently developed a great liking for cantaloupe seeds scattered on an earthen mound near the house. The mound (about a foot high and six feet across) was of extra earth carted in for a worm-pit; the seeds were from over-ripe cantaloupes that a grocer needed to dispose of. Soon after the male Rose-breast had developed the custom of visiting the mound, a female also appeared. The two birds visited the mound for cantaloupe seeds principally early in the morning and late in the evening; they came singly as a rule, rarely together. When the birds departed they usually flew northwestward. This set us off nest-hunting in that direction, but we did not find the nest. Later in the season the female often came to the mound accompanied by two young birds.

That spring the Rose-breast infrequently visited our place. On May 11 I trapped and banded a female bird. My traps were baited with ordinary "wild bird mix" and a few cantaloupe seeds. On August 31, 1964, I caught and banded a male bird in first winter feather—presumably, though not certainly, progeny of the pair that had visited the John place so regularly. This individual I caught again on September 3, 1964, the only "repeat" I have had of this species. The fact that Mr. John never saw a banded Rose-breast near his house, despite his eagerness to see one, leads me to believe that more than one pair of Rose-breasts summered near Silver Lake in 1964. The female that I banded on May 11 could, of course, have been a transient; or, conceivably, the one male had two mates.

In 1965, 1966, and 1967, we saw a Rose-breast from time to time near Silver Lake. On July 13, 1967, I banded a fully adult male (primaries blue-black, not blackish brown) at our place. Mr. John continued to see Rose-breasts at his mound, but he never saw a banded one. On several occasions I made a point of waiting near the mound, hoping to see a Rose-breast fly in; on only one occasion, on 21 May 1965, did I see one. That bird was an *unbanded* female.

In 1968 the Rose-breast appeared on April 6—a female seen by Mr. John. He could not see a band on the leg. He recorded the species again May 1—a male that he believed to be unbanded. Between June 4 and 18 I watched the "cantaloupe mound" from the John window. On each of six 2-hour watches I observed a *banded* adult male. The bird fed largely on sunflower seeds and as a rule fed facing away from me. His visits lasted about a minute each. On leaving, he flew up into dense foliage and I could not ascertain the direction of his flight from that point on. On June 14 Mr. John saw two young birds with an adult male at the mound. On August 5 he saw two young birds with an adult female there.

My wife and I have been growing cantaloupes in our garden year after year. We have saved and dried the seeds, mixing them with sunflower seeds for birds. Both Carolina Chickadees (*Parus carolinensis*) and Cardinals (*Pyrrhuloxia carolinensis*) eat the cantaloupe seeds, which are richly fragrant. I have placed quantities of cantaloupe seeds, by themselves, on a large stone table close to the ground, hoping to lure Rose-breasts, but they seem to prefer Mr. John's mound.

Their liking for that spot evidently was firmly established in 1964 and it has continued year after year. I have never observed a singing Rose-breast at Silver Lake.

The similarity of the female Rose-breast to the female Black-headed Grosbeak (*Pheucticus melanocephalus*) must be borne in mind by all who observe birds in Oklahoma. Mixed pairs are to be looked for in central and western parts of the state.

ROUTE 2, BOX 123, OKLAHOMA CITY, OKLAHOMA 73114, 6 AUGUST 1968.

GENERAL NOTES

The Piping Plover in Tulsa County, Oklahoma.—Most Oklahoma sightings of the Piping Plover (*Charadrius melodus*) have been in the central part of the state in the vicinity of Oklahoma City (see Sutton, 1967, *Oklahoma Birds*, pp. xxviii, 172), but the species has been seen on several occasions, and taken once, in Tulsa County. From August 12 to 16, 1964, one was seen repeatedly in Mohawk Park, near Tulsa, by Anne Reynolds, L. B. Reynolds, and me (Tomer, 1966, *Proc. Oklahoma Acad. Sci.*, 46: 59-60). On August 25 and 27, 1966, two were seen on a sandbar in the Arkansas River 3 mi. west of Bixby by Anne Reynolds and L. B. Reynolds. On August 29, 1966, one was seen on the same sandbar by the same observers. On April 27, 1967, three were seen by me on the same sandbar; one of these I collected. On May 6, 7, and 8, 1967, one was seen repeatedly on a gravel dike in Lake Yahola, in Mohawk Park, Tulsa, by Anne Reynolds and L. B. Reynolds. On August 15, 1967, one was observed feeding with a Killdeer (*C. vociferus*), three Spotted Sandpipers (*Actitis macularia*), a Solitary Sandpiper (*Tringa solitaria*), two Lesser Yellowlegs (*Totanus flavipes*), and three Least Sandpipers (*Erolia minutilla*) on wet gravel at the edge of a partly filled-in impoundment about 1 mi. southeast of Tulsa (Anne Reynolds, L. B. Reynolds).

The specimen above referred to, a male in excellent feather, is the second for the state and the first for eastern Oklahoma. It was not very fat. Its testes were considerably enlarged. It represents the western race, *Charadrius melodus circumcinctus*, its black chest-band being broad and complete. It is now No. 6085 in the bird collection at the University of Oklahoma.—John S. Tomer, 5911 East 46th St., Tulsa, Oklahoma 74135, 22 May 1968.

Ground Dove in Comanche County, Oklahoma.—A Ground Dove (*Columbigallina passerina*) visited our yard in Lawton, Comanche County, Oklahoma, on 26 March 1967. The bird flew in, raised its rufous-lined wings, and stayed several minutes, giving us ample time to examine it carefully at 60 ft. with 7-power binoculars. The sparrow-size and short black tail were carefully checked. This is the second record for Oklahoma, so far as we know, the first being of a male bird shot in the North Canadian River bottoms 2 mi. east of Greenfield, Blaine County, on 1 December 1956 (Sutton, 1967, *Oklahoma Birds*, p. 235).

We are familiar with the Ground Dove, since it was a regular visitor in our yard at Yuma, Arizona, where we lived for ten years. In Lawton our yard borders a semi-permanent creek adjacent to a city park. A check of local

caged-bird fanciers revealed that none of these had had a Ground Dove recently. From several records for adjacent states (Sutton, *op. cit.*) it appears that this little dove may be observed with increasing frequency by bird students in Oklahoma.—Arthur F. Halloran and Audrey G. Halloran, 1551 North 43rd St., Lawton, Oklahoma 74501, 22 May 1968.

Poor-will in Pontotoc County, Oklahoma.—On 5 July 1967 Charles Smith collected an adult female Poor-will (*Phalaenoptilus nuttallii*) in rough, rocky country 7 mi. south of Ada, Pontotoc County, Oklahoma. Two ova were considerably enlarged. Almost certainly the bird was breeding.

The area is a northward-reaching extension of the limestone hill district of the Arbuckle Mountains. There is similar habitat in northern Johnston and southeastern Coal counties. Sutton (1967, *Oklahoma Birds*, p. 272) lists Poor-will records for Washington County in northeastern Oklahoma, and for Oklahoma, Cleveland, and Murray counties in central Oklahoma, but the easternmost breeding record for the state is for the vicinity of Cogar, Caddo County. A mid-summer "record" for Tulsa County is questionable: two white eggs found on the ground near Tulsa on 11 July 1931, though alleged to be those of a Poor-will (see White, 1935, *Oologist*, 48: 158), might well have been eggs of a Mourning Dove (*Zenaidura macroura*), a species that frequently nests on the ground even in areas throughout which above-ground sites are readily available.—W. A. Carter, *Department of Biology, East Central State College, Ada, Oklahoma 74820, 17 May 1968.*

Curve-billed Thrasher in Jackson County, southwestern Oklahoma.—From late January to 24 February 1965 Viola B. (Mrs. V. E.) Estes observed a Curve-billed Thrasher (*Toxostoma curvirostre*) repeatedly—often many times daily—at a bird-bath and feeding counter in the residential part of the city of Altus, Jackson County, Oklahoma. The thrasher fed at a spot where bread scraps were scattered but not at a grain-filled hopper about which House Sparrows (*Passer domesticus*) gathered in great numbers. The thrasher was especially conspicuous on cold or windy days. Mrs. Estes made a point of noting the unfamiliar bird's large, decurved bill, gray upper parts, vaguely mottled breast, white tail corners, and bright orange eyes. At the feeding counter it easily dominated the sparrows by running at them or jabbing with its bill. It frequently visited a mass of trumpet vine along a fence south of the house, but it did not spend the night there.

On 26 February Gerald W. Dickson and I drove to Altus, hoping to see the bird. We looked in several likely spots, including the city park, but failed to find it. Mrs. Estes's vivid description of the bird's appearance and behavior convinced me that she had indeed been seeing a Curve-billed Thrasher.—George M. Sutton, *Department of Zoology, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma 73069, 11 August 1968.*

Curve-billed Thrasher in Kiowa County, Oklahoma.—On the morning of 27 March 1968, near Group Camp No. 2 in the eastern part of Quartz Mountains State Park, half a mile east of the south end of Lake Altus, in Kiowa County, Oklahoma, I happened upon two remarkably approachable Curve-billed Thrashers (*Toxostoma curvirostre*). I watched them closely for half an hour. They spent most of their time on the ground, rummaging through trash at a junk pile. I had little difficulty in identifying them from their over-all grayness, the vague streaking on the chest, and their bright orange eyes. I returned to watch them that evening and again the following morning.

During the total of about an hour spent by me in observing them, neither bird uttered a sound.

On the morning of 7 April, Jack D. Tyler of the Department of Biology at Cameron State College, in Lawton, Oklahoma, following explicit directions given him, visited the junk pile, found one bird (only), and collected it. The specimen—the first of its species to have been taken in the main body of the state—proved to be a male with somewhat enlarged testes (each about 2.5 x 3 mm.); it is now No. 6264 in the bird collection at the University of Oklahoma in Norman. George M. Sutton has identified it as *Toxostoma curvirostre celsum* (wing 102, tail 106, culmen 35), a large geographical race found from southeastern Arizona, northeastern New Mexico, and “extreme western Oklahoma (Kenton)” south to the Mexican states of Jalisco and Guanajuato (see AOU Check-list of North American Birds, 1957, p. 427).

The Curve-billed Thrasher has for some time been known to inhabit the Black Mesa country of northwestern Cimarron County, Oklahoma. In that part of its range it nests exclusively in the arborescent cactus *Opuntia imbricata* (see Sutton, 1967, *Oklahoma Birds*, p. 425). If, in time, it establishes itself in southwestern Oklahoma, where this cactus has not thus far been found, one cannot help wondering where the bird will build its nest.—Brad Carlton, 5949 N.W. 27th St., Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73127, 20 May 1968.

Loggerhead Shrike kills Cardinal.—About 5 p.m. on 31 December 1967, a cold day, a few miles east of Norman, Cleveland County, Oklahoma, my friend Floyd Eoff and his son Don witnessed the killing of a male Cardinal (*Pyrrhuloxia cardinalis*) weighing 45.0 grams by a female Loggerhead Shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus*) weighing 44.5 grams. When first seen, the hard-pressed Cardinal was being forced to the ground where the shrike dispatched it with a bite at the base of the skull. Dr. George M. Sutton, who prepared both specimens as skins for the University of Oklahoma collection, found a considerable wound at the base of the skull and a smaller wound at the base of the tail, but nowhere was the plumage bloody enough to require washing. Both the shrike and its prey were in first winter feather. The Cardinal's underparts were unusual in that the red was considerably veiled with pale brownish buff. Some parts of the belly were indeed so blotched with this color as to give the bird the appearance of what is sometimes called a “partial albino.”

The shrike was not observed to carry the Cardinal; but it stayed by its kill long enough to permit Don Eoff to return to the parked car for a gun. The Cardinal specimen is No. 6211 in the University of Oklahoma collection, the shrike No. 6212.—Harold S. Cooksey, 909 Morningside Drive, Norman, Oklahoma 73069, 20 May 1968.

NOTICE TO MEMBERS

The *Bulletin* is sent to all members of the Oklahoma Ornithological Society. Membership fee is \$5.00, sustaining, or \$2.00 regular. Checks made out to the society should be sent to the treasurer, Mrs. Frank L. Humphrey (nee Mossie Hassell), 8405 Arlington Drive, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73132.