

THE RED-SHOULDERED HAWK IN SOUTHWESTERN OKLAHOMA

BY JACK D. TYLER, SAM J. ORR AND JAY K. BANTA

The Red-shouldered Hawk, *Buteo lineatus*, is resident in moist lowland forests throughout much of eastern Oklahoma, but probably is to some extent migratory. Records are sparse for western sections of the state, but the species has nested as far west as Cleveland, Love and possibly Alfalfa counties and has been seen in Canadian, Caddo, Grady and Stephens counties (Sutton, G.M., 1967, Oklahoma birds, Univ. Oklahoma Press, Norman, p. 107; 1974, A check-list of Oklahoma birds, Contrib. Stovall Mus. Sci. & Hist. No. 1, p. 10; and [1982], Species summaries of Oklahoma bird records, Oklahoma Mus. Nat. Hist., Univ. Oklahoma, Norman).

Since December 1980, there have been 46 separate observations of the Red-shoulder in Comanche County and 12 others in Stephens County and northern Jefferson County (Tyler field notes). These are summarized in Table 1. All these individuals were associated with dense woodlands, primarily along streamcourses. Of these 54 records, 22 occurred during the winter months (27 December–18 March), 17 in spring (3 April–24 June) 9 in summer (2 July–1 September) and 6 in fall (3–13 October). Only about 40 percent of these dates fall into normal migratory periods.



RED-SHOULDERED HAWKS

Figure 1 shows the two young birds banded on 2 June 1989 at Fort Sill by Sam Orr (photo by Wallie Breden). An adult captured by Orr and Jay Banta at Fort Sill on 9 October 1988 appears in Figure 2 (photo by Orr).

Single subadult birds have been seen on 14 March (1988), 4 June (1986), 19 August (1984), 1 September (1986) and 10 October (1988). Most other records were of adults, two of which were reported together on 5 March 1985, 2 October 1986, 27 December 1986 (1987, Amer. Birds 41:1067) and 30 December 1987, when three were counted on the Stephens County Christmas Bird Count (1988, Amer. Birds 42:967).

Leonard Russell, Daryl Nobis and Brian Gardner observed a pair of Red-shoulders each summer, 1980–1984, along Cow Creek just north of Addington in Jefferson County, but never found an active nest. The hawks appeared in spring but were gone by mid-September or early in October (pers. comm., Leonard Russell). On 3 April 1983, Jon Andrew and Charles Boydston saw a Red-shoulder fly from a tree containing a raptor nest under construction, but they were not certain that it was a Red-shoulder nest. The location was in heavy timber along Post Oak Creek 2 miles northeast of Indianahoma in Comanche County. At this same location on 5 March 1985, Orr, Tyler and Allen Ratzlaff clearly heard the typical *peeee-o* scream as two adults circled several times overhead. They managed to obtain recognizable photographs (Tyler files), but were unsuccessful in locating a nest, if indeed, there was one.

The first documentation of nesting occurred in the spring of 1989. On 10 April, Banta and Orr, during a helicopter reconnaissance, flushed a bird from a new nest 40 feet up in the uppermost crotch of a spindly pecan tree (*Carya illinoensis*) near Post Oak Creek. The exact location was 2 miles north and 1 east of Indianahoma. In the nest were two eggs. Two days later, the eggs were still being incubated, as was also true on 24 April and 5 May. At various times during incubation, green boughs of cottonwood (*Populus deltoides*), red cedar (*Juniperus virginiana*), black locust (*Robinia pseudoacacia*) and box elder (*Acer negundo*) had been placed in the nest. On 15 May, Orr could see two hatchlings moving about in the nest and an adult perched only a few feet away. The two young hawks were photographed (Fig. 1) and banded by Orr (Nos. 816-69703 and —04) on 2 June. They were still in the nest with both adults not far away on 16 June. On 24 June, an adult was $\frac{3}{4}$ mile from the nest as a single young Red-shoulder flew over an open field near the nest.

More than half the known sightings since 1982 took place in the proximity of the Post Oak Creek site mentioned above, including the first Comanche County record: on 27 December 1982, Charles Boydston and Banta watched one that was perched in the same tree as a Great Horned Owl (*Bubo virginianus*) for approximately 30 seconds. Several observers, principally Boydston, found probably the same Red-shoulder there on eight other occasions between this initial sighting and 20 May 1983.

On 9 October 1988, Orr and Banta caught an adult Red-shoulder (Fig. 2) in a bal-chatri trap not far from the old Hoyle Bridge that spans East Cache Creek 2 miles east of the Fort Sill Post Office. Orr photographed, weighed (797g) and banded this bird (No. 816-69701).

From the foregoing, it is evident that the Red-shouldered Hawk is infrequently encountered in southwest Oklahoma. However, numbers appear to be increasing in proper floodplain habitat along this western periphery of its range, for it has been recorded each of the past 10 years. Westward movement probably retracts or expands from year to year depending on precipitation, land-use patterns, prey availability, reproductive success and perhaps other

factors. Preston *et al.* (1989, *Southwest. Nat.*, 34:72–78) suggested that availability of nest sites may influence distribution of this species. They found that Arkansas nests were consistently located *near water* in vegetation with tall canopy subtended by dense understory. During normal to dry years in southwestern Oklahoma, despite the presence of suitable habitat in a few select sites, water may not be plentiful enough to provide the associated prey upon which the birds largely depend over most of their range (amphibians, crayfish, meadow voles, etc.). The spring of 1989 was one of well above average rainfall, with 6.15 in. of precipitation through the first three months, compared to an average of 4.40 in. (Fort Sill, Oklahoma, Weather Service).

Table 1. Records for Red-shouldered Hawks in southwestern Oklahoma, 1952–89 (SS = Sutton Summary; JDT-FN = Tyler field notes; CUMZ = Cameron University Museum of Zoology; WMWR = Wichita Mtns. Wildlife Refuge).

Date	County	Location	No./Age	Observ.	Source
10/3/52	Stephens	10 mi. E Duncan	Ad.	G.M. Sutton, R.R. Graber & J.W. Graber	SS
4/19/62	Grady	2 mi. NW Alex	"	L.W. Oring	SS
3/3/74	Caddo	3 mi. NE Cyril	"	W.G. Voelker	SS
4/15–16/74	Caddo	Near Cement	1 bird	W.G. Voelker	W.G. Voelker
9/–/78	Jackson	2 mi. S Warren	Ad. (killed by dove hunter)	W. Webb	W. Webb
1980–84	Jefferson	2¼ mi. N Addington	2 ads. & inactive nest	L. Russell, D. Nobis, B. Gardner	L. Russell
12/27/82	Comanche	2 mi. NE Indiahoma	1 bird	C. Boydston, J. Banta	J. Banta
1/3/83	Comanche	2 mi. NE Indiahoma	1 bird	C. Boydston	J. Banta
1/15/83	Comanche	" " " "	" "	C. Boydston, J. Andrew	" "
1/23/83	"	" " " "	" "	C. Boydston	" "
3/18/83	"	" " " "	" "	J. Andrew	" "
4/3/83	"	" " " "	" "	C. Boydston, J. Andrew	" "
4/12/83	"	" " " "	" "	J. Andrew	" "
5/20/83	"	" " " "	" "	C. Boydston, M. England	" "
6/3/83	"	4 mi. N, 2 E Indiahoma	" "	M. England	" "
1/23/84	"	1½ mi. NW Cache	" "	C. Boydston, A. Pfister	" "
1/30/84	"	" " " "	" "	C. Boydston	" "
8/19/84	"	4 mi. SE Fort Sill P.O.	Subad.	S. Orr	S. Orr

3/3/85	Comanche	2 mi. NE Indiahoma	Ad. (?)	J. Banta, A. Ratzlaff	J. Banta
3/5/85	"	" " " "	2 ads.	J.D. Tyler, S. Orr & A. Ratzlaff	JDT-FN
5/11/85	"	2½ mi. E Meers	1 bird	J.D. Tyler	JDT-FN
10/13/85	"	2 mi. NE Indiahoma	" "	J. Banta	J. Banta
10/13/85	"	2½ mi. N, 3 W Indiahoma	" "	" "	" "
6/4/86	"	WMWR	Subad.	J.A. Grzybowski	<i>Am. Birds</i> 41: 1456, 1987.
7/2/86	"	2 mi. NE Indiahoma	1 bird	M. Granger	J. Banta
7/27/86	"	" " " "	1 bird	" " , W. Bartush	" "
9/1/86	"	1½ mi. NE Ft. Sill P.O.	Subad.	S. Orr, S. Petrie	" "
10/2/86	"	2½ mi. NE Indiahoma	2 birds	W. Bartush	" "
12/27/86	"	2¼ mi. E Indiahoma	Ad.	A. Breaden, W. Breaden	S. Orr
12/27/86	Stephens	8 mi. E Duncan	1 bird	Roma Lenehan, Lena Ferguson	C. Ferguson letter to JDT of 8/11/89
12/27/86	"	8 mi. NE Duncan	1 bird	C. Ferguson, <i>et al.</i>	<i>Am. Birds</i> 41:1067, 1987
5/9,12/87	Comanche	WMWR-Rush L.	Subad.	J.A. Grzybowski, P. Ashman, <i>et al.</i>	J.A. Grzybowski
6/15/87	"	" "	"	J.A. Grzybowski, P. Ashman	" "
12/30/87	"	8 mi. E Duncan	3 birds	R. Lenehan, <i>et al.</i>	<i>Am. Birds</i> 42:967, 1988
1/10/88	"	1½ mi. NE Ft. Sill P.O.	Ad.	S. Orr, J. Banta	J. Banta
2/5/88	"	" " " "	Ad.	K. McCurdy	J. Banta
2/7/88	"	1½ mi. NE Cache	Ad.	S. Orr, W. Breaden	S. Orr
2/28/88	"	2½ mi. NNE Indiahoma	Ad.	S. Orr, J. Banta	" "
3/14/88	"	1½ mi. NE Cache	Subad.	W. Bartush	J. Banta
4/11/88	"	1½ mi. N Indiahoma	Ad.	" "	" "
8/14/88	"	" " " "	2 ads.	J. Banta, S. Orr	" "
10/3/88	"	1½ mi. N Indiahoma	Ad.	S. Orr, K. McCurdy	S. Orr

10/9/88	Comanche	1¾ mi. E Ft. Sill P.O.	*Ad.	S. Orr, J. Banta	" "
10/10/88	"	2 mi. NE Indiahoma	Subad.	S. Orr, J. Banta	" "
12/28/88	Stephens	8 mi. E Duncan	2 birds	C. Ferguson, R. Lenehan, <i>et al.</i>	F. Neeld
1/21/89	"	3½ mi. S, 2½ W. Marlow	Ad.	J.D. Tyler, Jeff Tyler	JDT-FN
2/21/89	Jefferson	3 mi. E Hastings	Ad.	S. Gaines, G. Jackson, V. Pickren, <i>et al.</i>	Gaines letter of 4/13/89 to JDT; Jackson letter of of 4/25/89 to JDT; Photos at CUMZ
2/25/89	"	" " " "	Ad.	" " " "	" "
4/8/89	"	" " " "	Ad.	" " " "	" "
3/12/89	Comanche	2 mi. NE Indiahoma	2 ads.	S. Orr, W. Whitworth	S. Orr
4/1/89	"	1½ mi. NE Ft. Sill P.O.	Ad.	S. Orr	" "
4/10/89	"	2 mi. N, 1 E Indiahoma	Ad. on nest, 2 eggs	J. Banta, S. Orr	J. Banta
4/10/89	"	2½ mi. NW Cache	2 ads.	S. Orr	S. Orr
4/12/89	"	2 mi. N, 1 E Indiahoma	Ad. on nest	J. Banta, S. Orr, J. Tyler	JDT-FN
4/14/89	"	½ mi. N, 1 W Cache	Subad.	W. Bartush	W. Bartush
5/15/89	"	2 mi. N, 1 E Indiahoma	2 yng. in nest	S. Orr	S. Orr
6/2/89	"	" " " "	2 yng. banded	S. Orr, J. Banta	" "
6/16/89	"	" " " "	2 yng. in nest; both ads. near	S. Orr	S. Orr
6/19/89	"	2½ mi. NE Cache	Ad. courting	J.A. Grzybowski, D. Ladd	J.A. Grzybowski
6/24/89	"	2 mi. N, 1 E Indiahoma	Nest empty; 1 fledgling & 1 ad. in area	S. Orr	S. Orr

* Banded and photographed

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ASH-THROATED FLYCATCHER NESTING IN CENTRAL OKLAHOMA

BY JOHN S. SHACKFORD AND WARREN D. HARDEN

On 16 May 1982, in Kingfisher County, 10 miles west of Okarche, central Oklahoma, the authors and Hubert R. Harris found an Ash-throated Flycatcher's (*Myiarchus cinerascens*) nest that contained five eggs. The nest was built in an old nest cavity about 10 feet high in the side of a wooden gatepost. We caught and banded one adult bird (No. 1211-26033) that had apparently been incubating the eggs just before being captured. For this reason, and because we found a brood patch on its abdomen, we presumed that this was the female of the pair. According to C.E. Bendire, "The female, I think, attends to the duties of incubation exclusively . . ." (Bent, A.C., 1942, Life histories of North American birds, U.S. Natl. Mus. Bull. No. 179, Wash., D.C., p. 131). Almost exactly a year later, on 10 May 1983, the *very same bird* was recaptured at a nest cavity about a mile to the northwest. Both of these nest-holes had probably been excavated originally by Ladder-backed Woodpeckers (*Picoides scalaris*).

Details of these nestings are of interest. On 3 May 1982, Shackford first saw and heard an Ash-throated Flycatcher in Canadian County about ¼ mile southwest of the gatepost nest site. On 9 May, Shackford and Harden, and on 11 May, Shackford alone, saw an Ash-throat in the same area. It hung around a nearby shelterbelt of bois d'arc (*Maclura pomifera*) and juniper (*Juniperus virginiana*) trees where it may have been roosting, for it was usually seen during late evening. Then on 16 May, Harden was checking the gatepost nest cavity when he heard bill clacking from within; he immediately suspected that a *Myiarchus* flycatcher was responsible. Harden caught the flycatcher with a small mesh net he had been using to capture Ladder-backed Woodpeckers as they emerged from their nest holes. He determined that the nest contained five eggs by lowering a small flashlight bulb and mirror apparatus into the cavity. The adult bird was banded, photographed and carefully identified as an Ash-throated Flycatcher by its tail pattern: the leading edge of each outer tail feather was blackish toward its distal end rather than rufous as in the Great Crested Flycatcher, *M. crinitis*. The wing chord measured 95, tail 87, tarsus, 27 and exposed culmen, 17 mm, and the bird weighed 29.5 gm.

On 18 May the (presumed) female flew from the nest cavity when Shackford "squeaked" nearby, and on 22 May, Harden, his son Wade, daughter Liana, and Shackford verified that the nest still contained five eggs. However, on 27 May, Shackford found only four eggs. The gate at the nest-post had been left open, indicating human activity in the area, and this may well have upset the nesting birds. Shackford, on 4 June, saw an adult in the area and on 5 June one adult carrying nesting material *from* the nest. At this time there were no eggs in the nest and the cavity had a distinct musky odor, perhaps having been invaded by a rat snake (*Elaphe obsoleta*).

On 15 June, E. Wayne Easley saw two adult birds at and near the same nest cavity, and next day Shackford found that the nest now held four *new* eggs. He saw one bird leave the nest. On 27 June both adults were feeding four young, and on 29 June Shackford photographed both the banded female and its unbanded mate from about 35 feet away as they brought large insects to

the nest. Although one or more of the young may have fledged, Shackford could find no flycatcher in the area two weeks later (15 July).

Almost exactly a year later, on 10 May 1983, Harden, Shackford and Monte Setzer caught the same banded female at a second nest cavity about one mile northwest of the 1982 nest. It was about nine feet high in a mesquite tree (*Prosopis juliflora*) and also contained five eggs. They did not see the male. It took three attempts to catch the now-skittish female, who was not captured until after dark. Quite possibly they inadvertently caused this nest to fail, for on 26 May it had been abandoned by the female and held three Eastern Bluebird (*Sialia sialis*) eggs. The flycatchers were seen no more in 1983 or thereafter.

Sutton ([1982], Species summaries of Oklahoma bird records, Oklahoma Mus. Nat. Hist., Univ. Oklahoma, Norman), listed Ash-throated Flycatcher sightings for the following counties: Cimarron, Beaver, Harmon, Greer, Jackson, Tillman, Pawnee, Kiowa and Comanche. For the following counties he recorded breeding records: Cimarron, Harmon, Jackson, Tillman, Comanche and Beckham. Thus these nesting records in Kingfisher County are well east of the species' previously-known nesting range in the main body of the state.

An interesting question is whether or not the Ash-throated pair, the *first* time they ever nested in central Oklahoma, arrived together already mated, or separately? The chances of two birds of opposite sex turning up independently so far from the normal breeding range seems remote. One suspects such nesting birds arrive as pairs, but this is difficult to prove. Perhaps future radiotelemetry experiments will provide the answer.

6008-A NORTHWEST EXPRESSWAY, OKLAHOMA CITY, OKLAHOMA 73132 AND 2409 BUTLER DRIVE, NORMAN, OKLAHOMA 73069, 19 FEBRUARY 1987.

Common Moorhens nesting in the Texas Panhandle. — Prior to the impoundment of Lake Meredith in the 1960s by the construction of Sanford Dam on the Canadian River in southwestern Hutchinson County, local observers in the Texas Panhandle considered the Common Moorhen (*Gallinula chloropus*) a rarity. The few widespread sightings in spring had not been followed by any evidence of nesting and the species was considered as a bird of passage only. However, with the formation of a permanent marsh downstream from Sanford Dam, sightings became more frequent beginning in the early 1970s.

The first verification of nesting came in August 1976, when an adult Common Moorhen with one chick was found on the stilling basin below the dam by Fern Cain (Williams, F., 1977, Amer. Birds 31:195). The following chronology outlines my own discoveries of its breeding at that location in subsequent years: 5 July 1981, five adults with seven chicks (Williams, F., 1981, Amer. Birds 35:955) — reported in error as 15 July; 6 July 1984, three adults with two juveniles (Williams, F., 1984, Amer. Birds 38:1035); 4 July 1985, two adults with six chicks plus three juveniles; 29 June 1986, one juvenile. Although I have found adult moorhens summering in the marsh every year since 1975, not always have I seen young birds or other indications of breeding.

In the summer of 1983, Winnie Wester reported that a pair of Common Moorhens nested at Southeast Park Lake in Canyon, Randall County, about 55 miles south of Lake Meredith. On 24 June 1979 I observed an adult moorhen on a playa lake northwest of Dimmitt, in Castro County (Williams, F., 1979, Amer. Birds 33:876), and on 4 August 1985 I discovered an adult with three juveniles at a playa 12 miles south and 4 west of Dimmitt (Williams, F., 1986,

Amer. Birds 40:135). This latter site is a permanent body of water with an extensive growth of cattails (*Typha* sp.) located near a cattle feedlot.

Prior to these discoveries, the closest nesting to the Texas Panhandle was in Alfalfa and Grady counties in westcentral Oklahoma (Sutton, G.M., 1974, A check-list of Oklahoma birds, Stovall Mus. Sci. & Hist., Univ. Oklahoma, Norman, p. 13), and in central Texas (American Ornithologists' Union, 1957, Check-list of North American birds, 5th ed., Baltimore, p. 160). Concurrent with breeding in the northern Texas plains, nesting was being reported in the southern plains in Crosby County (Williams, F., 1978, Amer. Birds 32:225) and in Lubbock County (Williams, F., 1984, Amer. Birds 38:1035).

Other localities in the Texas Panhandle at which the Common Moorhen has been recorded in summer and where it may nest are one reported by Oberholser in Hemphill County (1974, The bird life of Texas, Univ. Texas Press, Austin, p. 303) and two by E.B. Ellis in northwestern Gray County (Williams, F., 1979, Amer. Birds 33:876; 1980, Amer. Birds 34:177). — Kenneth D. Seyffert, 2206 S. Lipscomb St., Amarillo, Texas 79109, 6 September 1986.

FROM THE EDITOR: Most duck populations in North America have declined to all-time record low numbers. The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service reports that the 31 million ducks surveyed during the spring of 1989 is eight percent lower than in 1988 and 24 percent under the 1955–1988 average. Particularly hard-hit are Northern Pintails, which are now 55 percent below their long-term average; American Wigeons, down 19 percent from 1988; Northern Shovelers, down 24 percent; and Redheads, 26 percent below last year's numbers. Gadwalls and Mallards were both seven percent under 1988 numbers and Green-winged Teal 14 percent. Canvasbacks, which for several years have been illegal to kill, were up 12 percent from last year.

The primary reason for these declines, of course, is loss of habitat. When prairie potholes in the northern plains are drained for agriculture, vital breeding areas are lost. This, coupled with increased usurpation of inland and coastal marshes necessary on the wintering grounds, deals a double blow to most species. A series of droughts during the 1980s, accentuated by the severely dry breeding season of 1988, certainly exacerbated an already serious problem, resulting in even lower reproduction.

Although not the basic cause of the dilemma, hunting annually takes its toll on already decreasing populations. Even greatly restrictive limits imposed in recent years haven't helped the over-all picture very much. For example, the take in 1988 was only half that of the previous year, but populations are still dropping. Hunting embargos are not very politically popular, but if drastic measures are not taken soon, the grandsons of present-day waterfowl hunters will not be able to enjoy their grandfathers' sport — there won't be any ducks around to shoot (statistics from Outdoor News Bulletin, published by The Wildlife Management Institute, Washington, D.C., 11 August 1989). — Jack D. Tyler.

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