

THE BLACK SKIMMER IN OKLAHOMA

By Mitchell Oliphant

During midmorning of 3 June 1991, while scanning the mud flats at Lake Overholser, Oklahoma City, central Oklahoma, with my 15-60 power spotting scope I found, coursing over the water, a gull-sized bird with a distinct black dorsum and white underparts. Back and forth it flew on long narrow wings just above the water's surface in front of a low cofferdam at the north end of the lake. Its outsized bill was orange basally, but black toward the tip. Closer scrutiny revealed that the lower mandible, decidedly longer than the upper, was largely submerged when the bird "skimmed" the surface of the lake. I quickly concluded that this strange visitor was none other than a Black Skimmer (*Rynchops niger*), whose breeding range is normally confined to the coasts of the Atlantic Ocean and the Gulf of Mexico from Massachusetts south to Florida and west to Texas (American Ornithologists' Union, 1983, *The A. O. U. check-list of North American birds*, 6th ed., p. 239).



BLACK SKIMMER

*Photo taken by Jim Vicars at Lake Overholser in Oklahoma City on 7 June 1991.*

I observed the skimmer for perhaps 15 minutes and noticed that it frequently rested on a low sandbar near the cofferdam. Anxious to share my splendid discovery with others, I telephoned John Newell. Soon, he arrived with his wife, Dorothy, and Thula Parkhill. Altogether, we observed the skimmer for at least an hour, thrilling to its graceful, almost effortless flight as it fished near shore. Hubert Harris was fortunate to happen by and also have the opportunity to admire this highly unusual bird.

Ironically, it was Newell who discovered Oklahoma's first Black Skimmer 24 years before *at this identical location!* This was on 14 May 1967, when one was studied during a six-hour period by Newell, T.K. Shires, Nelson Hall, Herb Chezem, Ernest and Betty

Hicock and Ray and Joyce Tillerson (John Newell, pers. comm.; Sutton, G.M., 1974, *A check-list of Oklahoma birds*, Stovall Mus. Sci. & Hist., Univ. Oklahoma, Norman).

During the intervening years, only one other *Rhynchops* is on record for the state. At Stanley Draper Lake in Cleveland County, central Oklahoma, several observers, including Grace E. Ray, Frances Peters, Warren D. Harden and George M. Sutton, saw one repeatedly on 1, 2 and 3 October 1971. On the latter date, Sutton collected the bird, which proved to be an adult female (UOMZ 7211; Ray, G.E., 1972, *Bull. Oklahoma Ornithol. Soc.* 4:34).

The skimmer lingered at Lake Overholser for six days, being last recorded on 8 June. During this period, many other observers saw it, including Esther Key, Jim and Nancy Vicars, Jeff and Tina Webster, Ernest Wilson, Sam Moore, Jim Norman, Jeri McMahon and Vera Jennings. Most of the bird's time was spent loitering along the aforementioned sandbar. Here it was occasionally in the company of Ring-billed Gulls (*Larus delawarensis*) and Least Terns (*Sterna antillarum*). At intervals during the day, however, it would lift up and slowly skim back and forth across the north end of the lake. Whether or not it was catching many fish was not immediately apparent. The bird was photographed by me on 3 June and subsequently by Jim Vicars (cover photo).

3116 NORTH VIRGINIA, OKLAHOMA CITY, OKLAHOMA 73118, 6 AUGUST 1991

## GENERAL NOTES

**Common Loon at Quartz Mountain State Park in summer.** —During the early afternoon of 14 July 1989, Tammy K. James and I discovered a large, light-colored bird swimming in a cove of Lake Altus-Lugert in Quartz Mountain State Park, Greer County, southwestern Oklahoma. It sat low in the water with its head tilted slightly upward. Examination through binoculars revealed the bird's grayish dorsum and white throat and chest. Its bill was gray. I tentatively identified it as a Common Loon (*Gavia immer*), a species that I had had considerable experience with in northern Minnesota and Wisconsin.

We observed the bird again at 1430 the same afternoon. A Bushnell Spacemaster II spotting scope with 25 X eyepiece allowed us excellent close-up views. Its gray sides, and neck and the dark area on its head above the eyes confirmed our earlier identification and precluded its being a Pacific Loon (*S. pacifica*). It was a Common Loon in basic (winter) plumage. For nearly 25 minutes, we watched it swim slowly about near shore, occasionally stretching one leg completely out of the water.

Between 0940 and 1010 on 21 July we noted the loon in the same location. Again, it was preening and loafing in a lackadaisical manner. I took several photographs (on file at Cameron University), using a 200mm lens. After this date, however, the loon was not seen again.

The cove that the loon favored lay between and south of two granite hills in the south end of the lake known as Twin Peaks. Because these prominences protected the cove from wind, the water there tended to be relatively calm. This very feature, however, made the cove a popular area for boating. The loon was never present when boats were, and noise and human activity may have eventually forced it out of the park.

The Common Loon is a rare migrant in spring and an occasional fall migrant through

this part of the state (Tyler, J.D., 1979, *Birds of southwestern Oklahoma*, Stovall Mus. Sci. & Hist., Univ. Oklahoma, Norman, p. 10). This is the first southwestern Oklahoma record for this species in summer, but John G. Newell observed one in Oklahoma City during this same summer (*Am. Birds* 43: 1335, 1989), and there are summer sightings for 10 or more Oklahoma counties, all except one in the eastern half of the state (Sutton, G.M., [1982], Species summaries of Oklahoma bird records, Oklahoma Mus. Nat. Hist., Univ. Oklahoma, Norman). —Victoria Mason, *Naturalist, Quartz Mountain State Park, Rt. 1, Box 40, Lone Wolf, Oklahoma 73655, 24 January 1990*.

**Eurasian Wigeon in Comanche County, Oklahoma.** —At noon on 6 April 1991, my friend Edward Hall and I visited the Wichita Mountains National Wildlife Refuge near Lawton in Comanche County, southwestern Oklahoma. The temperature was about 70° F and winds were calm. Although skies were somewhat cloudy, light conditions were good, and the sun was almost directly overhead.

Our first stop was at French Lake immediately south of refuge headquarters. As we scanned the south arm of the lake with our binoculars, a small flock of American Wigeons (*Anas americana*) swam into view. Ed noticed a peculiar duck at one end of the flock, and both of us then concentrated our attention on it through our telescopes. The ducks we estimated to be about 300 feet away. Because of its dark head and vivid coloration, we both concluded that this strange anatid was a male bird in adult plumage. The crown, from the base of the bill to the back of the reddish-brown head, was pale yellow. Compared to the other drakes, its head was darker, the crown was dull yellow rather than clear white, and it lacked the green "blaze" through the eye. The sandy pink color was confined to the breast rather than extending onto the sides, which were grayish, as was the back. In profile, there was an area of white in front of this duck's black tail and a conspicuous white patch on its folded forewing. Not once did we see it in flight. Its size was the same as the wigeons around it. After studying the odd duck for 20 minutes as it fed and mingled with the others, we agreed that it was a drake Eurasian Wigeon, *A. penelope*.

I had previously identified this species in Seattle, Washington. Both Ed and I are experienced observers and I have frequently led birdwatching field trips.

The Eurasian Wigeon is seldom recorded in the Southern Great Plains. A perusal of *American Birds* uncovered only three records since 1982, two in Texas, one in Nebraska. There are five previous Oklahoma records: at a lake in Ponca City, Kay County, on 7 and 8 November 1952 (1953, *Aud. Field Notes* 7:281); possibly the same individual on same lake as above on 6, 8 and 14 March 1953; in or near Guymon, Texas County, on 29 April 1955; at Lost Lake in the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge on 13 December 1963; and in Roger Mills County in "early October" 1970 (1971, *Am. Birds* 25:75; see Sutton, G.M., [1982], Species summaries of Oklahoma bird records, Oklahoma Mus. Nat. Hist., Univ. Oklahoma, Norman). —Keith E. Lockhart, 225 *Highland Knoll, Lewisville, Texas 75067, 29 October 1991*.

**Osprey preys on amphibian.** —At 1605 on 7 October 1989, at a place known locally as Watson's Crossing and located 8 miles east of Kenton in Cimarron County, far western Oklahoma, an Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*) flew up from the Cimarron River bed, prey in tow. It landed in a cottonwood tree (*Populus deltoides*) about 350 yards

north of the river. Puzzled by the shape of the prey item, which was obviously not a fish, Dr. Jack Tyler, other class members and I approached the large bird in a van. It allowed us to within approximately 20 feet, then flew west, with talons grasping prey. Once again, we followed in the vehicle. When we next saw it, the Osprey arose from the ground only about 30 feet away. From that distance, we could tell by the length of its hind legs that the captive animal was a frog with an approximate snout-vent length of 3-4 inches. The only sizeable ranids occurring in the area are the plains leopard frog, *Rana blairi*, and the bullfrog, *R. catesbeiana*. The single source of water thereabouts was a quiet pool in the river near the spot from which the Osprey had flushed. There, moments earlier, we had noticed a few small bullfrogs, one of whose number we suspected the raptor had caught.

Ospreys are classically described as almost exclusively piscivorous, but on rare occasions have been known to feed on non-fish species including small mammals, birds, reptiles and amphibians (for review, see Sherrod, S.K., 1978, *Raptor Res.* 12(3/4):92). Frogs have been reported as prey by Brown and Amadon (1968, *Eagles, hawks and falcons of the world*, McGraw-Hill Book Co., N.Y.), Dement'ev and Gladkov (1951, *Birds of the Soviet Union*, Vol. I), Witherby, H.F., et al., (1939, *Handbook of British birds*, Vol. III), and Coward (1984, *The Oriole* 49:43-14).

That Ospreys occasionally eat non-piscine animals does not prove that their capture is prompted by a decrease in normal prey, but "may represent another food source for certain populations of Ospreys" (Coward 1984). —Gerard A. Clyde Jr., 4103 N.W. Currell Dr., Lawton, Oklahoma 73505, 22 March 1991.

**New early fall date for Bald Eagle in Oklahoma.** — On 19 September 1990, while fishing by boat along the south shore of Tom Steed Reservoir 3 miles north and 2 miles west of Mountain Park, Kiowa County, Oklahoma, I noticed an adult Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucophalus*) cruising about, at times less than 100 yards away. The day was calm and rather cool, with intermittent light showers. Having fished this lake for many years, I had encountered Bald Eagles before. Always, I was impressed by the adult's great size and the immaculate whiteness of its head and tail.

At one point, the eagle swooped at a Great Blue Heron (*Ardea herodias*), causing it while beating retreat to drop a fish. The eagle grasped the plundered prey in its talons and took flight, transferring it to the bill in midair.

The earliest date of record for this part of Oklahoma is 2 October. On that date in 1958, Edwin Drummond, a refuge employee, saw an adult along Panther Creek in the Wichita Mountains National Wildlife Refuge in Comanche County (Halloran, A.F., 1960, *Proc. Oklahoma Acad. Sci.* 40:120; Halloran field notes). For the entire state, the first fall date known heretofore was 1 October, when one was observed near the Arkansas River 10 miles south of Wagoner, Wagoner County, by James L. Norman and Vaud L. Travis, Jr. in 1955 (Sutton, G.M., [1982], Species summaries of Oklahoma bird records, Oklahoma Mus. Nat. Hist., Univ. Oklahoma, Norman). The Kiowa County eagle, then, arrived almost two weeks earlier to establish a new early fall date for Oklahoma. — Earl Shaw, 1010 10th St., Snyder, Oklahoma 73566, 14 September 1991.

**Recent breeding records for the Northern Harrier in southwestern Oklahoma.** — Northern Harriers (*Circus cyaneus*) are uncommon migrants and winter residents in southwestern Oklahoma (Tyler, J.D., 1979, *Birds of southwestern Oklahoma*, Contrib. Stovall Mus. Sci. & Hist. No. 2, Univ. Oklahoma, p. 18). Large numbers of these raptors winter locally, and roosts in the native mixed-grass prairie on the East Range of Fort Sill, Comanche County, are known to have contained more than 1000 harriers some years (unpubl. Fort Sill Wildlife Division records). The first breeding record for this species in southwestern Oklahoma was confirmed when a nest was discovered on the East Range in the spring of 1986 (Montaperto, T., 1988, *Bull. Oklahoma Ornithol. Soc.* 21:12).

Since 1986, five additional breeding records are known. Three more nests have been discovered on Fort Sill; a harrier was observed feeding young there; and, in Stephens County, a nest with chicks was destroyed during a hay cutting operation.

On 28 April 1991, Regosin and Sarnat observed a male Northern Harrier performing the "somersault" flight display and consorting with a female bird on Fort Sill's West Range approximately 4.5 km WSW of the main post office. On 5 May, they found the pair in a nearby grassland and watched the female carry grass to a partially completed nest in a dense stand of little bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*). The birds were not observed in this field again, and we concluded that the nest had been deserted.

Approximately 3 km north of the abandoned nest site, Regosin and Sarnat saw a pair of Northern Harriers on 15 May. This was likely the same pair observed earlier. The female flew down to a spot in the bluestem grass where we soon found the nest. It consisted of a mat of dead, flattened grass stems and held four eggs. Open prairie around the nest was composed primarily of little bluestem and lesser amounts of switchgrass (*Panicum virgatum*), together with various admixtures of sideoats grama (*Bouteloua curtipendula*), wildrye (*Elymus canadensis*), and several forbs. The nest was situated on a gentle incline near a small stand of mesquite trees (*Prosopis juliflora*) 15 m northeast of a shallow drainage.

On 1 June we returned to the nest to find a completed clutch of five eggs. Five small chicks were observed on 17 June, and on 6 July Sam Orr banded the two male (USFWS band nos. 614-54063 and 064) and three female nestlings (band nos. 745-65826, 827, and 828). Interestingly, the nest contained two dead passerine chicks that had not yet sprouted feathers, suggesting that harriers may be nest predators.

On 17 May 1991, Orr spotted a male harrier chasing a Red-tailed Hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*) on Fort Sill's East Range near Lake George, approximately 5.7 km ESE of the Fort Sill post office. The female harrier flew up from the nest to join its mate and then returned. The nest contained five eggs and was similar to that described above. It was in open grass on a gentle slope not more than 25 m east of a small depression bordered by a few small woody plants. The dominant grass surrounding the nest was little bluestem, but some switchgrass, sideoats grama and a variety of herbaceous species were also present. Several photographs of this nest taken on 24 July are on file at Cameron University in Lawton.

On 22 June, Orr returned to band the nestlings, but four of them left the nest as he approached. The remaining male nestling was banded and released (band no. 614-54062). Northern Harriers incubate for approximately 31 days and the chicks fledge about five or six weeks later (Reilly, E.M., 1968, *The Audubon illustrated handbook of American birds*, McGraw-Hill Co., N.Y.), therefore this clutch was probably completed

about mid-April.

On 19 May, Orr observed a male harrier carrying prey on the East Range at a place approximately 10.5 km east of the Fort Sill post office, but he could not find the nest. When he returned on 16 July, part of the field had been mowed for hay. However, he watched the male bird as it plucked a meadowlark, then dropped it to a recently fledged juvenile. On 20 July, he saw a male and female fledgling perched in the shade of a small green ash (*Fraxinus pennsylvanica*) near the suspected nest site.

On 24 July, Orr, J. D. Tyler and Regosin returned to the latter site. No harriers were around, but we did find the remains of what was almost certainly a harrier nest composed of dead, trampled grass stalks. Numerous tunnels in the surrounding grass where the young could have taken refuge led away in several directions. Typically, the nest lay on a gentle slope about 20 m southeast of a small vale with two green ash trees and two multiflora rose (*Rosa multiflora*) bushes. Grasses in the immediate vicinity were the ubiquitous little bluestem, some big bluestem (*Andropogon gerardi*), silver bluestem (*A. saccharoides*), sideoats grama, switchgrass, and a few forbs. Photographs of the site are on file in the Cameron University Museum of Zoology in Lawton.

There are two other breeding records for southwestern Oklahoma. In June 1986, a farmer in Stephens County inadvertently mowed over a harrier nest, killing two of four nestlings. The surviving two were brought to Arthur and Yolande Breaden in Lawton for rehabilitation. They thrived in captivity and were released months later, after learning to fend for themselves (pers. comm., Y. Breaden). Finally, Orr observed a male harrier transfer food to a female bird on 20 June 1987, at a spot on the West Range 4.5 km SSW of the Fort Sill post office. On 5 July, the hen harrier brought food to a juvenile that had recently fledged. However, the nest was never found.

In addition to the six Northern Harrier nesting records to date, there are 18 or more sightings known for eight southwestern Oklahoma counties between 1 June and 31 August (Sutton, G.M., [1982], *op. cit.*; Tyler J.D., unpubl. field notes). These, together with recent nesting records, suggest that Northern Harriers may have been breeding at low densities in southwestern Oklahoma for some time. — Jonathan V. Regosin, *Department of Ecology and Evolution, University of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois 60637*; Sam Orr, *6307 NW Maple, Lawton, Oklahoma 73505*; and Jeremy Sarnat, *University of Indiana at Bloomington, Indiana 47401, 15 August 1991*.

**Harris' Hawk in Cleveland County, Oklahoma.** — On 22 November 1989, Curtis J. Creighton found a Harris' Hawk (*Parabuteo unicinctus*) near Max Westheimer Airport in the north part of Norman, Cleveland County, central Oklahoma. Independent of Creighton's sighting, I observed apparently the same hawk on 28 November 1989 near the airport. Because of its jet black breast and back, I determined it to be an adult male.

Almost a year later on 23 October 1990, I again encountered either the same or another male Harris' Hawk near the airport. Based on size, coloration and behavior, I believed that it was the same individual that had visited the previous year. After carefully noting the absence of jesses and bands, and detecting no excessive wear on the tarsi, I concluded that this hawk was probably wild. Warren D. Harden observed it on several dates, and John S. Shackford photographed it on 1 December 1990. Both concurred that it had probably not escaped from captivity. A factor weighing heavily

toward this conclusion was the bird's alert, wary behavior. On perhaps a dozen occasions during the winter of 1990-91, numerous persons studied this bird. I saw it last sometime in February, but it was last seen on 8 May, 1991.

The Arizona subspecies of the Harris' Hawk (*P. u. superior*) averages slightly larger than does that of south Texas (*P. u. harrisi*). For this reason, I am relatively confident that this bird was a member of the former subspecies. Also, since this species is considered a "zone bird," i.e., moving about in certain southern habitats, but seldom being truly migratory, I speculated that the Norman bird drifted northeastward from southern Arizona, rather than arriving from southern Texas.

The grassy fields and cultivated land surrounding the runways at Max Westheimer Field have attracted birds of prey for many years. For example, at a vantage point near the north end of the airport one day in December 1989, Harden, during one revolution, counted 38 hawks. In addition to the Harris' Hawk, the list of raptors that have been recorded in this area since 1974 is lengthy: Northern Harrier (*Circus cyaneus*), Cooper's Hawk (*Accipiter cooperii*), Swainson's Hawk (*Buteo swainsoni*), Red-tailed Hawk (*B. jamaicensis*), Ferruginous Hawk (*B. regalis*), Rough-legged Hawk (*B. lagopus*), American Kestrel (*Falco sparverius*), Merlin (*F. columbarius*), Prairie Falcon (*F. mexicanus*), Great Horned Owl (*Bubo virginianus*), Snowy Owl (*Nyctea scandiaca*; see *Bull. Oklahoma Ornithol. Soc.* 8:29-34, 1975), Burrowing Owl (*Athene cunicularia*), and Short-eared Owl (*Asio flammeus*).

According to Sutton, ([1982], Species summaries of Oklahoma birds, Oklahoma Mus. Nat. Hist., Univ. Oklahoma, Norman) the Harris' Hawk was first recorded in the state when one was seen "during early 1956" at the Naval Depot near McAlester in Pittsburg County. It has been recorded in Oklahoma at least 10 times since, most recently in 1987, and chiefly along the Red River in southern Jackson County, southwestern Oklahoma. All these records were summarized by Banta and McMahon (1987, *Bull. Oklahoma Ornithol. Soc.* 20:29-31). — Robert C. Troutt, 927 *Canterbury, Norman, Oklahoma 73069, 8 April 1991.*

**Greater Yellowlegs in central Oklahoma in winter.** —At about 1330 on 12 December 1989, John and Dorothy Newell joined me at the canal near the southwest corner of Lake Hefner in Oklahoma City, central Oklahoma. Knowing that I wasn't well acquainted with shorebirds, John pointed out a Greater Yellowlegs, *Tringa melanoleuca*, standing near a dilapidated duck blind. It sported long, yellow legs and a body much larger than a nearby Killdeer's (*Charadrius vociferus*). When it flew, John called attention to the white in the rump and tail. He saw four Greater Yellowlegs on each of the following two days.

On 30 December 1989, 40 miles south of Lake Hefner, Pat Bergey saw two Greater Yellowlegs. They were feeding in a shallow pond near the Canadian River adjacent to the Norman sewage treatment plant outflow.

When visiting Lake Hefner during ensuing days, I occasionally observed this species again. Because it was the only large shorebird then present, this was fairly easy. On 1 January 1990, I saw two. Four days later, at 0730 and 1730, I again saw two birds. Newell saw three that day and Mitchell Oliphant photographed them. On 6 January, Newell noted the threesome again, but on 7 January found only one.

On 8 January, I saw three Greater Yellowlegs near several gulls on the southeast side

of the canal and Newell saw three the next day. I spied one bird at about 0730 on both 10 and 11 January in the cove west of Prairie Dog Point on the west side of the lake. On each of these dates, Newell located four.

Not until 21 January were the yellowlegs sighted again. On that date, Newell found one. On the 28th, both he and Oliphant counted five feeding in the cove behind Newell's house near the lake. Oliphant photographed four of them as they fed together.

During February 1990, the date, number of yellowlegs seen and observer(s) were as follows: 1 February (3), Newell; 12 February (4), Key; 19 February (4), Newell; 24 February (1), Newell; 25 February (1), Newell and Key; and 26 February (3), Newell. During these months there were extensive mudflats around Lake Hefner because the water level was exceptionally low due to highway construction on the east side.

My final sighting (two birds) was on 7 March, but the last individual at Lake Hefner was recorded by Newell on 11 March. On 16 March the first dowitchers (*Limnodromus* sp.) arrived and, for me, the days of easy shorebird identification during this comparatively mild Oklahoma winter were over.

John S. Shackford reported a Greater Yellowlegs at a small ice-covered pond about 5 miles northwest of Lake Overholser on 20 December 1975 (*Bull. Oklahoma Ornithol. Soc.* 9:33, 1976), but according to G.M. Sutton's Species summaries of Oklahoma bird records [1982] at the Oklahoma Museum of Natural History in Norman, the only sightings for the state during January have been in Alfalfa County, northwestern Oklahoma, at or near the Salt Plains National Wildlife Refuge on the following dates: 1 January, 1943; 10 January, 1953; 13 January, 1968; and 14 January, 1942. No sightings are on record for early February.—Esther M. Key, 518 Van Buren Ave. NW, Piedmont, Oklahoma 73078, 15 April 1991.

**Occurrence of the White-winged Dove in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.** —Just outside the patio door of our home in northwest Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, is an ideal spot for viewing birds as they come to the ground to partake of the mixed seeds we scatter there. On the morning of 8 April 1991, one dove and several overwintering sparrows were in the yard. Although generally the same color, this dove seemed larger than the Mourning Doves (*Zenaida macroura*) that we occasionally saw, and I noticed that there was a white margin about a half-inch wide along the lower edge of its closed wings.

I called Thula Parkhill and Hubert Harris, who soon arrived to see this strange dove. By then it was perched on an overhanging branch of our apple tree a few feet up, but was still visible. A brief flight exposed the white tips of the dove's outer tail feathers as well as conspicuous white upper wing coverts that vividly contrasted with the dark gray primary and secondary flight feathers. I then recognized for certain that the dove was a White-wing, *Z. asiatica*. During past trips to the Rio Grande River Valley of southern Texas and parts of New Mexico and Arizona, we had all encountered this species.

Wanting to see the dove's flight colors again, I flushed it. Into my neighbor's mulberry tree (*Morus* sp.) it flew, where it remained partially hidden by the foliage. Although it did not return to our yard, my neighbors, who also feed birds, reported seeing it in their yards on both 10 and 12 April.

I.D. Franklin, who lives about 4 miles northeast of my house, told me of seeing a White-winged Dove in his area a few weeks later, in late April or early May. Not long

thereafter, on 5 June, Jack Roberts, who lives three miles south of me, called to describe an unusual dove in his yard. His description was very similar to the one given above. He had heard its call, depicted as "loud and somewhat owl-like."

Where their wintering ranges overlap, Mourning and White-winged doves mingle in feeding areas in Texas. At least twice this past April, I noted large numbers of the former in closely packed groups feeding in grassy areas at the Lake Hefner Golf Course. The last group I saw was on 21 April, when possibly 100 doves were foraging there. They were migrating flocks, and perhaps the White-wing(s) joined them as they migrated northward.

Brewer (1987, *Bull. Oklahoma Ornithol. Soc.* 20:25-26) documented the first White-winged Dove for the state at Pauls Valley in Garvin County. That dove was seen during November and December, 1986. Prior to these dates, three sight records had been reported, all earlier in the year. These dates and localities were: 13 June 1973 (Jackson County); 3 July 1969 (Greer County); and 27 September 1970 (Kay County; Sutton G.M., [1982], Species summaries of Oklahoma bird records, Oklahoma Mus. Nat. Hist., Univ. Oklahoma, Norman). The 8 April 1991 date reported herein however, is the earliest for Oklahoma. A few sightings in the Panhandle of Texas have been reported (Texas Ornithological Society, 1984, *The T.O.S. checklist of the birds of Texas*, 2nd ed., Austin) and a specimen was collected in north central Texas (Stangl, F.B., and W. Pulich, 1987, *Texas J. Sci.* 39:288-289).

Within the past several years, this species has expanded its breeding range northward. It is now a regular breeder in Waco, Brownwood, the Guadalupe Mountains and El Paso. Additionally, more and more birds overwinter in south Texas rather than Mexico (George, R.R., 1991, *Texas Parks & Wildl. Mag.*, Sept.).

A few White-wings may wander into Oklahoma during most years. However, the comparatively small number of observers are mostly concentrated in metropolitan areas and very thinly dispersed throughout the remainder of the state, especially in the western sections. This species should be watched for among migrating flocks of Mourning Doves. —John G. Newell, 8304 Lakeaire Dr., Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73132, 15 July 1991.

**Two partly albinistic hummingbirds in Comanche County, Oklahoma.** —On 6 and 26 August 1991, the senior author, who lives 5 1/2 miles east and 1 mile north of Meers, in rural Comanche County, Oklahoma, watched a white hummingbird feed from the many luxuriant flowers in her yard. Its favorite was that of the trumpet creeper (*Campsis radicans*), but at times it also visited *Phlox* and *Hibiscus* flowers. She described it as being bigger and "fuzzier" than the Ruby-throated Hummingbirds (*Archilocus colubris*) present. It may have been a true albino because of its totally white coloration, but Hewes couldn't get close enough to see if the eyes were pink or not.

Albinos are rare, but birds that show partial albinism are not so uncommon. However, Gross (1965, *Bird-Banding* 36:67-71) listed cases of known albinism for only four of the 15 hummingbird species that occur in the United States. Most were probably not truly albinistic (i.e., totally devoid of pigment), for of 1847 avian species in 54 families tabulated, only 7% were reported as pure albinos.

Incredibly, on 19 September 1991, another white hummingbird showed up at the junior author's feeder in Lawton and returned almost daily until 1 October. It domi-

nated the feeder, driving the smaller Ruby-throats away. McCoy wrote the following description of this bird: "The hummingbird was white, with light gray markings on wing and tail feathers. The body was solid white. Eyes and beak were black." A photo of it taken by Charles T. McCoy on 24 or 25 September is on file in the Cameron University Museum of Zoology at Lawton. It is evident from the foregoing that this bird was not a true albino.

Because they were perceived to be bigger than the Ruby-throats around them, there is a possibility that one or both of these individuals were Rufous Hummingbirds (*Selasphorus rufus*). Though rare, this species has been reported from Comanche County on a few occasions (see McGee, J.M., 1983, *Bull. Oklahoma Ornithol. Soc.* 16:14-15; Kranenburg, T., 1988, *Bull. Oklahoma Ornithol. Soc.* 21:21-22). The only other species of hummingbird known for southwestern Oklahoma is the Black-chinned (*A. alexandri*), which, at least locally, may be almost as numerous as the similar-sized Ruby-throat in summer (pers. comm., J.D. Tyler).

One other instance of albinism in the family Archilochidae has been reported for Oklahoma. From 10 August to 7 September 1987, a partial albino visited a feeder in Norman, Cleveland County, central Oklahoma (Bass, W., 1988, *Bull. Oklahoma Ornithol. Soc.* 21:20-21). As in the above account, it appeared to be larger than a Ruby-throat, and may have been a Rufous Hummingbird. — June Hewes, *HC 30, Box 2750, Lawton, Oklahoma 73538, and Anita McCoy, 2614 NE Euclid, Lawton, Oklahoma 73507, 8 October 1991.*

**Brown Thrashers harrass fledgling Loggerhead Shrikes.** —As I was driving across a pasture 1 mile north and 3.5 miles east of Apache in Caddo County, southwestern Oklahoma, on 12 July 1991 I happened upon two adult Brown Thrashers (*Toxostoma rufum*) that were repeatedly diving toward something in the bermudagrass (*Cynodon dactylon*). The weather was normal for this time of year: 95°F, sunny, and with a southerly breeze estimated at 10 mph. As I drew closer, I could tell that the objective of these repeated attacks was a recently fledged Loggerhead Shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus*). For 28 nests in nearby Comanche County, J.D. Tyler (unpubl. MS) found that the average time from hatching to fledging was 16.8 days. Therefore, I surmised that this juvenile bird was from 16 to 20 days old. The Brown Thrashers retreated to a nearby pear tree (*Pyrus communis*) and loudly scolded as I retrieved the juvenile shrike. But they soon began to attack another young shrike on the ground not far away. All at once, two adult shrikes appeared. I backed away, hoping that they would fend off the thrashers. When it became obvious that the aggressors were paying little attention to the (assumed) parent shrikes, I interceded and caught the other fledgling, routing its assailants in the process.

After conferring with Tyler at Cameron University in Lawton, we decided to try to rehabilitate the fledgling shrikes and release them later. They were kept in a small enclosed porch at my house near Apache. Soon they began to accept pieces of grasshoppers and other small insects caught for them. Although they appeared to be none the worse for their experience, we had no way to ascertain the extent of damage they might have incurred from the thrashers. During the night of 15 July, one fledgling died. The other succumbed 24 hours later. These were taken to the Cameron University Museum of Zoology to be prepared as specimens.

The most logical explanation for the aggressive behavior of the Brown Thrashers would appear to be that the young shrikes had wandered into their nesting territory. Thrashers are well-known as staunch, even fearless, defenders of their eggs and young. For instance, several accounts were recorded by A.C. Bent (1948, *Life histories of North American birds*, Bull. U.S. Natl. Mus. No. 195, Wash., D.C., pp. 365-366) in which human intruders at nests had been attacked savagely by parent birds, sometimes even suffering punctures and lacerations.

During his study of shrikes in southwestern Oklahoma, Tyler (*op. cit.*) observed several other species of birds attacking young shrikes. These included Scissor-tailed Flycatchers (*Tyrannus forficatus*), American Robins (*Turdus migratorius*), Eastern Meadowlarks (*Sturnella magna*) and Common Grackles (*Quiscalus quiscula*). All of these incidents could not be attributed to transgression of nesting territory, nor could predatory intent be entirely ruled out. More information is needed in this area of interspecific avian behavior. —Kent Smith, Box 599, Apache, Oklahoma 73006, 22 July 1991.

**FROM THE EDITOR.** —A recent paper in *American Birds* (Vol. 45, pp. 50-52, 1991) merits the attention of serious bird students in Oklahoma. It documents the arrival of a new species in the state: the Shiny Cowbird (*Molothrus bonariensis*). As if the smaller songbirds that are the usual hosts of the native Brown-headed Cowbird (*M. ater*) don't have enough to contend with, there is now another parasite that soon may be vying for their nests.

The range of this species is much of South America north to Panama. The authors, J.A. Grzybowski and V.W. Fazio III, traced its expansion westward and northward through the Caribbean. First reported from Puerto Rico in 1955, the Shiny Cowbird was adversely impacting the reproductive success of several other species within 15 years. The first record for the United States was in 1985, in the Florida Keys. After reaching the mainland in 1987, populations increased rapidly. Two years later, it was reported from coastal locations in four other states: Georgia, Louisiana, and North and South Carolina, and from another (Alabama) in 1990. The first inland sighting was made at Fort Hood, Texas, on 23 May 1990.

On 12 June 1990, David Ely discovered a strange cowbird caught in a cowbird trap on the Wichita Mountains National Wildlife Refuge in Comanche County, Oklahoma. In the U.S. it proved to be only the second Shiny Cowbird reported away from coastal areas and the westernmost to date. Several photographs of this ostensible first-year male bird were published in this paper. The specimen is housed at the Oklahoma Museum of Natural History on the University of Oklahoma campus.

Both the Texas and Oklahoma reports were of birds caught in traps set to control cowbird populations in areas where a threatened species, the Black-capped Vireo (*Vireo atricapillus*), breeds. Only time will reveal the effects of this new icterid on Oklahoma's birdlife. Numerous species that formerly were fairly common here in summer have become locally rare to uncommon in recent years, a situation to which the Brown-headed Cowbird has almost certainly contributed. Among them are the vireo mentioned above, Bell's Vireo (*V. bellii*), Orchard Oriole (*Icterus spurius*), Blue Grosbeak (*Guiraca caerulea*), Indigo Bunting (*Passerina cyanea*) and the Lark Sparrow (*Chondestes grammacus*).

# INDEX OF BIRD NAMES

BY JACK D. TYLER

- Accipiter cooperii*: 31  
*Ajaia ajaja*: 1-3  
*Ammodramus caudacutus*: 16  
*Ammodramus leconteii*: 16  
*Anas americana*: 27  
*Anas penelope*: 27  
 Anhinga: 13-14, 24  
*Anhinga anhinga*: 13-14, 24  
*Aphelocoma coerulescens*: 15  
*Archilochus alexandri*: 7, 34  
*Archilochus colubris*: 33, 34  
*Ardea herodias*: 6, 14, 28, 34  
*Asio flammeus*: 31  
*Athene cunicularia*: 31  
 Blackbird, Rusty: 7-8  
 Bluebird, Mountain: 24  
*Bubo virginianus*: 31  
*Bubulcus ibis*: 2, 14  
 Bunting, Indigo: 35  
*Buteo jamaicensis*: 29, 31  
*Buteo lagopus*: 31  
*Buteo regalii*: 31  
*Buteo swainsoni*: 31  
*Calcarius lapponicus*: 16  
*Calcarius pictus*: 16  
*Casmerodius albus*: 14  
*Charadrius alexandrinus*: 24  
*Charadrius melodus*: 24  
*Charadrius montanus*: 9-13  
*Charadrius vociferus*: 31  
*Chondestes grammacus*: 35  
*Chordeiles acutipennis*: 22  
*Chordeiles minor*: 21-22  
*Circus cyaneus*: 29-30, 31  
 Cowbird, Brown-headed: 35  
 Cowbird, Shiny: 35  
 Crane, Sandhill: 6  
*Cyanocitta cristata*: 15  
*Cyanocitta stelleri*: 14-15  
 Dove, Mourning: 32, 33  
 Dove, White-winged: 32-33  
 Dowitcher: 32  
 Eagle, Bald: 28  
 Egret, Cattle: 2, 14  
 Egret, Great: 14  
*Egretta caerulea*: 14  
*Euphagus carolinensis*: 7-8  
*Falco americanus*: 31  
*Falco columbarius*: 31  
*Falco mexicanus*: 31  
 Falcon, Prairie: 31  
 Flycatcher, Scissor-tailed: 18-21, 35  
 Flycatcher, Vermilion: 24  
*Gavia immer*: 4, 26  
 Grackle, Common: 35  
 Grebe, Pied-billed: 4-5  
 Grosbeak, Blue: 35  
*Grus canadensis*: 6  
*Guiraca caerulea*: 35  
 Gull, Bonaparte's: 17, 18  
 Gull, Little: 17-18  
 Gull, Ring-billed: 18, 26  
*Gymnorhinus cyanocephalus*: 15  
*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*: 28  
 Harrier, Northern: 29-30, 31  
 Hawk, Cooper's: 31  
 Hawk, Ferruginous: 31  
 Hawk, Harris': 30-31  
 Hawk, Red-tailed: 29, 31  
 Hawk, Rough-legged: 31  
 Hawk, Swainson's: 31  
 Heron, Great Blue: 5-6, 14, 28  
 Heron, Little Blue: 14  
 Hummingbird, Black-chinned: 7, 34  
 Hummingbird, Broad-tailed: 7  
 Hummingbird, Calliope: 6-7  
 Hummingbird, Ruby-throated: 33, 34  
 Hummingbird, Rufous: 7, 34  
*Icterus spurius*: 35  
*Icterus naevius*: 23  
 Jay, Blue: 15  
 Jay, Pinyon: 15  
 Jay, Scrub: 15  
 Jay, Steller's: 14-15  
 Kestrel, American: 31  
 Killdeer: 31  
 Kingbird, Eastern: 19, 20  
 Kingbird, Western: 20  
 Kitiwake, Black-legged: 18  
*Lanius ludovicianus*: 34-35  
*Larus delawarensis*: 18, 26  
*Larus minutus*: 17, 18  
*Larus philadelphia*: 17, 18  
*Limodromus*: 32  
 Longspur, Lapland: 16  
 Longspur, Smith's: 16  
 Loon, Common: 4, 26-27  
 Meadowlark, Eastern: 35  
 Merganser, Red-breasted: 17  
*Mergus serrator*: 17  
 Merlin: 31  
*Molothrus ater*: 35  
*Molothrus bonariensis*: 35  
 Nighthawk, Common: 21-22  
 Nighthawk, Lesser: 22  
 Nighthawk, Texas: 22  
 Nighthawk, Trilling: 22  
*Nyctea scandiaca*: 31  
*Oenanthe oenanthe*: 22-23  
 Oriole, Orchard: 35  
 Osprey: 27-28  
 Owl, Burrowing: 31  
 Owl, Great Horned: 31  
 Owl, Short-eared: 31  
 Owl, Snowy: 31  
*Pandion haliaetus*: 27-28  
*Parabuteo unicinctus*: 30-31  
*Passer domesticus*: 19, 20  
*Passerina cyanea*: 35  
*Picoides borealis*: 24  
 Plover, Mountain: 9-13  
 Plover, Piping: 24  
 Plover, Snowy: 24  
*Podilymbus podiceps*: 4  
*Pyrocephalus rubinus*: 24  
*Quiscalus quiscula*: 35  
*Rhynchops niger*: 25-26  
*Rissa tridactyla*: 18  
 Robin, American: 20, 23, 35  
*Selasphorus platycercus*: 7  
*Selasphorus rufus*: 7, 34  
 Shrike, Loggerhead: 34-35  
*Siala currucoides*: 24  
 Skimmer, Black: 25-26  
 Sparrow, House: 19, 20  
 Sparrow, Lark: 35  
 Sparrow, Sharp-tailed: 16  
 Spoonbill, Roseate: 1-3  
 Starling, European: 20  
*Stellula calliope*: 6-7  
*Sterna antillarum*: 26  
*Sturnella magna*: 35  
*Sturnus vulgaris*: 20  
 Tern, Least: 26  
 Thrasher, Brown: 20, 34-35  
 Thrush, Varied: 23  
*Toxostoma rufum*: 20, 34-35  
*Tringa melanoleuca*: 31-32  
*Turdus migratorius*: 20, 23, 35  
 turkey, water: 14  
*Tyrannus forficatus*: 18-21, 35  
*Tyrannus tyrannus*: 19, 20  
*Tyrannus verticalis*: 20  
*Vireo atricapillus*: 35  
*Vireo bellii*: 35  
 Vireo, Bell's: 35  
 Vireo, Black-capped: 35  
 Wheatear, Northern: 22-23  
 Wigeon, American: 27  
 Wigeon, Eurasian: 32  
 Woodpecker, Red-cockaded: 24  
 Yellowlegs, Greater: 31-32  
*Zenaidra asiatica*: 32-33  
*Zenaidra macroura*: 32, 33

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