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**BALD EAGLES, RAILS, AND OTHER 2006 BREEDING SEASON
OBSERVATIONS FROM NORTHWESTERN OKLAHOMA**

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Abstract—I document: (1) western extension to the breeding ranges of Bald Eagles and Red-shouldered Hawks; (2) sightings of Sora and Black, King and Virginia Rails at 4 locations in Woodward and Ellis counties; (3) breeding records of Greater Roadrunners, Spotted Sandpipers; and (4) observations of Pileated Woodpeckers, Common Loons, Gray Catbirds, Prothonotary Warblers, and Yellow-breasted Chats.

On 4 June, I first noted an adult pair of Bald Eagles (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) at Fort Supply Lake in Woodward County, and on 6, 7 and 12 June, I saw a recently fledged juvenile with the adults. On 23 June, I found the nest in thick woods near the lake. This was the first time a pair had been known to successfully nest at Fort Supply Lake, and this nest and a nest in Cimarron County that fledged 1 juvenile in 2005 (McConnell et al. 2006) constituted the 2 westernmost known breeding locations in Oklahoma (M. Alan Jenkins pers. comm.). With these sightings, combined with a nest in Grant County that was successful in 2005 and 2006 (M. Alan Jenkins pers. comm.), the Bald Eagle can be considered a statewide breeder.



Fig. 1. King rail (*Rallus elegans*) photographed 27 July 2006 by Scott McConnell.

I noted rails at 4 locations, and Black Rails (*Laterallus jamaicensis*) were present at all of them. I heard a Black Rail calling the morning of 4 June in a 3–4 ha wetland (ponds, cattails [*Typha* sp.], sedges) near Fort Supply Lake which I visited approximately 20 times between 4 June and 29 July; I did not hear a Black Rail again at that location after 4 June. I found a Sora (*Porzana carolina*) there on 6 (calling) and 7 July. At a cattail-dominated slough 8.5 km south, I found 3 rail species. I heard a Black Rail calling on the mornings of 27, 28 and 30 July (and made a sound recording on 28 July; note correction to Beck and Patten 2007). I saw an immature and adult female King Rail (*Rallus elegans*) on 27 July, and I saw an immature Virginia Rail (*R. limicola*) on 27 July and an adult on 28 July. The Virginia and King rails presumably bred in the immediate vicinity. For King Rails, the Oklahoma Breeding Bird Atlas (Reinking 2004) records 2 confirmed nests in the state during atlas years and no historical (pre-1997) breeding records. The Atlas noted 4 historical breeding locations for Virginia Rails, and McConnell et al. (2006) found Virginia Rails breeding in Cimarron County in 2005.

I also found Black Rails in 2 neighboring wetlands in Ellis County. I checked those wetlands on 9 dates between 26 June and 24 July, and heard 1–4 Black Rails there on 8 of those dates. One wetland was ~ 2 ha and surrounded by large trees, mostly cottonwoods (*Populus deltoides*), with a tree-lined road on 1 side. Cattails and sedges were the dominant vegetation; there also were a few small willows (*Salix*). A Virginia Rail called “kiddick” continuously on the evenings of 26 and 27 June. The other wetland (~17 ha) was 0.5 km east of the first and was long, narrow, mostly dry, and dominated by sedges. Don Shepard (pers. comm.) heard a Black Rail there on 25 June. I heard as many as 3 calling at once within 200 m of each other at that wetland on the evenings of 10 and 11 July, and on the evening of 11 July, there were 4 Black Rails (total) calling at the 2 wetlands. I made a sound recording of a calling Black Rail the morning of 5 July (note correction to Beck and Patten 2007). Breeding was not confirmed. Beck and Patten (2007) also found Black Rails calling in Beaver County in 2006.

On 1 July, I found 2 adult Red-shouldered Hawks (*Buteo lineatus*) and 1 recently fledged juvenile in woods south of Fort Supply Lake. This is the westernmost known breeding location for this species in Oklahoma, approximately 135 km farther west than a Red-shouldered breeding location in the Wichita Mountains (D. Reinking pers. comm.).

On 6 June, I found a Greater Roadrunner (*Geococcyx californianus*) nest with 3 eggs at the Hal and Fern Cooper Wildlife Management Area near Fort Supply; the nest remained active and by 29 June had large juveniles in it (E. Doxon pers. comm.). This same nest was reused later in the season and had 2 eggs on 16 July and an incubating adult on 22 July, the date of my last visit. Nest reuse by roadrunners within a breeding season is rare (Hughes 1996).

I confirmed breeding of Spotted Sandpiper (*Actitis macularia*) at 4 Ellis County and 1 Woodward County locations. This species probably breeds more commonly in Oklahoma than previous confirmations would indicate; there have been only 12 prior breeding records (M. Howery pers. comm.).

Other observations of note from northwestern Woodward County included Pileated Woodpeckers (*Dryocopus pileatus*) at a few locations, including 3, presumably a family, on 20 June, 15 km west of their westernmost known Oklahoma breeding location (Reinking 2004), and a 2nd-year (non-breeding) Common Loon (*Gavia immer*) heard and seen on Fort Supply Lake on 22 June. A Prothonotary Warbler (*Protonotaria citrea*) was singing at a small pond south of Fort Supply Lake on 1 July; Gray Catbirds (*Dumetella carolinensis*) were calling in June and July at 2 locations around Fort Supply Lake; a small Great Blue heronry (*Ardea herodias*) still had 3 active nests on 1 July by a wetland south of Fort Supply Lake; and there were Yellow-breasted Chats (*Icteria virens*) at several locations. The Oklahoma Breeding Bird Atlas indicates that the latter 4 species are absent or thinly distributed in this area of the state (Reinking 2004).

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Fall Nesting Killdeer in McCurtain County, Oklahoma.—On 15 December 2004 at 1300 h, I (B.A. Heck III) observed 2 adult Killdeer (*Charadrius vociferus*) with 2 downy young. The Killdeer were in a wet lawn area by a leaking water piper at the edge of an asphalt parking lot in Valliant, McCurtain County, Oklahoma. When I approached, the adults retreated about 10 m and the young crouched. From approximately 1 m, I observed that the dorsal plumage of the young was about 50% down feathers and 50% adult feathers. On 17 December at 1400 h, I observed 1 adult Killdeer for about 40 min in the same area, but no young were observed. On 24

December at 1725 h and on 25 December at 0535 h, I observed 2 adult Killdeer roosting within 3 m of the original observation site, but no young were observed.

Weather in this area during the first one-half of December was abnormally mild with 10 days above 15° C and 2 nights below 0° C, but freezing rain on 23 December and a low temperature of -8° C resulted in a 4 cm crust of ice covering the ground (Oklahoma Department of Agriculture Forestry Station, Broken Bow, OK). The ice cover, which remained for 2 days, prevented normal feeding by Killdeer, exemplified by an adult Killdeer observed 24 December by B.A. Heck, Jr. pecking the frozen carcass of a chicken flattened by vehicle traffic in the same parking lot.

Fall and winter nesting of Killdeer in the U.S. has been reported previously 6 times; Little Rock, Arkansas was the farthest west (about 114 km east of Valliant), and the latest nesting attempt was in mid-December in South Carolina (Smith, K., et al. 1999. Additional records of fall and winter nesting by Killdeer in southern United States. *Wilson Bulletin*. 111: 424–426). This winter nesting is the farthest west nesting of Killdeer reported to date. A nesting chronology can be determined by using data from Jackson and J. A. Jackson. (2000. Killdeer [*Charadrius vociferous*] *The Birds of North America*, No. 517 [A. Poole and F. Gill, eds.] *The Birds of North America, Inc.*, Philadelphia, PA.) In Mississippi, the mean time reported for egg-laying was 5.5 days; the mean time for incubation was 25.1 days; and prejuvenal molt was completed in about 17 days (the juvenile molt on these 2 birds appeared to be about one-half completed, or 9 days). Based on these time frames, we estimate that nesting was initiated about 27 October, and the juvenile Killdeer were about 9 days old when I observed them.

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