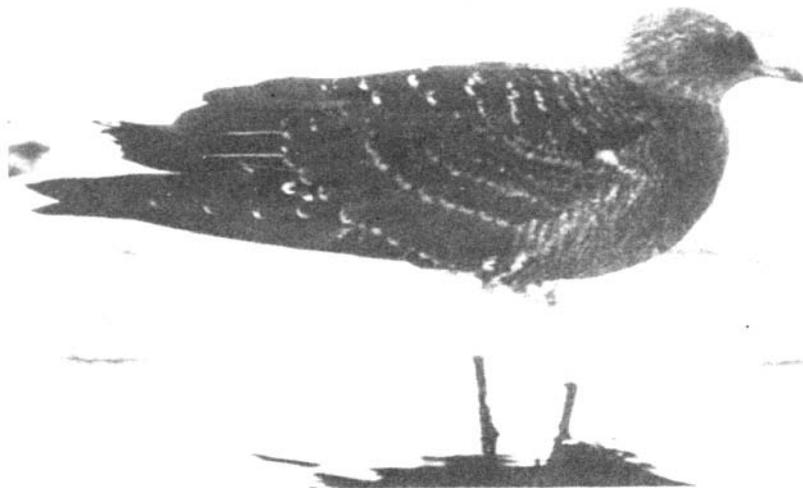


PARASITIC JAEGER IN OKLAHOMA CITY

BY JOHN G. NEWELL

In mid-September 1970, at Lake Hefner, a large impoundment in the northwestern part of Oklahoma City, Oklahoma County, central Oklahoma, at least thirteen persons observed at close range a bird that I am convinced was a Parasitic Jaeger (*Stercorarius parasiticus*). Several excellent colored slides were taken of the bird. The more diagnostic of these are filed at the University of Oklahoma Bird Range.

The puzzling bird was first seen on the evening of 7 September by J. Brooks Parkhill and his wife Thula. It was eating a fish along the southwest shore. Parkhill photographed it and carefully described it to me. I suggested that such a dark-colored, long-winged bird might be a juvenile gull of some sort.



PARASITIC JAEGER IN FIRST WINTER PLUMAGE

Photographed on 11 September 1970 at Lake Hefner, Oklahoma City, by J. Brooks Parkhill. Note tufts of natal down just back of each leg.



The following day the Parkhills found it again, along the south shore. This time they took a few feet of colored movie film.

On 9 September, at sundown, my wife Dorothy and I "discovered" the moot bird ourselves. It was feeding on a fish along the east side of the lake. Dorothy, who saw it first, thought it was a Crow (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*), but the hawklike way in which it stood over and tore at the fish caught my attention at once. I backed the car toward it for a closer look. It was dark and crow-size, to be sure, but we could now see the slightly hooked beak and the pale markings on its upperparts. Because moving the car had not frightened it off, I approached it slowly afoot—to within 8 feet. It turned, threatened me with open beak and partly spread wings, turned again, and flew off a few feet, alighting in the water.

I now knew that the bird was a jaeger. Noticeably buoyant, it held its head and tail-end high, watching me closely. The barred appearance of its upperparts was due to the light tipping of the dark plumage. When it lifted its wings I saw that their under sides, especially the axillars, were strikingly barred (see picture above, a photograph taken 11 September 1970 by J. Brooks Parkhill). As it flew I noted the long, bluntly pointed middle feathers of the wedge-shaped tail, a whitish patch at the base of the primaries, the comparatively uniform gray of the breast and belly, and the checkered appearance of the under tail coverts. The bill was pale gray with blackish tip. The legs and toes were pale gray too (slightly yellowish in some of the slides, perhaps because of the afternoon light), but the webbing between the toes was blackish. The eyes were dark, and the darkness of the surrounding plumage, especially in front, gave them a deepset appearance.

Word was spread concerning the rare visitor from the far north, and a number of interested "birders" from Oklahoma City were fortunate enough to see it. On the evening of 10 September I joined the Parkhills, who had located it along the south shore. It was feeding on a large fish and was reluctant to leave. When finally it did flush, it flew up the lake a hundred yards or so, returned, and alighted on the shore nearby, waiting for us to withdraw. Its flight, though seemingly effortless, was strong and surprisingly swift. The "depth" of the spread wings—i.e., the distance between the leading edge and the following edge between the wrist and the body—seemed unusually great.

On the evening of 11 September the Parkhills and "camera-fan" friends of theirs, Frank Beaver and his wife Marie, found the jaeger resting on short grass

along the southwest shore near the canal inlet. It tolerated very close approach. Finally it rose sleepily to its feet and flew off. The several photographs that Beaver took show excellent detail, but the lowness of the sun unfortunately gave a reddish cast to the browns and a purplish cast to the grays.

About mid-morning on 12 September I found the jaeger ranging along the east side of the lake. Several times it turned quickly, scattering flocks of small sandpipers, but these it did not pursue. Its only food, so far as I could see, was fish, all of which it found dead, washed up on the shore. Some of these probably had been discarded by fishermen. A cigarette butt that it picked up idly, it flicked aside.

At noon that day I showed the jaeger to Nelson Hall. Late that afternoon Brad Carlton saw it—still along the east shore. Here I saw it again on 13 September, but that day it spent considerable time floating well out in the lake. Herb Chezem saw it on 14 September. No one saw it, so far as I know, from 15 to 18 September, during which period I looked for it several times. On the morning of 19 September Vic Vacin and I were pleased to find it again, floating well out. Blown shoreward, it finally came close enough for scrutiny and careful identification. Vacin, who like the rest of us had never before seen a jaeger, estimated that it was "at least as large as a crow." Others, including myself, were of the opinion that it was slightly smaller than a crow.

On Sunday, 20 September, Jack Roberts and I visited the lake, he in hopes of photographing the jaeger with new camera equipment, I to enjoy the bird. We found it along the east shore patiently "keeping company" with an unconcerned fisherman whose box of shrimp bait and occasionally-tossed-aside dead minnows probably attracted the jaeger. We obtained a fair idea of the bird's length (13¾ inches) by measuring the distance between a pebble at its breast and another pebble at its tail-tip. Roberts obtained several close photographs, one of which shows the bird with wings fully spread—just as it was taking off.

No one reported seeing the jaeger after 20 September. It probably left when the weather turned stormy a day or so later.

Identification of this jaeger as *S. parasiticus* may be questioned. Admittedly *S. parasiticus* and *S. longicaudus* (Long-tailed Jaeger) are much alike when in first winter feather. Careful study of all slides and movies taken, of literature pertaining to jaeger plumages, and of skins at the University of Oklahoma Bird Range convinced me, however, that the bird we had been seeing was indeed *parasiticus*. It seemed too large and too dark for *longicaudus*. The white patch at the base of the primaries was noticeable—a feature discernible in a specimen of *S. parasiticus* (UOMZ 2710) at hand, but not in any specimen of *S. longicaudus* in the Sutton collection. Its bill, which shows well in several slides, was far too slender for that of *S. pomarinus* (Pomarine Jaeger).



PARASITIC JAEGER IN FIRST WINTER PLUMAGE

Photographed on 20 September 1970 at Lake Hefner, Oklahoma City, by Jack S. Roberts. Note white patch on each wing at base of primary feathers.

Judging from its naiveté, and especially from what appeared to be tufts of natal down on the forehead and near each leg, the bird was very young. Pleske (1928, *Birds of the Eurasian tundra*, Mem. Boston Soc. Nat. Hist., 6: 188) states that the fledging period of *S. parasiticus* is 27 days. Observers agree that young jaegers do not retain remnants of natal down long after learning to fly. The bird that we observed may well have been little more than a month old. Its presence so far from the ocean may have been a direct result of late hatching, late fledging, and late departure from the breeding ground—all in consequence of failure of the first clutch of eggs.

The above reported-in-detail record is the second Parasitic Jaeger record for the state; the first was of four birds seen by Seth H. Low and Wendell Taber along the west shore of the main reservoir at the Salt Plains National Wildlife Refuge in Alfalfa County, north-central Oklahoma, on 8 September 1941; one of the four birds, a cripple, was collected (Sutton, 1967, *Oklahoma birds*, p. 212).

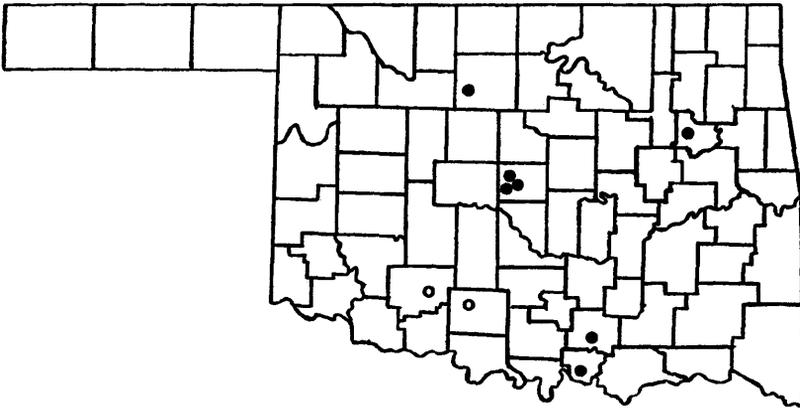
4129 NORTH EVEREST, OKLAHOMA CITY, OKLAHOMA 73111, 1 JULY 1971.

MORE GROOVE-BILLED ANI RECORDS FOR OKLAHOMA

BY JANET M. MCGEE

AT ABOUT 07:30 on 5 October 1970 (a windless day with occasional showers; air temperature 62° F. at noon) I saw a rather large black bird fly into a pyracantha bush in our backyard—a somewhat formally planted area bounded along one side by Wolf Creek, an intermittent stream, in the northwestern part of Lawton, Comanche County, southwestern Oklahoma. At first I dismissed the bird as a Common Grackle (*Quiscalus quiscula*), but decided to check again, so watched it with a binocular as it preened and fed on the pyracantha berries. A look at the bill convinced me that the bird was an ani. It called several times—two low, soft notes, followed by a higher-pitched *pee-to*—as it moved about the bush. Presently it flew to a shed nearby, ran swiftly across the roof in the manner of a Roadrunner (*Geococcyx californianus*), and returned to the bush to preen. I called Jack D. Tyler, who watched the bird a while and fully agreed that it was an ani, but neither he nor I could be positive about the bill's grooving. The ani left the yard about 08:15. That evening, however, I heard it call several times and again saw it in the shrubbery.

Next morning (weather conditions the same) I heard the ani at 07:30. Again the bird flew to the pyracantha bush, where it fed on the berries. Here Dr. Tyler collected it. The specimen (JDT 109) proved to be a moderately fat immature female Groove-billed Ani (*Crotophaga sulcirostris*) in fine feather. The grooving on the bill was distinct. The wing measured 134 mm., the tail 186, the exposed



OKLAHOMA GROOVE-BILLED ANI RECORDS

Circles (Stephens County, Comanche County) indicate specimens taken; spots (in following counties: Marshall, Johnston, Oklahoma, Wagoner, Garfield) indicate sightings. Positioning of circles and spots is only approximate.

culmen 25. The specimen is now in the collection of vertebrates at Cameron College in Lawton.

What I have reported above is the first Groove-billed Ani record for Comanche County, the eighth record for Oklahoma, and the second specimen for the state. Louis J. Bussjaeger of Oklahoma City informs me of the following ninth record for the state. On 25 November 1970 Dr. Leonard R. Johnson (of the Department of Physiology and Biophysics at the University of Oklahoma Medical Center), who lives near Lake Hefner at 5301 N. Hamilton Drive, Oklahoma City, saw two Groove-billed Anis with a flock of Common Grackles in his backyard. He confirmed his identification the following day when he took a partly eaten ani from a neighbor's cat.

There are now seven fall records for Oklahoma (two in 1952, one each in 1963, 1966, and 1968, and two in 1970), one record for spring (1962), and one record (1969) for midsummer (Newell, 1969, Bull. Oklahoma Orn. Soc., 2: 1-2, 28-29). The accompanying map, made with the assistance of Robert Burke of the staff of the Stovall Museum of Science and History at the University of Oklahoma, shows the geographical distribution of the nine records.

1703 N. 43RD ST., LAWTON, OKLAHOMA 73501, 16 JUNE 1971.

GENERAL NOTES

Recovery in South America of Snowy Egret banded as nestling in Oklahoma.—On 19 November 1964 Alvaro Amaya Amaya, of the staff of the Instituto Nacional de Fomento Tabacalero of Colombia, shot or found dead near Bogota, Colombia (or received from someone who had shot it or found it dead, presumably in the vicinity of the city), a Snowy Egret (*Leucophoyx thula*) that had been banded as an almost-fledged nestling by me at a rookery in Bethany, Oklahoma County, central Oklahoma, on 21 June 1964. The band number was 515-81926. The rookery, a large one, was composed of Little Blue Herons (*Florida caerulea*), Common Egrets (*Casmerodius albus*), Snowy Egrets, and Black-crowned Night Herons (*Nycticorax nycticorax*), in about that order of abundance. The nests were in a fairly uniform stand of mature oaks.—Jack S. Roberts, 5816 N.W. 53rd St., Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73122. 30 July 1971.

White-winged Scoter in Johnston County, Oklahoma.—On 4 November 1970 Richard Orr, a 15-year-old duck hunter, shot a female White-winged Scoter (*Melanitta deglandi*) on Richardson Pond, an 8-acre, 20-foot-deep impoundment 5 miles north and 1.5 miles west of Tishomingo, Johnston County, south-central Oklahoma. About 200 ducks of various species were on the pond that day, but the scoter that Orr shot was the only scoter seen by anyone. That same day I shot a drake Ring-necked Duck (*Aythya collaris*) and saw several Lesser Scaups (*A. affinis*).

The White-winged Scoter has not thus far been reported from southern Oklahoma. There are published records for Tulsa, Kay, and Payne counties

(Sutton, 1967, Oklahoma birds, p. 81), and the species has, according to records filed at the University of Oklahoma Bird Range, been reported recently also from Alfalfa, Oklahoma, and Cleveland counties. The species arrives in Oklahoma from the north in late October and early November. On 26 October 1957 David Bahos obtained a female or young male (UOMZ 4478, head only, sex not determined; specimen originally No. 127 in collection of John S. Tomer) on Fort Gibson Reservoir about 5 miles east of Wagoner, Oklahoma. On 2 November 1967 Richard Parker shot an adult female (UOMZ 6168) at Lake Thunderbird, about 13 miles east of Norman, Cleveland County, central Oklahoma. On 4 November 1967 G. M. Sutton *et al.* saw a female or subadult male at the south end of Draper Lake near Norman.

The Johnston County specimen referred to above is now No. 550 in the collection of vertebrates at East Central State College in Ada, Oklahoma.—Jack L. Millard Jr., *National Fish Hatchery, Tishomingo, Oklahoma 73460, 15 December 1970.*

Early nesting of Killdeer in Oklahoma.—On the afternoon of 27 March 1971 Mary Coleman, Brad Carlton, and I observed the “broken wing” display of a Killdeer (*Charadrius vociferus*) in a small prairie dog town at Lake Ellsworth near Elgin, Comanche County, southwestern Oklahoma. Knowing that the display meant a nest nearby, we examined a small patch of gravel—the only such patch anywhere in the vicinity—and found the nest, which contained four eggs. We saw only one adult bird and of course had no way of ascertaining when the eggs had been laid. The date is early. According to Sutton (1967, Oklahoma birds, p. 174), the earliest dates on record for the nesting of *Charadrius vociferus* in Oklahoma are 30 March 1957, when J. B. Kelso found a nest and four eggs not far from the shore of Lake Texoma near Willis, Marshall County, south-central Oklahoma, and 8 April 1956, when David F. Parmelee found a nest and two eggs (an incomplete clutch) in a small prairie dog town along the northeast edge of Norman, Cleveland County, central Oklahoma.—Bert Jane Turner, *1708 Sandra Drive, Midwest City, Oklahoma 73110, 18 April 1971.*

Violet-green Swallow in Cimarron County, Oklahoma.—In late August 1970 I spent several days at Black Mesa State Park in Cimarron County, far western Oklahoma. The weather remained hot and dry until 24 August. That afternoon a series of brief but violent summer showers, accompanied by a strong wind and sharp temperature drop, passed through from the west. Shortly thereafter (about 16:00 CST) I noticed a loose gathering of swallows on the power lines at the west end of Lake Etling. On closer inspection the group proved to consist of six Barn Swallows (*Hirundo rustica*), about two dozen Rough-winged Swallows (*Stelgidopteryx ruficollis*), and two Violet-green Swallows (*Tachycineta thalassina*). The last-named species immediately captured my attention, as it was not listed for Oklahoma either by Nice (1931, Birds of Oklahoma) or by Sutton (1967, Oklahoma birds).

Approaching to within about 10 yards, I studied the swallows through a 7 x 35 binocular for about ten minutes. Both Violet-greens were in the distinctive adult plumage, velvety green on the back and somewhat glossy

blue on the wings. The facial pattern, with white partly encircling the eye, was sharply defined on each bird. In size, the two were virtually identical to the Rough-wings. I put the flock to flight. The diagnostic white patch at each side of the rump showed clearly in each Violet-green. For another half hour I watched the two birds as they flew about over the lake before they disappeared to the east.

So far as I know, this is the first sighting of this species for Oklahoma. No other naturalist was present to confirm my identification; I am, however, thoroughly familiar with both the Violet-green Swallow and the Tree Swallow (*T. bicolor*). Had the two birds been immature, collecting would have been essential, for at that plumage-stage the two species are much alike; but in several readily perceptible ways the adult Violet-green differs from the adult Tree.

The Violet-green Swallow breeds from central Alaska, southwestern Yukon, British Columbia, southwestern Alberta, northwestern Montana, and southwestern South Dakota southward locally to southern Mexico, wandering eastward in migration to "w. edge of Great Plains" (Peterson, 1961, A field guide to western birds, p. 203). I have seen it nesting in Colfax County, New Mexico, only 115 miles west of the Oklahoma border. If individuals from the easternmost part of its breeding range (Black Hills of South Dakota) migrate directly southward, they must regularly pass over (or close to) the western end of the Oklahoma Panhandle. The species has wandered east of its normal range on several occasions, notably to New Hampshire and Nova Scotia (1966, Audubon Field Notes, 20:7); it has been reported from three Texas localities that are almost directly south of the Black Mesa country: Midland (1963, Audubon Field Notes, 17:414), Friona (1962, Audubon Field Notes, 16:51), and Palo Duro Canyon State Park (*loc. cit.*). There is one record for the Texas coast, a single bird seen at Rockport (1969, Audubon Field Notes, 23:606). Further careful field work may reveal that it is a regular migrant in Cimarron County, Oklahoma.—Kenn Kaufman, 2713 S. Martinson, Wichita, Kansas 67217. 11 February 1971.

Early fall date for Red-breasted Nuthatch.—On the morning of 9 August 1970 I saw a Red-breasted Nuthatch (*Sitta canadensis*) in a tree across the street from the general store in Kenton, Cimarron County, far western Oklahoma. Although I observed the bird for only a minute or so, I clearly saw the rusty-buff underparts and the white line over the eye. It was obviously not a Pygmy Nuthatch (*S. pygmaea*), a comparatively non-migratory species known to inhabit the Black Mesa country of Oklahoma.

The earliest Oklahoma fall date thus far on record for *S. canadensis* is 29 August 1963 (Sutton, 1967, Oklahoma birds, p. 397). On that date J. S. Shackford saw one along the Cimarron River 13 miles north of Boise City, Cimarron County.—Gary R. Graves, 7424 Redwood Drive, Little Rock, Arkansas 72209, 5 October 1970.

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