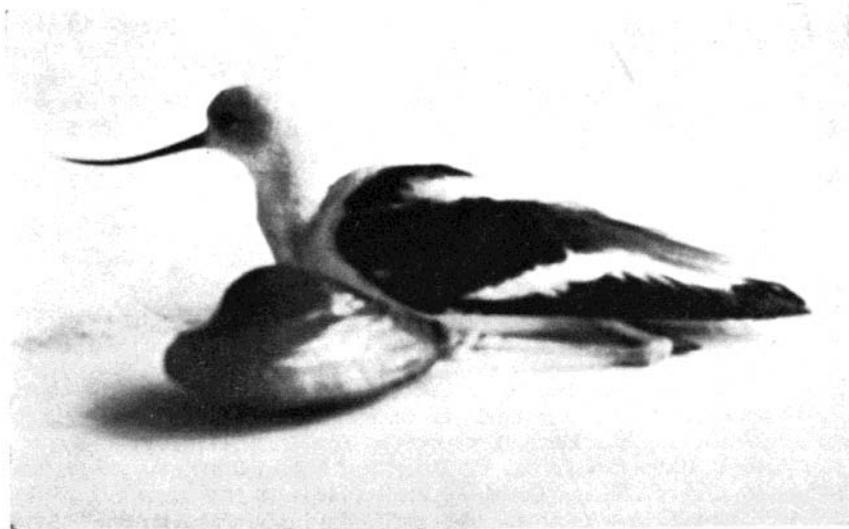


AN AMERICAN AVOCET CAUGHT BY A LARGE CLAM

BY JACK D. TYLER

ON 17 SEPTEMBER 1970, while Brad Carlton, William J. Fox, and I were observing shorebirds at the north end of Lake Ellsworth, 6 miles west of Fletcher, Comanche County, southwestern Oklahoma, we noticed an American Avocet (*Recurvirostra americana*) standing quietly on a mudbar about 50 yards out from shore. Three other avocets joined the quiet bird momentarily, but flew off without it. Puzzled by the fact that the lone avocet had not even tried to fly, we decided to collect it. Fox approached to within about 30 yards and fired, crippling the bird. Now we perceived why it had not flown off: a large freshwater mussel was clinging to its left foot. The mussel was alive.

The water surrounding the mudflat was shallow. The weather had been very hot for several days. It is conceivable that the mussel, lying inconspicuously on the lake's bottom, had opened its valves wide in an attempt to obtain more



AN AVOCET AND THE CLAM THAT CAPTURED IT

Both specimens collected on 17 September 1970 by Jack D. Tyler at the north end of Lake Ellsworth in Comanche County, Oklahoma.

oxygen from the warm, motionless water, and that it had snapped its valves shut on the avocet's foot as the bird was alighting. We had no way of ascertaining, of course, precisely where the mussel had been when it had caught the avocet. It might have been in considerably deeper water. The struggling bird might have dragged it onto the mudbar.

The avocet, an adult female in winter feather, weighed 317.4 grams (very little fat). The mussel, a gravid adult female Great Freshwater Clam (*Anadonta grandis*) weighing 233.6 grams (more than two-thirds the weight of the avocet), was 140 mm. long, 57 mm. wide at the umbo (the knoblike protuberance near the hinges of the valves), and 84 mm. thick at its thickest point. Both the avocet and the mussel are preserved as specimens in the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology at Cameron College, in Lawton, Oklahoma. I wish to thank my friend James Sickel for identifying the mussel.

On the cover of the August 1918 issue of *The Oologist* (Vol. 35, p. 111) appears a photograph of an immature Little Blue Heron (*Florida caerulea*) "caught by an oyster, James River, Va., 1916." The bird was misidentified as a "young Great Blue Heron [*Ardea herodias*]." The photograph, which does not show the "oyster," was taken by B. R. Bayles.

DEPARTMENT OF BIOLOGY, CAMERON COLLEGE, LAWTON, OKLAHOMA
73501, 17 OCTOBER 1971.

GENERAL NOTES

Fall specimen of Cattle Egret from Osage County, Oklahoma.—At about 08:00 on 19 October 1972, a mild, sunny day, my husband, Dr. A. Max Mery, collected a first year male Cattle Egret (*Bubulcus ibis*) from a floating duck-blind about 350 yards out from the north shore of the northeastern cove of Hulah Reservoir, Osage County, northeastern Oklahoma. The egret flew in from the south across a wide expanse of water and circled the blind closely, as if wanting to alight there. Scattered near the blind were about 150 goose and duck decoys.

The egret specimen, mounted by the collector and presented to the bird collection at the University of Oklahoma (UOMZ 7305), is clearly tinged with buff on the crown and very faintly tinged with buff in the middle of the back. Its culmen measures 54 mm., its tarsometatarsus 74. The crown of a first year female specimen (UOMZ 5525) taken on 6 November 1964 at Norman, Cleveland County, central Oklahoma, is a little less strongly suffused with buff than the Osage County specimen, but the color probably would be perceptible in the field. In each of two much younger specimens in the University of Oklahoma collection—one from Tulsa, Tulsa County, northeastern Oklahoma (male, UOMZ 5488, 11 July 1964), the other from Oklahoma City, Oklahoma County, central Oklahoma (sex uncertain, UOMZ 7164, 24 July 1971)—the crown plumage is dead white and the grayish-buff tinge on the back looks more like soiling than actual color.—Sophia C. Mery, 345 S. E. Boston, Bartlesville, Oklahoma 74003, 20 July 1972.

Additional Oklahoma sightings of Hudsonian Godwit in southward migration.—On 14 August 1966 I observed an adult Hudsonian Godwit (*Limosa haemastica*) in breeding feather feeding with small sandpipers of several species on a mudflat at Hulah Reservoir, Osage County, northeastern Oklahoma. On 15 September 1971 I saw a Hudsonian Godwit in gray winter plumage at Young's Lake, an impoundment about 5 miles north of Dewey, Washington County, northeastern Oklahoma. This bird was in a mixed flock of sandpipers. According to Sutton (1967, Oklahoma birds, p. 203), the Hudsonian Godwit has been sighted in Oklahoma only twice heretofore during the period of southward migration—an adult "in mixed feather" at Shawnee Reservoir, Pottawatomie County, central Oklahoma, on 1 August 1965, and a flock of four, "all in gray feather," on the Salt Plains National Wildlife Refuge in Alfalfa County, north-central Oklahoma, on 10 September 1960.—Dotty M. Goard, 2117 South Dewey, Bartlesville, Oklahoma 74003, 21 April 1972.

Early fall record for Glaucous Gull in Oklahoma.—On 7 November 1971, not far out from the south shore of Lake Hefner, a large impoundment in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma County, central Oklahoma, I saw a Glaucous Gull (*Larus hyperboreus*)—obviously an immature individual for it was light brown in general appearance. The weather was mild. There was no evidence otherwise that northern birds had been forced southward by cold weather. I saw only two or three Herring Gulls (*L. argentatus*), all of them juvenile, no Ring-billed Gulls (*L. delawarensis*), and very few Common Mergansers (*Mergus merganser*) on the lake that day.

Brad Carlton saw the Glaucous Gull flying about Lake Hefner on 8 November. On 10 November Brooks Parkhill and his wife Thula saw it. On the morning of 13 November I saw it again myself—along the same stretch of south shore. So far as I know, no one saw it after 13 November.

The dates are exceptionally early for the southward migration of this boreal species. According to Anderson (1971, Bull. Oklahoma Orn. Soc., 4: 31-32), the earliest fall date for Oklahoma heretofore has been 17 December. Most sightings have been in mid-winter, the latest "spring" record having been of a single bird seen 12 March. My own observations indicate that the Glaucous Gull puts in its appearance about the time Herring Gulls and Common Mergansers are most abundant. The Herring Gulls seem to follow the mergansers to the big impoundments, and the Glaucous Gulls join the Herring Gulls in stealing fish from the mergansers.—John G. Newell, 4129 N. Everest, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73111, 9 December 1970.

Late nesting of Yellow-billed Cuckoo in southeastern Oklahoma.—On 2 October 1971, at the side of a road in Mead, Bryan County, southeastern Oklahoma, my friend Arnold Moorhouse found a dead young Yellow-billed Cuckoo (*Coccyzus americanus*) that probably had left the nest only a day or so previously. The specimen's tail feathers, the longest of which measured 38 mm., were sheathed basally for about half their length. The wing feathers were fairly well developed (wing-length 62 mm.), but I doubt that the bird had flown much, if at all. Ants had eaten away part of the left side of the head, but the carcass was not badly decomposed. I preserved it in alcohol. As a mummy it is now part of the bird collection at the University of Oklahoma (UOMZ 7262).

The date is exceptionally late for the breeding of the Yellow-billed Cuckoo. According to Sutton (1967, Oklahoma birds, p. 242), the latest date on record for Oklahoma is 17 August 1960, when J. D. Ligon found "stub-tailed young" just out of the nest in Adair County, northeastern Oklahoma. The latest "egg dates" mentioned by Bent (1940, U. S. Natl. Mus. Bull. 176, p. 66) are August 19 (New York), August 20 (California), and August 25 (Florida). At a nest in Michigan, L. H. Walkinshaw witnessed departure of a young bird "with feathers unsheathed" on 29 August (Bent, *op. cit.*, p. 58).—Karl W. Haller, Box 1271, Austin College, Sherman, Texas 75090, 19 January 1972.

Rufous Hummingbird in Oklahoma in winter.—From the last week in August 1971 until 12 January 1972 a bird believed to be a female Rufous Hummingbird (*Selasphorus rufus*) was observed repeatedly at the home of Upton Hudson and his wife Bea in the south residential part of Tulsa, Tulsa County, northeastern Oklahoma. The bird fed at flowers and also at hummingbird feeders placed just outside a window. It was so aggressive toward the other hummingbirds—all presumably Rubythroats (*Archilochus colubris*)—that regularly visited the yard that the Hudsons tried driving it off with a long pole. It often perched on a utility wire about 10 feet from the ground. For three days the Hudsons tried to evict it, but it refused to leave; they noticed that it was "chunkier" than the hummers it continued to drive from the feeders.

The Ruby-throated Hummingbirds that visited the Hudson yard all disappeared about 1 October, but the Rufous remained. On 13 November Harvey T. Phillips and his wife Letitia watched it for at least 30 minutes, during part of which period it was only about 10 feet from the window. They clearly saw the brown on its flanks and tail. The Hudsons continued to see it daily. During cold weather in early January it roosted not far from the ground in a rose bush, but when the sun and air temperature rose it would fly up to its usual perch on the wire. The weather was particularly cold on 12 January, after which date the Hudsons did not see it.—John S. Tomer, 5911 E. 46th Street, Tulsa, Oklahoma 74135, 26 January 1972.

Pileated Woodpecker in Comanche County, Oklahoma.—In reading the article by Louis E. McGee and Frances Neeld concerning the western limits of the range of the Pileated Woodpecker (*Dryocopus pileatus*) in Oklahoma (1972, Bull. Oklahoma Orn. Soc., 5: 5-7), I noted that this bird has not been sighted in Comanche County since 1904 when J. H. Gaut saw "a few . . . along Medicine Creek" (Nice, 1931, Birds of Oklahoma, p. 112). The first Pileated Woodpeckers I ever saw were in Comanche County. Few birds have made such an impression on me, and I remember them vividly. Fortunately my husband, Harley P. Brown, has kept a diary for many years, so I was able to look up the date and locality with ease. On 26 October 1952, early in the afternoon, I saw three of the fine birds in the Boulder Park area of the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge. I am not sure about the sex of the three, but I had the pleasure of watching them for some time while my husband, my daughter Joy, and a young friend of the family were off hiking up the "narrows" of Panther Creek. Some years later, when the Fort Sill

firing range was extended, this part of the refuge was closed to the public.—Laura Williams Brown, 529 Dakota St., Norman, Oklahoma 73069, 1 April 1972.

Late nesting of Eastern Kingbird in Wagoner County, Oklahoma.—On the afternoon of 14 August 1971, at Bluebill Point on Fort Gibson Reservoir, about 6½ miles northeast of Wagoner, Wagoner County, northeastern Oklahoma, I discovered a nest of the Eastern Kingbird (*Tyrannus tyrannus*) containing three young that were nearly ready to fledge. The rather untidy nest was about 30 feet up within three feet of the end of a long branch in a large deciduous tree. The branch extended over the road and well beyond any nearby limbs so that with a 7 x 50 binocular I had a clear view of the nest. Two of the nestlings were sitting close together in the nest; the third was perched on the edge. Several times during the half hour that I watched, each parent fed the brood, one arriving as the other left; on two occasions the parent birds arrived at the nest almost simultaneously.

The latest date thus far reported for the breeding of the Eastern Kingbird in Oklahoma is 21 July 1960, when J. D. Ligon found a nest containing "three almost-fledged young"—also in Wagoner County (Sutton, 1967, Oklahoma birds, p. 329).—Emma H. Messerly, 344 S. E. Elmhurst, Bartlesville, Oklahoma 74003, 21 June 1972.

Another Violet-green Swallow sight record for Oklahoma.—The sighting on 24 August 1970 of two Violet-green Swallows (*Tachycineta thalassina*) at Lake Etling in Black Mesa State Park, Cimarron County, far western Oklahoma as documented by Kaufman (1971, Bull. Oklahoma Orn. Soc., 4: 27), prompts me to report that at about 11:00 on 5 July 1971 (day still and overcast; air temperatures in the 80's) John W. Ault and I saw a Violet-green Swallow at the same lake.

We had been watching the aerial maneuvers of two Rough-winged Swallows (*Stelgidopteryx ruficollis*) and at least a dozen Cliff Swallows (*Petrochelidon pyrrhonota*). A colony of the latter species were nesting under an overhanging rocky ledge on the west side of the lake. A short-tailed swallow that fed separately attracted our attention. We knew that this bird was neither a Cliff, for it had no rusty rump-patch, nor a Rough-wing, for its underparts, including the throat and chest, were immaculately white. Was it a Tree Swallow (*Tachycineta bicolor*)? Finally, having assured ourselves that the white of the underparts extended up onto each side of the rump in such a way as to be clearly visible when the bird was flying directly away from us, we identified it as a Violet-green.

Lake Etling contains about 260 surface acres of water most of the year, but its level fluctuates markedly in this rather arid part of Oklahoma. At the time of our observation a dense stand of tall cattails (*Typha* sp.) bordered the narrow mudflat along the lake's edge. Near these cattails, where the water was clear and shallow, the Violet-green fed.

Tachycineta thalassina is not on Oklahoma's "official list," since no specimen has been taken in the state. At Clayton, New Mexico, about 25 miles south-southwest of Lake Etling, the species has been seen infrequently during the past 20 years by Adolf J. Krehbiel (Weske, 1968, Bull. Oklahoma

Orn. Soc., 1: 10). The permanent water, hydric vegetation, and insect life at Lake Etling may well attract more Violet-green Swallows to Oklahoma from now on.—Jack D. Tyler, *Department of Biology, Cameron College, Lawton, Oklahoma 73501, 3 February 1972.*

Tree Swallow in Cimarron County, Oklahoma.—Margaret M. Nice, who called the Tree Swallow (*Tachycineta bicolor*) a “transient in eastern and central Oklahoma” (1931, *Birds of Oklahoma*, p. 124), mentioned only one record for the panhandle—a sighting by W. E. Lewis on 2 May 1924 of “about a dozen flying around a pond” near Gate, Beaver County. R. C. Tate, who lived in Cimarron County, Oklahoma, for many years, did not mention the Tree Swallow in his “Some birds of the Oklahoma panhandle” (1923, *Proc. Oklahoma Acad. Sci.*, 3: 41-51). In the course of my many trips to the Black Mesa country of Cimarron County in 1932, 1933, 1936, 1937, and from 1951 to 1970, I have, as a rule, looked in vain for the Tree Swallow—this despite my continuing belief that I would find there the closely allied western species, the Violet-green (*T. thalassina*).

In the latter half of August, 1968, however, William A. Carter, Jack D. Tyler, and I observed a small flock of Tree Swallows at sewage-disposal ponds just east of Boise City, Cimarron County. We first saw the birds—11 to 15 of them according to attempted counts—on the evening of 17 August. Their underparts were white largely, with a faint gray wash across the chest. Not a bird of the lot was glossy green or velvety green above, and not one of them appeared to have any white above the eye. On 19 August, just before nightfall, I secured a specimen, an obviously immature bird whose upperparts were wholly gray—i.e., without a trace of white above the eye. I could not, of course, be sure that the rest of the birds were just like the one I had collected. Where the flock spent the night we did not know. We last saw them on 21 August. That evening they fed not over the ponds but over low-lying land close by. We left the area ourselves the following day.

The specimen (UOMZ 6342) proved to be a not very fat female in complete juvenal plumage (i.e., no molt was in progress). The skull was unossified. To convince myself that the bird was indeed a Tree Swallow I compared it directly with a young Violet-green Swallow (from Lewisburg, Idaho) in my personal collection. The two specimens were astonishingly alike in general appearance, but the young Violet-green had an ill-defined patch of grayish white above the eye; its underparts were grayish white throughout, without a wash of darker gray on the chest; and the tail was shorter, proportionately, than that of the Tree Swallow. In the Violet-green the wing-tips extended beyond the tail-tip about 20 mm., in the Tree only about 6 mm. Makeup of specimen could, admittedly, affect this distance. In the Violet-green (a male) the wing measured 105 mm., the tail 41; in the Tree, the wing 109, the tail 49. In other words: in the Tree Swallow the wing was “very little more than twice as long as the tail,” whereas in the Violet-green the wing was “two and a half times as long as the tail” (Ridgway, 1904, *Bull. U. S. Natl. Mus.* 50, Pt. 3, p. 28).—George M. Sutton, *Stovall Museum of Science and History, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma 73069, 24 March 1971.*

New locality-records for Brown-headed Nuthatch in southeastern Oklahoma.—On 29 June 1968 John L. Arter, Ron Cox, and I, cooperating with the U. S. Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife, made a breeding bird census along Census Route 2, which leads from Blanco, Pittsburg County, Oklahoma, southeastward across the Jack Fork Mountains to the point where the Pittsburg County line meets the line between Latimer and Pushmataha counties. About 11 miles east and 4 miles south of Blanco, in an open stand of short-leaf pines (*Pinus echinata*) with good grass ground-cover—formerly an area of oak-pine woodland, but treated to remove deciduous trees—we heard callnotes that I felt sure were those of a Brown-headed Nuthatch (*Sitta pusilla*), a species with which I have become familiar in McCurtain County. We could not, however, find the bird in the brief time allowed for the scheduled stop. On our return trip that same day we looked for the bird again, but in vain. We did not include the species in our census report.

On 22 June 1969 Jenna Jo Hellack and I made a census of the same route. At the stop referred to above (No. 28) I heard the calls of a Brown-headed Nuthatch. Having located the bird, we got enough of a look to assure ourselves that it was, indeed, *Sitta pusilla*. It was by itself in a short-leaf pine close to the road. Presently it flew to a small group of larger pines not far away. The wind was gusty. Many bird calls were audible for only short distances. We neither saw nor heard another Brown-headed Nuthatch that day.

On 14 June 1970 Jon V. Cecil and I found a single Brown-headed Nuthatch at the same stop. We studied the bird closely before it flew off. A quarter of a mile away we came upon a group of the nuthatches in a tall pine near the road. As we watched, seven of them—possibly a family group—flew down to a small oak, then across the road in front of us not more than 10 yards away.

The above discussed sightings were all in Pittsburg County. I know of one unpublished locality record for LeFlore County: in the fall of 1968 James L. Norman saw the species among big pines on the Cedar Lake picnic grounds 11 miles southwest of Heavener—two birds on 2 September, three birds on 22 September.

Sitta pusilla is known to be a resident of the shortleaf pine forests of McCurtain County (Sutton, 1967, Oklahoma birds, p. 398). There is one record for Pushmataha County: on 5 or 6 July 1920 Margaret M. Nice saw one "near Cedar Creek" (Nice, 1921, Condor, 23: 131; 1931, Birds of Oklahoma, p. 134). I am confident that Brown-headed Nuthatches inhabit many parts of the McCurtain Game Preserve that I have visited—parts in which I have not actually seen or heard the species (Carter, 1968, Proc. Oklahoma Acad. Sci., 47: 60-66). The bird is conspicuous when active and calling; but when it is not calling it may easily be overlooked. Bird students should be watchful for *Sitta pusilla* in any of the oak-pine woodlands of the Ouachita Uplift region of southeastern Oklahoma.—William A. Carter, *Department of Biology, East Central State College, Ada, Oklahoma 74820, 4 September 1970.*

Did S. W. Woodhouse ever see the Black-throated Blue Warbler in Indian Territory?—In a recent paper by me (Sutton, 1971, Bull. Oklahoma Orn. Soc., 4: 11-15), I called attention to the fact that bird students have long been

puzzled by Woodhouse's statement to the effect that he found the Black-throated Blue Warbler (*Dendroica caerulescens*) "abundant in Texas and the Indian Territory" (Woodhouse, in Sitgreaves, 1853, Report of an expedition down the Zuni and Colorado rivers, p. 71). My friend John S. Tomer, who has been making a thorough study of Woodhouse's work and itinerary in the northeastern part of what is now the State of Oklahoma, recently called my attention to an entry in Woodhouse's hand-written diary, words that must be the basis for the summary statement quoted above.

The diary entry for 3 July 1849 reads (Woodhouse's handwriting is not by any means always legible; often he made no attempt to capitalize or punctuate; it is doubtful that he had any dictionary or other reference work at hand as he wrote): "Tuesday 3d Clear & hot Thermometer 87° at 1 a.m. showery in the afternoon in the morning I took a strole [sic] along the creek and shot a specimen of the *S. mitratus* [*Sylvicola mitratus* = *Wilsonia citrina*, Hooded Warbler]. The young of the *Sylvicola Canadensis* [= *Dendroica caerulescens*] abundant. in picking up a stone I received a severe sting and dropped it quickly and on turning it over I found a scorpion I immediately applied it [the spot that had been stung, not the scorpion!] to my mouth and commenced sucking. the pain did not last long and I suffered no inconvenience from it."

On that eventful morning of 3 July 1849 Woodhouse must have seen several young warblers of some species, otherwise he would surely never have used the word "abundant." To me it is unthinkable that the Black-throated Blue Warbler was breeding in that area, so I believe Woodhouse must have written the wrong scientific name without bothering to check what he had written. Nowhere in the literature is there even a guess that *Dendroica caerulescens* might breed in the central United States as far south as the Southern Great Plains. According to the AOU Check-list (1957, p. 490), the southern limits of breeding are in "central Minnesota, northern Michigan, southern Ontario, northern Connecticut, and along the Appalachians to northeastern Georgia."

The young warblers that Woodhouse saw on 3 July 1849 might, in my opinion, have been Cerulean Warblers (*Dendroica cerulea*)—an opinion supported by the fact that on 4 July 1849 he actually collected a young male Cerulean, a specimen that is still in the United States National Museum collection (No. 12160). Woodhouse listed two young Cerulean Warblers among the specimens collected by his party in 1849 (Woodhouse, in Sitgreaves and Woodruff, 1858, Reports of Captains Sitgreaves and Woodruff of the survey of the Creek Indian boundary line, Exec. Doc. 1857-58, Vol. 12, Doc. 104, p. 13). One of these I have just mentioned; the other, according to John Tomer, either was not preserved or has not survived as a specimen.—George M. Sutton, *Stovall Museum of Science and History, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma 73069, 21 December 1971.*

THE BULLETIN, the official scientific organ of the Oklahoma Ornithological Society, is published quarterly, in March, June, September, and December, at Norman, Oklahoma. Subscription is by membership in the OOS, \$4.00 single or \$6.00 family per year. Treasurer, Mr. and Mrs. Walter Doane, 9912 Mahler Place, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, 73120; Editors, Sophia C. Mery, 345 S. E. Boston Ave., Bartlesville, Oklahoma 74003, and Emma H. Messerly, 344 Elmhurst Ave., Bartlesville, Oklahoma 74003.