

**EASTERN PHOEBE: FIRST DOCUMENTED NESTING AT THE
OKATIBBEE WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA,
LAUDERDALE, COUNTY, MISSISSIPPI**

Van McWhorter

*Environmental Ranger, Okatibbee Lake
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Collinsville, Mississippi 39325*

In 1997, 1998, and 1999, I documented six, two and two Eastern Phoebes (*Sayornis phoebe*) respectively along a county road where Lauderdale and Kemper Counties intersect (32° 34' N, 88° 48' W) within the boundaries of Okatibbee Wildlife Management Area. The recorded sightings were documented in June of each year as part of the annual Breeding Bird Survey for the National Biological Service.

On 19 June, 2000, while I was pre-scouting the Okatibbee Lake Breeding Bird Survey route (#51902), I decided to check a couple of bridges for possible nests. The bridges were approximately 0.5 mile from the Kemper County line, just inside of Lauderdale County. I located two nests under separate bridges some 300 meters apart. I checked nest #1 and noted a large amount of dried excrement and concluded that the nestlings had just fledged within a few days of my visit. Nest #2 was located on a bridge beam approximately seven feet above a dry creek bed. Following a closer look, I discovered an old egg and a great deal of dried excrement. Like nest #1, the young had also recently fledged. As an authorized collector with a collection permit from the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks, I decided to collect the nests and photograph them for Okatibbee Lake's natural science files.

On 24 June, 2000, while conducting the 2000 Breeding Bird Survey, I documented two Eastern Phoebes at one of the route stops near the two nest sites. An additional five Eastern Phoebes were also documented along the BBS route. It might also be noted that I continued seeing Eastern Phoebes in the same area and up to eight miles south of the area throughout the fall and winter months. The 1999 and 2000 Christmas Bird Count summary reports noted two and five Eastern Phoebes for the respective years, along the county roads and public park roads in the vicinity of Okatibbee Lake.

There is no doubt in my mind that the Eastern Phoebe is a year-round resident of Lauderdale County. The area in which the nesting and year-round feeding occur is typical habitat of their nesting success, and should continue to be ideal for years to come. A year-round monitoring program of the county roadways in the vicinity of the nesting area will continue in hopes that the population increases.