

The First Blue Grosbeak Nest for Northern Ohio

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The breeding range of the Blue grosbeak (*Guiraca caerulea*) in Ohio is apparently restricted to counties bordering the Ohio River east to Meigs County (Peterjohn, et. al. 1987). Occasionally, unmated birds are found north of this area in the summer. Occurrences in the northern third of the state are rare and most often a function of spring migration overshoot.

The discovery of a pair of Blue grosbeaks and subsequent nest in the Oak Openings of Lucas County is therefore quite significant. Kemp found the pair on 17 June 1988. On 19 June, Mayfield and Durbin saw the female carrying grass to the unfinished nest. It was placed in a thistle about fifteen inches from the ground. On 24 June, the nest contained three eggs. The female was still incubating on 26 June. The nest was found abandoned on 30 June, but the pair remained in the area until at least 5 July. They were not found after this date.

The nest was located in a ten-acre fallow field roughly fifty feet from any woody plant. Vegetation in the field was dominated by rye grass and goldenrod with lesser amounts of thistle and mullein. The field was bordered by a small brush-lined stream and the mixed oak forest and pine plantation of the Maumee State Forest. According to the literature, this area had all the habitat components preferred by Blue grosbeaks. Blue grosbeaks typically nest 2-14 feet from the ground in a small shrub or tree (Terres 1980) but may nest as close to the ground as 6 inches (Bent 1968). Thus, while the location of the nest initially surprised us, its location was not really out of the ordinary.

This nest implies a breeding range extension of Blue grosbeaks in Ohio some 150-200 miles north. This species has apparently been extending its range northward in recent years, but this Lucas County nest was totally unexpected.

LITERATURE CITED

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Blue grosbeak nest. Lucas County, Ohio, June 1988. Photograph by Louis Campoell.

