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HISTORY OF THE *"BULLETIN OF THE TEXAS ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY"*

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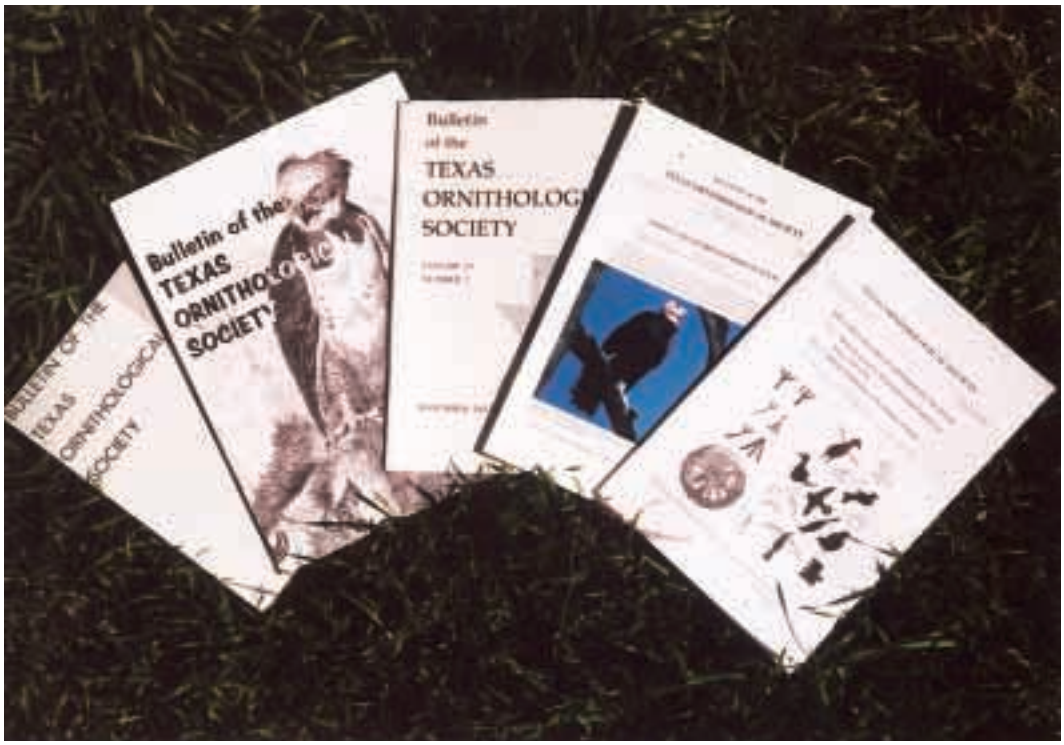
An historical account of the *Bulletin of the Texas Ornithological Society* would surely rank among the dreariest of topics if it were not for the fact that this modestly conceived publication—developed in the restless womb of the Sixties, as a companion to the *Newsletter*—aspired to take on the spirit and movement of that defiant decade. The *Bulletin* aimed at being idealistic, humanistic, adventurous, and blithely unconcerned with mainstream perspectives; in effect, it sought to define a new direction for contemporary "lay" ornithology and to make the TOS the bellwether of the state ornithological societies.



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Accordingly, as the *Bulletin*'s first editor, I urged contributors to aggressively challenge the conventional protocol for state ornithological bulletins and to experiment with unorthodox ways of describing and evaluating our everyday birding experiences. In one series of articles, I invited professional ornithologists to write candidly about why they found their work engaging, how they dealt with their profession's shortcomings, and how they evaluated their accomplishments. These intimate glimpses of their thoughts and feelings were intended to form a "bridge" between the professional ornithologist and the layman; indeed, such bridges were central to what I considered the *Bulletin*'s mission.

I was encouraged by the generous responses to my invitations. George M. Sutton, one of the foremost bird artists of that time, explained in sensitive detail how and why he painted birds; Alexander Skutch, perhaps the most prominent neotropical ornithologist of the day, described his personal approaches to studying tropical birds; and Roger Tory Peterson, a sort of patron saint of the TOS at the time (he designed the Scissor-tailed Flycatcher on the TOS emblem), offered to share his personal experiences about birdwatching in Texas. (Regrettably the interview had to be cancelled when I resigned as editor.)

Another bridge between the professional ornithologist and amateur birder was a series of articles explaining, in non-technical terms, contemporary views about avian migration, behavior, ecology, and similar topics. Still another was guest editorials dealing with controversial issues, especially the social responsibilities of the TOS. Being an insoucient young professor, I naturally appointed myself a contributor, and not surprisingly sometimes overreached in my arguments. Even at that time I wondered if someday I would be a little embarrassed about some of the viewpoints I had so strongly championed (I am).

After a few years, the sheer mechanics of editing the *Bulletin* became so overwhelming for a person trying to climb the academic ladder that when Keith Arnold and Douglas Slack courteously suggested that the *Bulletin* be moved from Texas Tech to Texas A&M, where several persons could work on it, I readily agreed. I knew that the *Bulletin* as I had conceived it would cease to exist, but I sensed that enthusiasm for my journalistic experiment had waned considerably, and I conceded that maybe it was, in fact, time for a change.

Editing a bulletin demands so much from a person that editors understandably question if the impact of their efforts justifies such a large personal investment of time and energy. In this case, the impact on the general TOS membership was probably so small as to be trivial, but I think that in a modest way this journalistic experiment at least encouraged some members to rethink our organization's identity, as well as its mission. I think also that the *Bulletin* momentarily revived the adventure, imagination, and boldness—in no way exclusively ideals of the Sixties—that characterized the spirit in which the TOS was founded in 1956. I suspect that the ambitious founders of the TOS, especially Edgar Kincaid, Jr., the talented first editor of the *Newsletter,* also envisioned our organization as the future bellwether among state ornithological societies—a role that, hopefully, is still reserved for us.

HARRIS' HAWK SURVIVING IN THE WILD AFTER PARTIAL LOSS OF WING AND ONE HALLUX

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ABSTRACT.—On 6 December 2001 an immature female Harris' Hawk was found surviving in the wild missing half of one wing and the hallux of one foot. Apparent cause of injury was exposure to a high voltage electric current. We hypothesize that Harris' Hawks are able to survive in the wild after sustaining serious injury more readily than other species of raptors because Harris' Hawks are unique among raptors by cooperatively hunting and sharing food among group members.

INTRODUCTION

On 6 December 2001 we observed two adult Harris' Hawks (*Parabuteo unicinctus*) while trapping and banding Harris' Hawks for a longevity study. The adult hawks were perched on a horizontal section of a util-

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ity pole on the side of Highway 44 in Webb County Texas approximately 13 miles (21 km) west of the town of Freer. In the grassy area beside the road opposite the pair of hawks, we deposited a bal-chatri trap containing a pigeon (Berger and Mueller 1959). We parked and watched from our vehicle about 400 meters away. After 45 minutes the adults had not approached the trap so we drove over to retrieve the trap. Upon arriving at the site, we found an immature female Harris' Hawk, as determined by plumage and wing chord (Hamerstrom and Hamerstrom 1978). This hawk had entangled several of its toes in the trap's nooses. While banding this hawk, we discovered that she was missing part of the right wing and the back toe (hallux) of the left foot.

All primaries except primary number 1 on the injured right wing were absent, although she still had an intact alula (Figure 1). All secondary feathers were present on the damaged wing. Scar tissue had formed at the point of loss on the injured wing and P1 was growing in as an adult feather.

The entire hallux of the left foot was missing. The talons on the remaining three front digits of the left foot were damaged, were flaky and appeared whitish in color. The point where the hallux had attached to the foot was also completely healed over with scar tissue, indicating that the injuries occurred at least two months previously (Redig, DMV—personal communication).

Except for the noted injuries, this young bird appeared to be in fine health; her weight (940 g) was normal for her age (mean 935.1 g, range 789–1137 g: Hamerstrom and Hamerstrom 1978). Upon release the hawk flew approximately 50 meters in a labored semi-arc to the right and landed about 3 meters high in a mesquite tree (*Prosopis juliflora*).

DISCUSSION

We presume that the immature Harris' Hawk missing part of its wing and hallux described above was a victim of a high voltage electric current. Power line electrocution is a common cause of Harris' Hawk mortality where power poles are common (Whaley 1986; Bednarz and Hayden 1988). Hunting Harris' Hawks utilize the highest unobstructed perches available which, in most cases, are electrified utility poles (Bednarz 1995). Eighty-six percent of the Harris' Hawks captured and banded during our longevity study in year 2001 (n = 77) were lured down from their perches on electrified utility poles.

The authors have witnessed a falconer's adult Harris' Hawk and a fledgling peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus*) electrocuted by high voltage electric currents from landing on electrical transformers. In the case of the Harris' Hawk, the explosion from the hawk grounding out the transformer burned a large section of pri-

Figure 1: Front of immature female Harris' Hawk showing the missing end of the right wing. Dark feather at point of loss is an emerging adult primary feather. Note intact alula above emerging adult primary feather. The foot near the face of hawk is missing the hallux. (Photo: Jill Morrow)

mary and secondary feathers from the Harris' Hawk's right wing and flashed gold colored metals onto several of the talons, toe and leg scales. Months later, the talons turned white and disintegrated but were replaced after a year. The peregrine falcon had the electric current enter the base of the foot, burning tissue up into the pad of the foot. The electricity exited by the base of the tail, leaving a large hole that burned the emerging tail feathers, causing four to fall out within two weeks. The peregrine survived and at 100 days of age started to replace the lost tail feathers with adult tail feathers. The foot injury left a core of dead tissue in the center of the ball of the foot, which later developed a bacterial infection with *Escherichia coli* and *Staphylococcus aureus.* In both cases of electric shock, the birds were nursed back to health by the falconer. We suspect that neither of these birds would have survived in the wild because the severity of their injuries would have prevented them from hunting.

Ornithological literature is sparse on reports of birds living with injuries in the wild. One report from the 1920's mentions three birds who had survived injuries that were killed while collecting scientific specimens: 1) a Rough-legged Hawk (*Buteo lagopus*) that had only one foot, the other was a healed stump; 2) a Great Horned Owl (*Bubo virginianus*) was skeletonized to reveal shattered and healed ulna and metacarpal bones; 3) a Steller's Jay (*Cyanocitta stelleri*) surviving at least a year with a wing injury that rendered it virtually flightless (McCabe and McCabe 1928). A more recent report of passerines missing a foot is attributed to metal bird bands (Amata 1999). One published account from Texas describes a Golden-fronted Woodpecker (*Melanerpes aurifrons*) living with an injured tongue (Husak 1999). In May 2002, we captured and banded an adult female American Robin (*Turdus migratorius*) in a mist net. The robin's tongue was broken as it became entangled in the mist net while it struggled to avoid attack by an opportunistic Loggerhead Shrike (*Lanius ludvicianus*). Three months later we recaptured this same banded robin. It had a healed stub of a tongue (approximately 1/2 of it's tongue was missing) but the bird appeared to be healthy and was within 5% of its initial capture weight in spite of its injury.

The authors have captured and banded numerous raptors surviving with serious injuries in the wild: an adult golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*) and an American kestrel (*Falco sparverius*), each with one non-functional eye (clouded); an adult redtail (*Buteo jamaicensis*) with a broken tarsus that healed in a manner rendering the foot permanently closed; an adult redtail with a foot hanging by the flexor tendon of the tarsometatarsus, and an adult prairie falcon (*Falco mexicanus*) missing the patagium web of it's wing. All of these injured raptors were surviving in the wild, as their injuries had healed. Notably all were adult birds.

Proportionately, we have captured more Harris' Hawks surviving in the wild with serious injuries than any other species of diurnal raptors: 5 out of 240 (2.08%) Harris' Hawks—compared to 5 out of 5733 (0.09%) other raptor species including various accipiters, buteos, harriers, kites, falcons and eagles. In addition, we have observed serious injuries of wild Harris' Hawks in both immature and adult birds, in contrast to other injured raptor species, which are invariably adult birds. An immature Harris' Hawk starting its first molt was found with a healed broken wing. It was incapable of flight but was in excellent health (Morrow 1996). While raptor banding we have observed an adult Harris' Hawk with a dead eye, an adult Harris' with arthritis so it was unable to properly stand or fly when temperatures approached 10 degrees Celsius, and an immature male Harris' Hawk with a broken and healed right leg (personal observations).

We hypothesize that injured Harris' Hawks enhanced survival rate is due to their unique social attributes. Harris' Hawks live in family groups that exhibit cooperative hunting techniques, sharing food with each other in the context of a complex social order (Mader 1975; Ellis, et. al. 1993, and Bednarz 1995). Thus, we hypothesize that injured Harris' Hawks do not necessarily have to catch prey themselves. Their family group members may share food with them, thus helping to prevent severely injured Harris' Hawks from starving.

The two adult Harris' Hawks perched in the vicinity where the injured immature Harris' Hawk was trapped were most likely part of the young hawk's family group, probably her parents. We suggest the possibility that other Harris' Hawks, whether they are direct family members or socially gregarious unrelated birds, are helping severely handicapped Harris' survive in the wild in situations where other raptors would have perished due to their injuries affecting their ability to capture prey.

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FIRST SPECIMENS OF THREE SPECIES OF SEABIRDS FROM THE UPPER TEXAS COAST

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With the establishment of the Texas Photo Record File (TPRF) and the Texas Rare Bird Committee (TRBC), documentation of Texas bird distribution has increased dramatically in the last 20 years. However, where possible, it is helpful to have voucher specimens for these records.

Herein we document the first specimens of Parasitic Jaeger (*Stercorarius parasiticus*), Band-rumped Storm Petrel (*Oceanodroma castro*) and Leach's Storm Petrel (*O. leucorhoa*) from the upper Texas coast of the Gulf of Mexico. These records provide important additions to our knowledge of these species for Texas.

The *Checklist of the Birds of Texas* (TOS 1995) indicates the following for these species:

Parasitic Jaeger (*Stercorarius parasiticus*) - no records.

Band-rumped Storm Petrel (*Oceanodroma castro*) - very rare summer visitor offshore, often in numbers, or as storm-blown strays, May into September.

Leach's Storm Petrel (*O. leucorhoa*) - very rare summer visitor offshore or as storm-blown strays, May into September.

Parasitic Jaeger (*Stercorarius parasiticus)*

Five photographs of this species were archived in the TPRF between 1986–1996, with three (60%) of these records occurring prior to 1990. One of the photographs (TPRF 689) is also represented by a skeletal specimen housed at the Texas Cooperative Wildlife Collection (TCWC) (No. 13263, collected in 1989). Two (40%) of these five archived records are from Nueces county, with one record each from Cameron, Raines, and Taylor

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county (20% each).

There are two study specimens of *S. parasiticus* from Galveston Co. housed at at the Houston Museum of Natural Science (HMNS), Vertebrate Ornithology (VO) division: an adult male (HMNS.VO 259), and a younger bird in juvenile plumage (HMNS.VO 1096, collected February 2001). These represent the first documented records for the upper Texas coast, and possibly the only study specimens of this species from Texas.

Band-rumped Storm Petrel (*Oceanodroma castro)*

Eleven photographs of this species were accepted and archived in the TPRF between 1988–1997, with eight (73%) of the photos taken between 1993–1997. One of the photographs (TPRF 815) is also represented by a study specimen housed at the TCWC (No. 12440, collected in 1989). Additionally there is a skeletal specimen (TCWC 12877) and two study skins (TCWC 6358, 13392) housed at the TCWC; these three specimens were collected between 1954–1998. Eight (57%) of these 14 photo and specimen records are from Calhoun county, three from Nueces county (21%) and one each from Hidalgo, Kleberg and Willacy counties (7% each). All of these specimens are from the 28th north latitude parallel.

There is a specimen of *O. castro* housed at HMNS (VO 13) that was salvaged 23 July 1976 from Freeport, Brazoria county, close to the 29th north latitude parallel. This specimen represents the first documented evidence of this species for the upper Texas coast.

Leach's Storm Petrel (*O. leucorhoa)*

Nine photographs of this species were accepted and archived in the TPRF between 1970–1997, with seven (78%) of the photos taken 1994–1997. Two of the photos are also represented by specimens housed at TCWC: an alcohol specimen (TCWC 12818 cross-referencing TPRF 1411, collected in 1991), and a study skin (TCWC 13327 cross-referencing TPRF 1652, collected in 1997). Six (67%) of these nine records are from Calhoun county, two are from Nueces county (22%) and one from Kleberg county (11%). All of these specimens are south of the 28th north latitude parallel.

There is a specimen of *O. leucorhoa* collected 6 June 2001, and housed at HMNS (HMNS.VO 1095) from Seabrook, Harris county, between the 29th–30th north latitude parallel, providing documentation of the first specimen from the upper Texas coast.

It appears that more Storm Petrel (*Oceanodroma*) specimens are encountered by salvagers during the breeding season, when apparently more birds may die than average. For example, six (86%) of the seven specimens mentioned in this report were collected with dates ranging 12 May–23 July; the only exception was the skeletal specimen (TCWC 12877) that was collected 4 January 1980. Moreover, five of these six summer-salvaged birds were collected between 12 May–25 June. It is possible that these deaths were associated with an energetically stressful time of year, with dispersal from the breeding grounds.

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VARIATION IN RED-BILLED PIGEON CLUTCH SIZE

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The Red-billed Pigeon (*Columba f. flavirostris*) inhabits lowland areas from the Rio Grande Valley of Texas south through Mexico to central Costa Rica (Goodwin 1983, Howell and Webb 1995, AOU 1998). As with other New World arboreal species of Columbid pigeons (Scaly-naped, *Columba squamosa;* Band-tailed, *C. fasciata;* Plain, *C. inornata;* Ruddy, *C. subvinacea;* etc.) the size of the clutch seems limited to a single egg. Exceptions have been documented in the Scaly-naped and Band-tailed Pigeons with two-egg clutches

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Figure 1: Nest and egg of Red-billed Pigeon. (Photo: A. Aragon T. /CSTB Inc.)

(Baptista et al. 1997). We gathered clutch-size data on Red-billed Pigeons to determine the frequency of two egg clutches. Data were gathered from various sources including the literature (Brush 1998, Dickey and Van Rossem 1938, Land 1970, Monroe 1968, Oberholser 1974, Russell 1964, Russell and Monson 1998, Slud 1964, Skutch 1964), notes from Texas Parks and Wildlife biologists (G. Waggerman pers. comm.), nest cards on file at the Western Foundation for Vertebrate Zoology and authors' field studies (Eitniear and Aragon 2000, Breeden 2002). In all we documented 119 clutches (45 Mexico, 66 Texas, 1 El Salvador, 7 Costa Rica).

Our analysis (STATVIEW 1996) indicated that 8% of clutches contained 2 eggs ($x = 1.08$, $SE = 0.02$). Johnston and Janiga (1995) showed that increase in clutch size in the Feral Pigeon (*Columba vivia*) ranged from 0.2 % to 1.1 %. Keppie and Braun (2000) found between 5–20% of Band-tailed Pigeon nests ($n = 366$) contained two-egg clutches with variation depending upon the region sampled. Arizona samples ($n = 56$) contained the highest number of two-egg clutches (20%). Nests from the Pacific Coast region ($n = 219$) contained the fewest number of two-egg clutches (5%). The small sample size from Central America precluded our ability to statistically address regional variability in clutch size. Currently all documentation of two-egg clutches in *C. flavirostris* are from Texas and adjacent Tamaulipas [Mexico]. Westmoreland and Best (1987) considered possible limiting factors of clutch size in Morning Doves *Zenaida macroura* but concluded they could not attribute it to a single factor. Rather, they believe physiological and ecological factors (limited crop-milk production, extended nestling period, and low postfledgling survival) associated with larger broods interacted to limit the species clutch size. Further, if Red-billed Pigeons could rear two-egg broods as successfully as single egg clutches, selection would favor an increase in clutch size. We have no evidence supporting an increase in the number of two-egg clutches in this species.

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FIRST NESTING ATTEMPT OF YELLOW-FACED GRASSQUIT *(TIARIS OLIVACEA)* IN THE UNITED STATES

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The Yellow-faced Grassquit (*Tiaris olivacea*) is a common neotropical emberizid ranging from northeastern Mexico and the Greater Antilles south through Central America to northern South America (American Ornithologists' Union 1998). Known to occur as far north as central Nuevo León and southern Tamaulipas, the Yellow-faced Grassquit was first seen in Texas in 1990 (Haynie 1992). The species is currently considered accidental in Texas and Florida, and there have been no breeding records anywhere in the United States (Texas Ornithological Society 1995, Bruce H. Anderson, pers. comm.).

On 11 June 2002, Kenny Nichols found a singing male Yellow-faced Grassquit in Bentsen-Rio Grande Valley State Park, southwestern Hidalgo County, Texas. The bird was in mixed thorn-scrub/grassland habitat along the Rio Grande Hiking Trail, about 500 m from the Rio Grande. Huisache (*Acacia minuata*), granjeno (*Celtis pallida*), and other thorny plants formed a partial, open canopy over guineagrass (*Panicum maximum*). Birders who visited the area after the initial report noted that the male sang his soft, "insect-like" song regularly from one of several dead trees, and that it also spent time on or near the ground, where it was much harder to see. Another vocalization, probably a call, was similar to the soft, slow trill often given by Olive Sparrows (*Arremonops rufivirgatus*).

On 15 June 2002, Laura Moore, Jane Kittleman and DeWayne Hodges saw the grassquit chasing or following a singing Olive Sparrow. On the same date, I saw the grassquit repeatedly carrying short pieces of grass into a nest that it was building within 15 m of the trail. At all times, I watched the nest from at least 15 m away, to avoid disturbing the bird, and he showed no signs of nervousness. The grassquit usually sang or called before and after visiting the nest. He stayed under cover as much as possible during his approach, only stayed in the nest for 5–10 seconds, and then left the nest area in a low, rapid flight.

On 22 June 2002, I did not see the grassquit approach the nest, but it was still singing regularly in its territory. The nest walls appeared thicker than on 15 June, and the male may have completed the outer shell of the nest. I saw the grassquit occasionally following a singing Olive Sparrow from tree to tree, within 20 m of the nest. This may have been an expression of territoriality in this sociable bird: "But all that the territorial male does is to fly

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Figure 1: Nest of the Yellow-faced Grassquit. (Photo: J. Eitniear/TCWC No.2002-75).

mildly in the direction of the intruder, who retreats without necessity of conflict" (Skutch 1954: 39).

The nest was domed, with a roof and a side entrance, and was attached to some guineagrass stems, 1–2 m from the nearest woody plant and about 42 cm above the ground. The nest had maximum height of 75 mm and a maximum width of 108 mm. The oval-shaped nest entrance was 35 mm wide and 40 mm high, and the depth of the cup (below the nest entrance) was 58 mm. The nest was made primarily of plains bristlegrass (*Setaria leucopila*), with some strands of the coarser guineagrass woven into the outside—both are common grasses in the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas (Lonard 1993).

During the last week of June, the grassquit was seen more erratically. On 25 June Bruce Crider saw it in semi-open thorn-scrub, further along the Rio Grande Hiking Trail, within 50 m of the Rio Grande, but the bird was not reported after 30 June. At no time was a female grassquit observed. Unlike most passerines, the male Yellow-faced Grassquit typically starts building the nest and may complete the outer "shell," leaving it to the female to complete the nest and add lining material (Skutch 1976). On 6 September 2002, I collected the nest, having determined from two visits in the previous week that no grassquits were around. The nest did not have any eggs, shell fragments, or droppings, further confirming that the nest was never active (Figure 1).

Despite the failure of the 2002 nesting attempt, Yellow-faced Grassquits may eventually breed successfully in the Lower Rio Grande of Texas, as have other tropical species now established in Texas (Oberholser 1974). Grassquits are common in disturbed grassy and brushy habitats, increasingly common habitats in central and southern Tamaulipas (Wauer 1998, Arvin 2001). Similarly, grassquits have been seen in higher elevations than before in central Nuevo León (Behrstock and Eubanks 1997), again suggesting that a larger, nearby source than previously known exists for dispersing individuals. However, regular field work will be needed, since Yellow-faced Grassquits can be easily overlooked, given their secretive habits and soft song.

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FIRST TRAVIS COUNTY BREEDING RECORD OF EASTERN WARBLING VIREO (*VIREO GILVUS)*

Brush Freeman[1]
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During the spring of 2001 a pair of Warbling Vireos occupied Webberville County park near the Bastrop/Travis County line. This pair remained until at least 20 June 2001, though evidence of breeding was never detected. I could not follow up on my observations of this pair that year after this date until mid-July. I did not relocate the birds during my subsequent July visits.

During the Spring of 2002 beginning in mid-May, a singing male was noted with increasing frequency in the same park. However, as migration was still under way, the bird could be a migrant and I made no serious effort to track it down as to behavior. During the first week of June, I began to take special note of the bird(s) and found a singing bird present on approximately 85% of all visits to the park. It's song enabled me to identify it as the Eastern V. G. Gilvus. Through the month of June, I heard singing for short periods on many visits. No evidence of breeding could be ascertained and the birds ranged widely along the Colorado River, making a probable territory difficult to pin-point.

I continued to search for evidence of breeding (e. g. nest, young etc.) throughout June with out success. On 2 July during intermittent rains, I heard the begging calls of a young bird that turned out to be a fledgling Brown-headed Cowbird (*Molothrus ater*). Within seconds of locating this fledgling in a large pecan tree, I noted the presence of a smaller bird nearby and identified it as an adult Warbling Vireo. I watched the interactions between the young cowbird and the adult vireo for about six minutes in an increasingly heavy rain.

The obvious gape and new feather grow of the young cowbird suggested that it has recently left the nest, possibly dislodged early during the recent heavy rains. Several times I noted that as the adult vireo moved within 8–10 feet of the young cowbird, the intensity of the cowbird's begging calls became more pronounced. On one occasion I saw the adult vireo feed the young cowbird a small unidentified food item, but this did not stop the young birds begging. The young bird tried to follow the adult around in the tree as best as it could, hopping from limb to limb, but never making any flights. I never saw a second adult.

I had to stop my observations at this point as the rain had become steady and moderately heavy. I returned to the

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park on 3 July and looked and listened for the young cowbird or any sign of the vireo, but was unsuccessful in that attempt.

This find of a successful breeding attempt, albeit producing a Brown-headed Cowbird, is the first such documented record of the eastern subspecies of Warbling Vireo within Travis County or the region including Bastrop, Caldwell, Fayette, Lee, and Williamson Counties and likely even a larger area. This species has been recorded breeding in McLennan County (Field Notes 1997)) where those represent exceptional records and reports exist, second hand, of attempts in Bell County however Oberholser (1974) mentions no records of breeding in Central Texas. There exists a small breeding population of the eastern race in Dallas Co. (Gardali, T. and G. Ballard 2000), while the western race (*V. G. Swainsoni*) is well documented as breeding in the Trans Pecos and even the Midland area (TOS 1995). This record may represent the southern most breeding record of the eastern Warbling Vireo in the state.

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