

NOTES FROM ELLIS AND CIMARRON COUNTIES, OKLAHOMA.

BY GEORGE MIKSCH SUTTON.

DURING the Spring of 1936 I made a study of the nesting habits of the Mississippi Kite (*Ictinia mississippiensis*) in northwestern Oklahoma. Establishing headquarters at Arnett, Ellis County, I remained in that vicinity from May 7 to June 18 save for eight days (May 31 to June 7) spent at Kenton, Cimarron County, in the western end of the Panhandle. A total of 139 bird forms was encountered. Of these the following twenty-nine species are of special interest, the Cassin's Kingbird Willow Thrush, and Bay-breasted Warbler being new for the State; the Magnolia Warbler not having before been collected; and the Gray Titmouse and Curve-billed Thrasher not having been known to be breeding species.

Pisobia fuscicollis. WHITE-RUMPED SANDPIPER.—This species is said by Mrs. Nice¹ (Birds of Oklahoma, Revised Edition, Publications of the University of Oklahoma, Vol. III, Biological Survey, No. 1, 1931, 93) to be an uncommon transient in Oklahoma. In Ellis County I recorded it almost daily from May 11 to 25, noting flocks of a hundred or more on several occasions, especially after heavy rains; collecting three males on May 11; and observing a single bird at a pond on the Davison ranch twelve miles southeast of Arnett as late as June 17.

Micropalama himantopus. STILT SANDPIPER.—Two were seen at a small pond on the McCullough farm six miles south of Arnett, Ellis County, on May 18. One of these, a female, was collected. Mrs. Nice (Ibid., 93) lists three specimens of this species for the State.

Coccyzus erythrophthalmus. BLACK-BILLED CUCKOO.—Mrs. Nice (Ibid., 103) calls this species "a rare transient in central and eastern Oklahoma" and "rare breeder in Tulsa county." At Arnett, Ellis County, the species is almost as common as the Yellow-billed Cuckoo, *Coccyzus americanus*, which is fairly common in wooded sections. While I did not find a Black-billed Cuckoo's nest with eggs or young, I saw a bird building a nest, several times encountered mated pairs, and on May 26 took a female that had been incubating eggs.

Centurus carolinus. RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER.—This species evidently ranges westward across Ellis County to the Texas State-line, for I found a pair and their almost fully fledged young on the Matthews farm eight miles southwest of Arnett, on May 21; and noted the species several times in the vicinity of Packsaddle Lake and Grand, along the South Fork of the Canadian River.

Dryobates scalaris symplectus. TEXAS WOODPECKER.—Rare in Ellis County. A pair with young just out of the nest were observed on the Matthews farm seven miles south of Arnett on May 21.

Tyrannus vociferans. CASSIN'S KINGBIRD.—Two mated pairs were observed along the mesa rims eight miles south of Kenton, Cimarron County. One of these pairs was collected June 1. The female was ready to lay eggs, though her brood-patch was not well defined. Mrs. Nice does not name this species in her list, and it is surprising that during the autumnal visits to Kenton made by Mr. Semple and

¹ Mrs. Nice has been good enough to give this paper a critical reading. G. M. S.

myself in 1932 and 1933 we so frequently recorded the Arkansas Kingbird, *Tyrannus verticalis*, but failed to note the present species.

Myiarchus crinitus. CRESTED FLYCATCHER.—Mrs. Nice (Ibid., 119) does not include Ellis County in the breeding range of this species. At Arnett, Packsaddle Lake, Harmon, and Grand I found it common in willow and cottonwood groves, collecting three specimens May 9–21.

Sayornis phoebe. EASTERN PHOEBE.—A nest with four small young was found in the old '101' ranch-house along Tesquesquite Creek, east of Kenton, Cimarron County, on June 2. The nest was built on a strip of wallpaper that sagged from the ceiling. Mrs. Nice (Ibid., 119–120) does not mention the nesting of this species anywhere in the Panhandle. Mr. Semple and I recorded it in the autumn on our earlier visits to the Kenton region.

Nuttallornis borealis.¹ OLIVE-SIDED FLYCATCHER.—Two female specimens were taken in a small canyon five miles southeast of Kenton, Cimarron County, June 2. These apparently are the second and third specimens for the State, a female having been taken at the mouth of Tesquesquite Creek by Mr. Semple and myself, on September 25, 1932 (Sutton, Notes on the Birds of the Western Panhandle of Oklahoma, *Annals of Carnegie Museum*, xxiv, 1934, 28).

Corvus cryptoleucus. WHITE-NECKED RAVEN.—Contrary to current belief, this raven is common in certain parts of western Oklahoma. In the vicinity of Arnett, Shattuck, Gage, and Grand, Ellis County, we encountered it constantly, recording from ten to sixty individuals per day and finding three nests—one with seven fresh eggs, collected with the parent birds May 12; one with seven highly incubated eggs, May 23; and one with five young almost ready to fly, June 16. The species is especially common along the highways where it feeds on jack rabbits killed by automobiles. In this respect it is noticeably different from the slightly smaller Crow, *Corvus brachyrhynchos*, which is only infrequently seen feeding in the open country.

Corvus brachyrhynchos. CROW.—Some form of Crow nests commonly in Ellis County, especially along the South Fork of the Canadian River, where, during early June, I repeatedly saw large flocks of young birds. Mrs. Nice (Ibid., 128) tells us that the Eastern Crow breeds 'as far west as Woods, Comanche and Tillman counties.' Ellis County birds are more than likely of this same race.

Penthestes carolinensis agilis. PLUMBEOUS CHICKADEE.—Fairly common in Ellis County along the wooded banks of streams. Mrs. Nice (Ibid., 131) gives the western limit of range as Woodward and Jackson Counties.

Baeolophus bicolor. TUFTED TITMOUSE.—Mrs. Nice (Ibid., 132) does not include Ellis County in the breeding range of this species. I encountered two pairs in the vicinity of Arnett, one on the Matthews farm seven miles south of Arnett, one near Packsaddle Lake, about a mile north of the South Fork of the Canadian River. The species is decidedly rare in the region.

Baeolophus inornatus griseus. GRAY TITMOUSE.—The Gray Titmouse nests in the Black Mesa country of Cimarron County. June 5, on the Regnier ranch eight miles southeast of Kenton, I collected a breeding female and observed a pair feeding young which were almost ready to leave the nest. The nest was in an old woodpecker hole in a large 'mountain' pine, a tree that is not common in the vicinity. Mrs. Nice (Ibid., 132) characterizes this bird as an 'uncommon winter visitant in Cimarron county.'

¹ *Nuttallornis mesoleucus* of the Check-List. For change of name see van Rossem, *Auk*, 1934, 548.

Toxostoma curvirostre. CURVE-BILLED THRASHER.—During the first week of June, I several times saw at long range what I felt sure to be Curve-billed Thrashers in the vicinity of Kenton, Cimarron County. Not until June 5 did I take a specimen (female), however; and on the same day I found a nest containing three small young in a dense clump of cholla cactus. The Curve-billed Thrasher is rare in the Black Mesa country. Mrs. Nice does not include it in her list.

Hylocichla fuscescens salicicola. WILLOW THRUSH.—Three specimens of *H. fuscescens* were taken: a male, at Arnett, Ellis County, on May 27; and a male and female along Tesquesquite Creek, east of Kenton, Cimarron County, on June 2. These prove to be of the western race, *H. f. salicicola*. Mrs. Nice does not mention either the Wilson's Thrush or the Willow Thrush in her list. From about May 25 to the end of the month we noted the species daily in the vicinity of Arnett, but found it exceedingly wary.

Poliophtila caerulea. BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER.—Mrs. Nice (Ibid., 145) does not include either Ellis or Cimarron County in the breeding range of this species. On May 10 a nest and four fresh eggs were found not far from Packsaddle Lake a mile or so north of the South Fork of the Canadian River, in southern Ellis County. June 1, a pair feeding small young were observed at the John A. Regnier ranch-house, several miles southeast of Kenton, Cimarron County.

Vireo belli. BELL'S VIREO.—One specimen, a female, was taken along Tesquesquite Creek, east of Kenton, Cimarron County, June 2. The species apparently has not heretofore been recorded anywhere in the Panhandle. In Ellis County I found it nesting on the Grady Word ranch, six miles south of Arnett; near Packsaddle Lake; and at Grand.

Dendroica magnolia. MAGNOLIA WARBLER.—A female was taken in a locust grove near Arnett, Ellis County, on May 28. Apparently this is the first record for western Oklahoma as well as the first specimen to be taken in the State.

Dendroica auduboni. AUDUBON'S WARBLER.—Mrs. Nice (Ibid., 158) characterizes this species as a 'transient in the Panhandle.' Apparently it migrates to some extent across the body of the State also, for I noted it in Ellis County several times in mid-May, collecting a female at Arnett on May 12. I did not with certainty record the Myrtle Warbler, *D. coronata*, during my sojourn in the State.

Dendroica castanea. BAY-BREASTED WARBLER.—A female was taken among large cottonwoods along the Cimarron River on the Walker ranch several miles east of Kenton, Cimarron County, June 4. Apparently this species has not heretofore been recorded in the State.

Oporornis philadelphia. MOURNING WARBLER.—May 21 a male was collected in a locust thicket at Arnett, Ellis County.

Dolichonyx oryzivorus. BOBOLINK.—Recorded but once, a male collected along a roadside fence a mile southwest of Arnett, Ellis County, May 13.

Icterus galbula. BALTIMORE ORIOLE.—About Arnett, Harmon, and Peek, Ellis County, this species was abundant. Many nests were found. The Bullock's Oriole, *Icterus bullocki*, also was present, though comparatively rare. Mr. Grady Word, Mr. Jacob Gross, and other persons who have been familiar with the birdlife of Ellis County for years assured me that orioles had only recently become numerous in the region.

Passerina cyanea. INDIGO BUNTING.—A few nesting pairs were observed along the South Fork of the Canadian River in the vicinity of Packsaddle Lake and Grand, Ellis County. No specimen taken.

Passerina ciris. PAINTED BUNTING.—Two nesting pairs were encountered on

the Grady Word ranch along the Canadian River, about ten miles south of Arnett, Ellis County. A male specimen was taken at that place on June 11.

Spinus tristis. GOLDFINCH.—Rather rare about Arnett, Ellis County. Several males in high plumage were seen along the South Fork of the Canadian River on the Grady Word ranch, June 11 to 16; but no nests were found.

Aimophila ruficeps eremoeca. ROCK SPARROW.—A male with much enlarged gonads was taken along an arroyo on the Grady Word ranch 10 miles south of Arnett, Ellis County, on May 9. Mrs. Nice tells me that this species has not heretofore been recorded from Ellis County.

Spizella pusilla. FIELD SPARROW.—In the monotonous shinnery oak country south and east of Arnett, Ellis County, the Field Sparrow is one of the few characteristic birds. Three specimens were taken.

Cornell University, Ithaca, New York.