

### Records of the Crimson-collared Grosbeak (*Rhodothraupis celaeno*) from Texas

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*Rhodothraupis*, a monotypic genus endemic to the dry tropical forest of northeastern México, occurs from central Veracruz to southern Nuevo León along the east slope of the Sierra Madre Oriental (Miller et al. 1957). Here, we report the first documented observation of *Rhodothraupis celaeno* in the United States, along with two other sight records.

On 28 June 1974, Bob and Sirpa Harms discovered a male Crimson-collared Grosbeak in Bentsen State Park, Hidalgo County, Texas. They taped the bird's song and observed its territorial response to a playback of the tape. At 0700 on 30 June, the authors, using a copy of the Harms' tape, relocated the bird along a slough of the Rio Grande where standing water promoted growth of taller trees and much denser undergrowth than the surrounding mesquite brushland. We observed the bird for several hours as it sang from exposed dead limbs and treetops. It behaved territorially, responding to the tape with approach and vigorous singing. It chased nearby Bronzed Cowbirds (*Molothrus aeneus*) and Couch's Kingbirds (*Tyrannus couchii*). While singing, the grosbeak frequently erected the feathers of its crown, which gave it a crested appearance and a Cardinal-like silhouette. We obtained photographs and further recordings. Photographs are on file at Texas A&M University, Texas Photo Record File #244; tapes are deposited in the Library of Natural Sounds, Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology (#23600). At about 0945, the bird left its singing perch and did not reappear. A brief sighting on 1 July by John Arvin constitutes the last observation of the bird of which we are aware.

Further sightings of this species in Texas occurred on 25 December 1974, when John and Gladys Donahue observed a male at La Joya, Hidalgo County, about 8 km northeast of the site of the above record (Webster 1975), and on 13 July 1975, when Steven and Mrs. Sydney Benn observed a female in their

yard in Brownsville, Cameron County (pers. comm.). The Benn's yard has luxuriant native vegetation and has attracted such other rarities as the Golden-crowned Warbler (*Basileuterus culicivorus*).

Several facts combine to make it unlikely that these records of *Rhodothraupis* represent escaped cage birds: (1) all three records occurred in habitat similar to the preferred natural habitat of the species in México; (2) the required dispersal distance from the nearest known natural population is less than 200 km (Kincaid 1951); (3) all three records occurred in a 1-yr period, suggesting that some temporary environmental condition may have caused dispersal in the species; (4) the species is rare in captivity (an informal survey of Texas birdwatchers who travel regularly in México revealed that only one of 13 persons had ever seen a caged Crimson-collared Grosbeak); and (5) although we observed the Bentsen State Park bird quite closely, we could see no unusual feather wear. These facts together make a strong case that the Texas records of *Rhodothraupis* represent natural dispersal in the species.

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### Ani Male Apparently Killed by Other Anis while Attempting to Parasitize Nest

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On 11 April 1981 I collected a dead male Smooth-billed Ani (*Crotophaga ani*) under the nest tree of an ani group on Virginia Key, Dade County, Florida. The color-banded male was apparently killed by a

puncture wound in the right temporal fossa of the skull. The nature of the fatal wound, the location of the body, and observations made before this finding strongly suggest that the bird was killed by other

anis while he and his mate attempted to parasitize their nest.

The dead individual and his color-banded mate were members of an ani group (W flock) occupying a territory adjacent to the group (E flock) under whose nest the male was found. Only E flock was nesting at the time. On 8 April I observed the pair from W flock entering E flock's territory and flying directly toward the nest tree. Four E-flock anis that had been working on the nest intercepted the pair and chased both birds, pecking at their backs and heads. The pair retreated to the edge of their own territory but flew back again after 23 min and were again chased out, this time by all seven E-flock members. The W-flock female appeared to be gravid because of a conspicuous bulge in her lower abdomen. On 9 April the E-flock nest was checked and found to contain a single egg. This egg was probably laid by the W-flock female, because the nest was incompletely built and no E-flock females were observed to be carrying eggs. This was the first of two cases of apparent intraspecific egg parasitism that I observed in Smooth-bills in 1981. This behavior is common in Groove-billed Anis (*Crotophaga sulcirostris*) (Vehrencamp 1976) but has been previously unreported for Smooth-bills. By the time the dead male was found on 11 April, E flock had abandoned its nest and had begun another one about 40 m away.

Evidence suggesting that the W-flock male was killed by E-flock members is circumstantial but strong. While defending a territory against intraspecific intruders, Smooth-bills characteristically peck at the heads of the invaders (Davis 1940). The fatal wound could have been caused in this manner. Smooth-bills will kill other anis placed in their territories if they are allowed to come in direct contact with them, as in the ani trap used by Davis (1940). Also, other than the punctured skull, the dead ani had no marks on its body that might be attributable to a predator. The location and condition of the body, the previous fights with E-flock members, and the evidence of egg parasitism all point to this being an intraspecific killing.

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### Effects of Stage of the Breeding Cycle on Sage Sparrow Detectability

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Among the myriad of factors potentially affecting the accuracy of bird census procedures are seasonal changes in detectability that correspond with different stages in the birds' breeding cycle. If detectability is influenced by the stage of the breeding cycle, then "perceived" changes in size within a single population or disparities in size among different populations may be only sampling artifacts rather than indications of actual differences in population density. In particular, this poses a problem when the census interval for a given study is long or when the results from more than one study are compared in which counts were conducted at different times in the season (see also Järvinen et al. 1977). Effects of the stage of the breeding cycle on bird detectability have been largely ignored, although Best (1981) has quantified these for the Field Sparrow (*Spizella pusilla*). During an intensive study of the breeding ecology of passerines occupying a sagebrush-grassland community, we had the opportunity to make a sim-

ilar evaluation for the Sage Sparrow (*Amphispiza belli*). Those results are reported herein.

The study area is located within the western boundary of the Idaho National Engineering Laboratory site in southeastern Idaho. The topography is flat to gently rolling. Dominant plant species include big sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata*), green rabbitbrush (*Chrysothamnus viscidiflorus*), bluebunch wheatgrass (*Agropyron spicatum*), Indian rice grass (*Oryzopsis hymenoides*), and bottlebrush squirreltail (*Sitanion hystrix*). Substantial portions of the ground are bare.

In 1981, Sage Sparrows arrived on the study area in early March, and territory establishment was completed by mid-April. Most birds were mist netted soon after their arrival and marked with colored leg bands for individual identification. In May and June, territories of 43 males (39 mated and 4 unmated) were mapped by using the "flush" technique (Wiens 1969). Birds on each of four 6.25-ha study plots, gridded