

NOTES

ORANGE BISHOPS BREEDING IN PHOENIX, ARIZONA

THOMAS A. GATZ, U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 2321 W. Royal Palm Road, Suite 103, Phoenix, Arizona 85021

In late summer of 1998 and 1999, I observed a small colony of approximately ten Orange Bishops (*Euplectes franciscanus*) in north Phoenix, Arizona. The colony was in a grassy tree-lined partially channelized desert wash in a highly urbanized area south of the intersection of First Drive and Greenway Parkway. A small amount of standing water was present through most of the year. In June of 2000, the 1998–1999 site was still occupied and I located a second group of six birds approximately 1.1 km east of the first location in a small cattail marsh with surface water in the same wash southwest of the intersection of Seventh Street and Greenway Parkway. The cattail marsh formed as a result of water ponded below a street culvert. The bishops at both locations were feeding on seeds of Johnson Grass (*Sorghum halepense*), a nonnative species from the Mediterranean region. Males, and occasionally females, often perched in nearby native and nonnative trees. I visited these specific locations and the surrounding area frequently from 1994 to 1997 but observed no bishops prior to 1998.

Evidence of breeding included alternate-plumaged males (Figure 1) displaying and chasing females from June through September, a male carrying a long blade of grass, apparently for nesting material, on 4 July, and a recently constructed but unoccupied nest in the cattail marsh on 6 August (Figure 2). The roundish nest, made of dried



Figure 1. Adult male Orange Bishop in alternate plumage, Phoenix, Arizona, July 2000.

Photo by T. Gatz

NOTES



Figure 2. Nest of Orange Bishop, Phoenix, Arizona, August 2000.

Photo by T. Gatz

grass, was 10 cm tall by 7.5 cm wide with an opening near the top. It was woven around several stems of Johnson Grass, 1 m above the water surface. In September, I observed a female feeding a fledged young.

This species, a member of the mainly African weaver family, the Ploceidae, is native to sub-Saharan Africa and is now well established in southern California with flocks of 50 to 100 birds routinely noted in some flood-control basins near Los Angeles [Garrett, K. L. 1998. Field separation of bishops (*Euplectes*) from North American emberizids. *W. Birds* 29:231–232]. Both the California and Arizona birds are assumed to have originated from escaped cage birds. Small colonies of this species are now established in the West Indies and are also believed to have originated from captive birds (Raffaele, H., J. Wiley, O. Garrido, A. Keith, and J. Raffaele. 1998. *A Guide to the Birds of the West Indies*, p. 446. Princeton Univ. Press, Princeton, N.J.).

Although no additional cattail marsh/Johnson Grass habitat occurs in the area immediately surrounding these sightings, a considerable amount of similar habitat, into which this species could spread, exists in riparian areas, around artificial impoundments for flood control, and in agricultural sections of central and southern Arizona.

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