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BOHEMIAN WAXWINGS, 1961-1962

BY IVAN L. BOYD

In the winter of 1961-1962 there was an unusually large and extensive invasion of Bohemian Waxwings (*Bombycilla garrulus*) into Kansas and most of the surrounding states. This species ordinarily is an uncommon winter visitant in the northwestern sector of Kansas, and is somewhat rare and irregular elsewhere in the state. The erratic wandering of this bird appears to be influenced by the presence or absence of berries or other suitable food. The unpredicted invasion into this region would indicate that there was a shortage of suitable food in the northern part of North America along with the possibility that there had been an unusual increase in population of this species of waxwing.

The earliest observation of this species as reported to me was made by Charles A. Ely, November 10, 1961, at Hays, Kansas. The maximum numbers occurred in January and February, and diminished through March and April. By April 12 only two were observed in Lawrence, and one lone bird was found on the spring count made at the Kansas Ornithological Society meeting held at Wichita, May 6. Numerous observers (Cole, Myers, Rising, Dingus, Betts, Kelley, Miller) estimated at least 1,000 Bohemians, interspersed with a few Cedar Waxwings, in the suburbs of Kansas City, Kansas. The greatest concentration occurred early in February and centered at Prairie Village, where there was an abundance of fruit on Washington Hawthorn (*Crataegus phaenopyrum*) and other ornamental shrubs and trees. In a week or less this large concentration of birds had depleted the food supply and were moving out of the area, probably to more fruitful grounds.

In almost all parts of the state where observers were present, sightings of the large waxwings were reported. One hundred and fifty were observed in Wichita and reported in the Wichita Eagle (Ruth) on January 28. Miss Ruth also reported observations made by Roy Henry and Lucille Thomas in Newton, in which their highest count was 140 on March 25. The highest count in Topeka was 85 (Carson, Rice). A dozen or more were seen at Emporia and Manhattan (Parmalee, Tiemeier). The maximum count at Lawrence was 40 (Anderson, Garrett, Nelson, Boyd). At least one was seen on the Audubon Christmas Count at Baldwin (Purvis) and at Clay Center. None were found at Pittsburg or Mound City, a part of the state in which daily observations are made by several birders.

This is not the only winter in which this species has occurred in the United States in large numbers. Reference to A. C. Bent's "Life Histories of North American Birds" would indicate that there have been four or five similar invasions. Miss Althea R. Sherman reported to Dr. Bent that she and several other observers saw millions of Bohemian Waxwings flying over northern Iowa on December 29, 1908. In the winter of 1916-1917 a Mr. Rathburn reported (in Bent) an invasion in the western part of the United States (Washington to Colorado). Thousands were seen at numerous places. Frederick C. Lincoln reported an estimate of 10,000 in Denver in February 1917. Smaller flocks in numerous areas were reported by Gabrielson and Jewett in Oregon in the winter of 1919-1920. Other reports were received from Nebraska, the New England states and parts of Massachusetts in the same winter. Small invasions of this species were reported in 1930-1931 and 1931-1932 from Colorado to California.

According to Bent, Bohemian Waxwings consume a wide variety of vegetable materials. They will eat highbush cranberries, buffaloberries, bearberries, blueberries, snowberries, hackberries, barberries, berries of alder, holly, madrona, buckthorn, ivy, asparagus, smilax, peppertree, dogwood, sumac, laurel, woodbine, and matrimony vine. In addition to these they will satisfy their hunger with frozen apples, Russian olives, rose hips, wild grapes, persimmons and figs. They even supplement their diet with buds from trees. Some bird lovers have attracted them to feeders that have been generously supplied with raisins, currants, chopped prunes, and dried apples.

To the inquiry as to the habitat preferences of these birds I invariably received the reply that they usually were located in large trees, on telephone wires, cedar trees, and even bushes that were in close proximity to a supply of food. When the food was exhausted, they moved on.

To me their song or trill is considerably more melodious and much louder than that of the Cedar Waxwing. It was possible to hear them even with the windows of the car closed and while we were driving along slowly.

The last and most important question as to why they were here last winter and on other infrequent occasions seems not too difficult to answer. It is probably failure of the food supply, rather than cold weather that sends the Bohemians southward in winter. According to observation in the far North these birds can survive temperatures 30 to 45 degrees below zero, providing the food supply is adequate. Waxwings seem to have ravenous appetites and a tremendous supply of food is necessary if they are to stay in one given region for any length of time. This winter the fruit from Washington Hawthorn, highbush cranberries, cedar trees, multiflora rose, bush honeysuckle, regal privet and arborvitae was eaten by these birds, according to the replies which were received. In many cases food was taken not only from the trees, shrubs and vines but also from the ground to which it had fallen.

Out-of-state records would indicate that occurrence of Bohemian Waxwings in Missouri, Iowa, Nebraska, South Dakota and Oklahoma in 1961-1962 was similar to that in Kansas.

Baldwin, Kansas, September 3, 1962.

WHITE-FACED IBIS NESTING AT CHEYENNE BOTTOMS

By J. R. ZUVANICH

Johnston (1960, Univ. Kansas Mus. Nat. Hist., *Misc. Publ.* 23:1-68) lists the White-faced Ibis (*Plegadis chihi*) as a transient and rare summer resident in Kansas, where it has been recorded from May 14 to October 6. Nossaman (1952, Kans. Fish and Game. 9(3):7) published the first nesting record for Kansas—a flightless chick photographed during the summer of 1951 at the Cheyenne Bottoms, Barton County, Kansas.

On April 17, 1962, John Nilsen and I saw three White-faced Ibises feeding in a marsh four miles north of the Cheyenne Bottoms. One, a specimen collected by us the following day in the same area, is now in the Kansas State Teachers College collection at Emporia.

We observed the species only sporadically until May 23, when a flock of 14 was seen feeding in the Cheyenne Bottoms. This number increased until June 4, when at least 20 were recorded. In June and July the ibises were seen feeding in Pool 3, generally in the early morning, but occasionally from 4:00 to 5:00 p.m.

John Nilsen and I found eight nests in Pool 2 on June 25, and 13 nests on July 4. All 13 nests were scattered throughout a Black-crowned Night Heron (*Nycticorax nycticorax*) rookery, which contained 60 to 70 heron nests. Both species utilized cattail (*Typha*) beds extensively as the chief nesting sites. Apparently the herons nested first; I found their nests in the area as early as June 5. According to L. O. Nossaman of Great Bend (personal communication), the ibises did not build nests before mid-June.

The ibis nests were constructed entirely of green cattails, anchored to the living cattails, five to fifteen inches over the water. They were five to seven inches thick with a shallow cavity ten to fifteen inches across.

The clutches varied from three to five eggs. Incubation probably began with the first egg, since the chicks varied greatly in size within individual nests. Twenty-one chicks were banded, but high water in late July resulted in great mortality, with a possible loss of 80% of the chicks. It will be interesting to note whether this loss will have any effect on future nestings at Cheyenne Bottoms.

2740 S. Lulu, Wichita, Kansas, March 8, 1962.

NOTES ON THE PHALAROPODIDAE OF CHEYENNE BOTTOMS

BY DAVID F. PARMELEE

The writer has visited Cheyenne Bottoms, Barton County, Kansas, a number of times since the fall of 1958, noting particularly the charadriiform birds. The following notes apply to the three species of phalaropes, the status of each of which is poorly known for the state. Specimens were collected by the author or Richard H. Schmidt and are in the Kansas State Teachers College collection at Emporia.

Red Phalarope: *Phalaropus fulicarius*.—A lone male in partly gray feather, swimming far out in Pool 4 on October 8, 1959, was the only bird of this species definitely noted by me at Cheyenne Bottoms. I took the bird, apparently the third specimen for Kansas. The first was taken in Douglas County on November 5, 1905, the second in Franklin County on October 25, 1926, according to Johnston (Univ. Kansas Mus. Nat. Hist., *Misc. Publ.* 23, 1960:26).

Wilson Phalarope: *Steganopus tricolor*.—An adult male with downy young noted June 26, 1954, at Cheyenne Bottoms, was the first reported breeding record for Kansas (Andrews and Stephens, *Bull. Kansas Ornith. Soc.*, 1954:30). On August 8, 1959, at Cheyenne Bottoms, Richard H. Schmidt collected two fledged birds-of-the-year. Much down was present on each. Although this is not a valid breeding record, it seems likely that the birds were hatched close by.

On June 3, 1961, Richard H. Schmidt and I noted upward of a hundred bright females in Pool 4. Many of them were chasing males at the time. In searching for nests, we flushed two males, each from a full clutch of four comparatively fresh eggs. These we collected, the first taken in Kansas. On June 10, I returned to Pool 4 with several members of my ornithology class and together we found five additional nests. Of these, one had four eggs with small embryos; two had four eggs each, all eight eggs appearing to have large embryos; one had two piped eggs and an empty shell, indicating that at least one young had left the nest; and one had crushed shells only, suggesting destruction by predation. Four of the seven nests had been placed in short grass over damp ground. Three were in spike rushes above water that was two to three inches deep. One of the piped eggs was artificially incubated at Kansas State Teachers College, where it finally hatched on June 12.

Fewer birds of either sex were noted in the nesting area on June 17, when no new nests were discovered. On July 2, I collected a well-feathered but practically flightless bird by hand in Pool 2, clearly indicating that the phalaropes were also breeding in other pool areas. In the summer of 1962, John Nilsen and J. R. Zuvanich (personal communication) noted several, widely scattered, nests at Cheyenne Bottoms, but no special study was made of them.

Our dates for this phalarope at Cheyenne Bottoms extend from April 22 to September 5, but almost certainly the species occurs there both earlier and later. According to Johnston (*ibid.*), it can be expected in Kansas as early as April 7 and as late as October 14.

Northern Phalarope: *Lobipes lobatus*.—At Cheyenne Bottoms, I noted a flock of six of these birds in breeding plumage in Pool 2 on May 28, 1961. From a flock of four in gray feather, I collected two females in Pool 5 on September 23, 1961.

Considered a rare transient in Kansas during May 8–28 and from August 30 to October 18, one specimen of Northern Phalarope was collected in Wallace County on May 25, 1883, and another in Douglas County on May 28, 1955 (Johnston, *ibid.*). Another specimen, long overlooked, is in the Kansas State Teachers College collection. It was collected in Hamilton County on October 28, 1934, by G. C. Rinker.

Biology Department, Kansas State Teachers College, Emporia, February 21, 1963.

Unusual Antics of a Prairie Chicken.—In late March, 1962, members of the Arkansas City Ornithology Club saw a Greater Prairie Chicken (*Tympanuchus cupido*) near a country road nine miles east of Arkansas City, Kansas. The bird's actions were unusual—instead of flying away from our car, as would be considered normal for such birds, it ran toward it with feather tufts erected, air sacs inflated, and audibly booming. These actions, characteristic of male territorial and mating behavior, were repeated every time a vehicle came along the road.

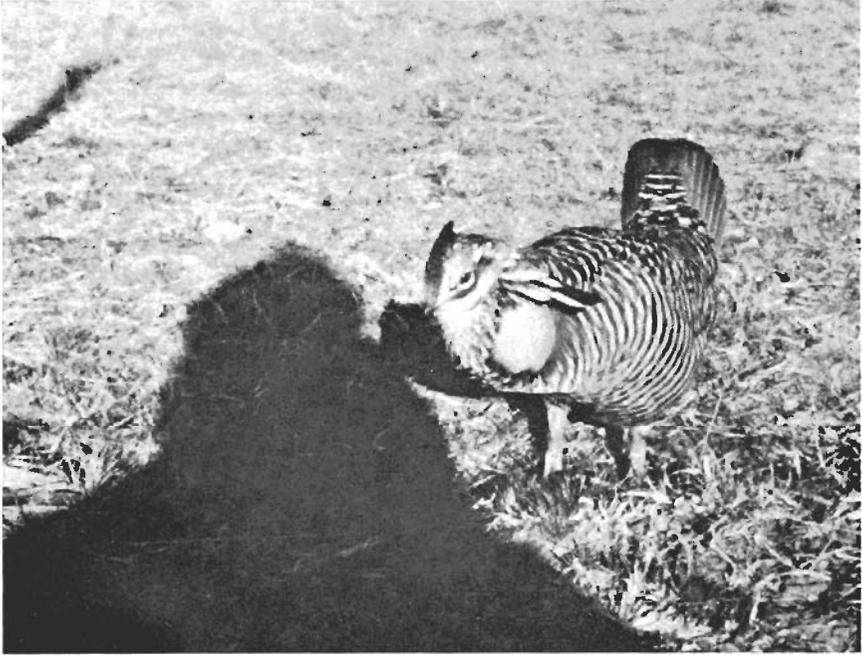


FIGURE 1. Male Greater Prairie Chicken, *Tympanuchus cupido*, in typical ritual posture associated normally with territorial aggression; display in this instance was evoked by presence of a man who was imitating the moaning sound that accompanies this posture in birds on the booming ground.

A few days later Mr. B. J. McKinley visited the site of the chicken's territorial actions with us, and made the accompanying photograph (fig. 1). Mr. McKinley imitated the booming sound and thereby induced the bird to move ultimately to within two feet of his camera lens. The chicken boomed in response to each of Mr. McKinley's imitations, and Figure 1 shows the bird in mid-boom in the very shadow of Mr. McKinley.—Mrs. Stedman Chaplin, *Arkansas City, Kansas, September 18, 1962.*

NOTES AND NEWS

The office of Assistant Editor of the Bulletin is appointive, rather than elective, and as a result most such editors tend to be inconspicuous. I therefore single them out from time to time so that we may be aware of the assistance they willingly lend the Society. On this occasion I thank Abbot S. Gaunt for his help on the Bulletin for the past three and one-half years. Dr. Gaunt completed graduate studies at The University of Kansas last month and is shortly to join the faculty of Middlebury College, Middlebury, Vermont; we wish him well. Mr. Jon C. Barlow will return in September to the University after a year's field work in Uruguay, and will then resume duties on the Bulletin in association with Mr. Klaas.

The following material is a summary of a memorandum from The Wilderness Society, dated May 16, 1963, concerning the Wilderness Bill.

The Wilderness Act as passed by the Senate (S. 4) has been referred to the House Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, where it is now in the hands of the Subcommittee on Public Lands. There seems to be general support for this bill, but the measure cannot be brought to a vote on the House floor until it has been reported out by the Committee. Congressional advisors inform us that it is the concentrated opposition of leaders of mining and lumbering interests on members of the House Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs that must be counteracted now by conservationists. They point out that members of this Committee must receive letters and other expressions of support for the bill from as many conservation-minded people as possible.

If conservationists fail to express support for the Wilderness Bill, it will surely languish in Committee, and the mining and lumbering interests will again have had their way, as indeed they had last year.

Members of the K.O.S. are urged in the strongest possible way to write both Wayne N. Aspinall, Chairman of the House Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, and Joe Skubitz (R., Kansas; 5th District), member of the Committee, at the House Office Building, Washington 25, D.C.; tell them of your feelings concerning the necessity to have a wilderness bill at least as good as the one presently under consideration.

Recent books of interest to members of the K.O.S.

Birds of the World. Oliver L. Austin, Jr. 1961. Golden Press, New York. 316 pp., 300 colored illustrations. Price \$17.50; Golden Craft Edition, \$11.98.—A large, beautiful book with an interesting and informative text, standing as the volume of choice if purchase of a survey of the world's birds is contemplated.

Biology and Comparative Physiology of Birds. A. J. Marshall, Ed. 1961. Academic Press, New York and London. Vol. 1, 518 pp; vol 2, 468 pp. Price, \$28.00.—A reasonably up-to-date set of summaries of many subdivisions of ornithology by authors who range mostly from competent to vastly superior.

Bird Study. Andrew J. Berger. 1961. John Wiley, New York. 389 pp.—A textbook designed for a one-semester, liberal arts course; it is generally good and has a stimulating and worthwhile chapter on conservation.

Sex and Internal Secretions. W. C. Young, Ed. 1961. Williams and Wilkins, Baltimore. 1609 pp. (2 vols.). Price, \$15.00.—Of particular interest to students of birds is chapter 21, *Hormonal Regulation of Parental Behavior in Birds and Infra-human Mammals*, by D. S. Lehrman, a superb summary of the field, covering 115 pp. The two volumes, the 3rd edition of this classic work, were published with a financial subsidy, accounting for the enormously low price.

New Mexico Birds. J. Stokley Ligon. 1961. University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque. 360 pp. Price, \$8.50.—This book by no means replaces Bailey's standard work on New Mexican birds, but it brings certain distributional matters up to date. The illustrations are notably uneven, but those done by Orville O. Rice are superior.

FOURTEENTH ANNUAL MEETING

1962

The 14th Annual Meeting of the Kansas Ornithological Society was held on May 5-6, 1962, at the University of Wichita, Wichita, Kansas. The following people presented papers at the sessions on May 5: Joan Challans, Erwin Klaas, Merrill McHenry, L. B. Carson, John Knouse, Charles Ely, John Breukelman, L. O. Nossaman, Frank Robl, Ivan Boyd, and Marvin Schwilling. The following officers were elected for the year 1962-1963: Mrs. Elizabeth Cole, President; Dr. J. C. Johnson, Jr., Vice-President; Miss Amelia Betts, Secretary; Mr. L. B. Carson, Treasurer; Dr. R. F. Johnston, Editor. The Society voted to accept an invitation to hold its Annual Meeting for 1963 at the University of Kansas, Lawrence. On May 6, some 60 people in three parties canvassed the area and recorded the following 127 species of birds:

Great Blue Heron, Green Heron, Mallard, Green-winged Teal, Blue-winged Teal, Shoveler, Lesser Scaup, Cooper Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, Swainson Hawk, Rough-legged Hawk, Sparrow Hawk, Bobwhite, Ring-necked Pheasant, American Coot, Killdeer, Upland Plover, Spotted Sandpiper, Greater Yellowlegs, Lesser Yellowlegs, Pectoral Sandpiper, White-rumped Sandpiper, Baird Sandpiper, Least Sandpiper, Long-billed Dowitcher, Stilt Sandpiper, Western Sandpiper, Semipalmated Sandpiper, American Avocet, Wilson Phalarope, Ring-billed Gull, Franklin Gull, Black Tern, Rock Dove, Mourning Dove, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Great Horned Owl, Common Nighthawk, Chimney Swift, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Yellow-shafted Flicker, Red-shafted Flicker, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Red-headed Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Eastern Kingbird, Western Kingbird, Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, Great Crested Flycatcher, Eastern Phoebe, Least Flycatcher, Arcadian Flycatcher, Olive-sided Flycatcher, Horned Lark, Bank Swallow, Rough-winged Swallow, Barn Swallow, Cliff Swallow, Purple Martin, Blue Jay, Common Crow, Black-capped Chickadee, Carolina Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, House Wren, Carolina Wren, Mockingbird, Catbird, Brown Thrasher, Robin, Wood Thrush, Swainson Thrush, Gray-cheeked Thrush, Eastern Bluebird, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Bohemian Waxwing, Cedar Waxwing, Loggerhead Shrike, Starling, Bell Vireo, Red-eyed Vireo, Warbling Vireo, Tennessee Warbler, Orange-crowned Warbler, Nashville Warbler, Parula Warbler, Yellow Warbler, Myrtle Warbler, Bay-breasted Warbler, Blackpoll Warbler, Yellowthroat, American Redstart, House Sparrow, Bobolink, Eastern Meadowlark, Western Meadowlark, Yellow-headed Blackbird, Red-winged Blackbird, Orchard Oriole, Baltimore Oriole, Common Grackle, Brown-headed Cowbird, Cardinal, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Indigo Bunting, Lazuli Bunting, Painted Bunting, Dickcissel, Purple Finch, Pine Siskin, American Goldfinch, Rufous-sided Towhee, Savannah Sparrow, Grasshopper Sparrow, Lark Sparrow, Chipping Sparrow, Clay-colored Sparrow, Field Sparrow, Harris Sparrow, White-crowned Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, Lincoln Sparrow.

FIFTEENTH ANNUAL MEETING

1963

About 85 members attended the 15th Annual Meeting of the K.O.S. at The University of Kansas on May 4 and 5, 1963. Nine papers were read in morning and afternoon session (by J. C. Johnson, Brother David, E. E. Klaas, G. C. Packard, F. Robl, J. L. Wildenthal, W. Abbott, A. S. Gaunt, R. M. Mengel, M. J. Phillips, R. K. Selander, and R. F. Johnston). A film was shown by U. W. Maupin, high points in which were white pelicans and prairie chickens. Another species of chicken, plus wild rice, was well received later in the day, and was spiced by an excellent program, entitled "Arctic Birds," presented by D. F. Parmelee. On Sunday morning, following two to three inches of rain, some six parties totalling 65 people visually assaulted large fragments of the avifauna of Douglas County, recording the following species of birds:

Pied-billed Grebe, Great Blue Heron, Green Heron, Mallard, Blue-winged Teal, Shoveler, Turkey Vulture, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Cooper Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, Rough-legged Hawk, Sparrow Hawk,

Bobwhite, King Rail, Coot, Semipalmated Plover, American Golden Plover, Upland Plover, Spotted Sandpiper, Solitary Sandpiper, Willet, Greater Yellowlegs, Lesser Yellowlegs, Pectoral, White-rumped, Baird, and Least sandpipers, Semipalmated Sandpiper, Northern Phalarope, Franklin Gull, Black Tern, Mourning Dove, Rock Dove, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Great Horned Owl, Chimney Swift, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Yellow-shafted Flicker, Red-bellied, Red-headed, Hairy, and Downy woodpeckers, Eastern and Western kingbirds, Scissor-tailed, Great Crested, and Least flycatchers, Eastern Phoebe, Eastern Wood Pewee, Horned Lark, Tree, Rough-winged, Bank, Barn, and Cliff swallows, Purple Martin, Blue Jay, Common Crow, Black-capped Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, White-breasted Nuthatch, House and Carolina wrens, Mockingbird, Catbird, Brown Thrasher, Robin, Wood, Swainson, and Gray-cheeked thrushes, Eastern Bluebird, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Loggerhead Shrike, Starling, White-eyed, Bell, Yellow-throated, Solitary, Red-eyed, and Warbling vireos, Black-and-white, Prothonotary, Tennessee, Orange-crowned, Nashville, Parula, Yellow, Magnolia, Myrtle, Black-throated Green, Blackburnian, Blackpoll, and Palm warblers, Ovenbird, Northern Waterthrush, Louisiana Waterthrush, Yellowthroat, Yellow-breasted Chat, Wilson Warbler, American Redstart, House Sparrow, Eastern and Western meadowlarks, Red-winged Blackbird, Orchard and Baltimore orioles, Rusty Blackbird, Common Grackle, Brown-headed Cowbird, Scarlet and Summer tanagers, Cardinal, Rose-breasted and Blue grosbeaks, Indigo and Painted buntings, Dickcissel, Pine Siskin, American Goldfinch, Rufous-sided Towhee, Savannah Sparrow, Grasshopper, Vesper, Lark, Chipping, Clay-colored, Field, Harris, White-crowned, White-throated, Lincoln, and Song sparrows. The total of 136 species represents about the average count by this number of observers in this area at this time of year.—R.F.J.

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