

Kansas Ornithological Society

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An anomalous bill in a Pintail.—On 1 November 1969 I killed an adult drake Pintail (*Anas acuta*) while duck hunting on a pond approximately 5 miles southeast of Lawrence, Douglas County, Kansas (820 feet elevation). The bird had a deformation of the bill in which the lower mandible projected substantially beyond the upper mandible or maxilla (Fig. 1). In order to determine which bill components were anomalous and which (if any) were normal, several measurements were taken on the bird's bill and compared with measurements from ten adult male Pintails in the University of Kansas collection. All measurements were taken according to the conventions of Baldwin, Oberholser and Worley (Measurements of Birds, Sci. Publ. Cleveland Mus. Natur. Hist., 2:1-165, 1931). These data were analyzed by means of a *t*-test for comparison of a single specimen with a sample as outlined by Sokal and Rohlf (Biometry, W. H. Freeman and Co., pp. 223-226, 1969).

The results of these analyses present an interesting picture. None of the seven measurements of length of the maxilla or the mandible is significantly different from the normal population ($P \leq .01$): only the extent of the maxilla beyond the lower mandible is significant ($P \leq .01$). From this it can be inferred that both the maxilla and mandible fit within (or nearly within) the range of variation existing in a normal population, but that the mandible is near the upper limit of length and the maxilla is near the lower limit.

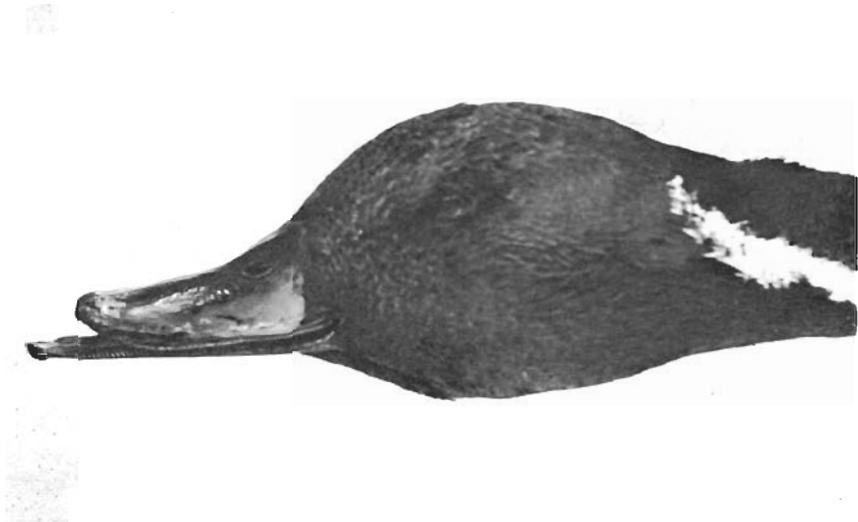


FIGURE 1. Lateral view of the head of the anomalous Pintail showing disproportionate bill components.

The height of the maxilla at the base is significantly larger ($P \leq .01$) than the average of the normal sample. Furthermore, all measurements of maxillary width, except the width of the terminal nail, are significantly larger than normal ($P \leq .01$). The width of the mandible is not significantly different at the .01 probability level. The tongue length was 48.7 mm, its width 11.9 mm and it conformed more closely in length and configuration to the maxilla than to the mandible.

Despite the obvious bill abnormality, the bird was apparently otherwise normal and in good health. The bird weighed 994.8 grams, well within the normal range of variation for the species: 624 to 1362 grams, averaging 1020 grams (Jahn and Hunt, Duck and Coot ecology and management in Wisconsin, Wis. Conserv. Dept. Tech. Bull. No. 33, Madison, p. 212, 1964). In light of the bird's excellent condition, it may be assumed that the anomalous bill did not affect its feeding.

I wish to acknowledge Chester B. Rideout, Museum of Natural History, University of Kansas for the photography contained herein. GARY L. WORTHEN, *Museum of Natural History, University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas 66044.*

Black-throated Gray Warbler in Shawnee County, Kansas.—On 25 April 1972 I was pleased to find a Black-throated Gray Warbler (*Dendroica nigrescens*) feeding in willows on the edge of the Kaw River below the Menninger Foundation's West Campus, just outside Topeka, Shawnee County. The bird fed actively about three-fourths the way up the trees and was at only this level on the several occasions when I returned to view it again during the day. I observed the bird closely and well, noting the distinctive face and throat pattern, the small yellow spot at the lores, the two white wingbars, the white underparts with black flank streaking, and the gray back with small black streaks. These few streaks could be seen only at very close range; otherwise the back appeared plain gray. The legs were blackish and the under tail coverts were white.

The bird was possibly a male. The throat was solid black, but less extensive in area than is pictured for the male by Singer (Robbins, et al., *Birds of North America*, Golden Press, p. 265, 1966). Like Singer's female the crown was largely gray, streaked with black, and the forecrown was solid black. The crown, though, was much blacker than Singer shows for the female. Also, there was a little gray in the black cheek patch. Thus the bird seemed to be in a plumage between male and female. After consulting information from the Bird Banding Office concerning sexing fall Black-throated Gray Warblers I still could not be certain this was a male. It seemed possibly a male coming into his First Alternate (= First Nuptial) Plumage, or perhaps the nuptial aspect of the female can include a solid black throat.

I heard the bird sing weakly at least twice; it was silent most of the time. In the evening it repeatedly gave a distinctive chip note. The song was a burry, slightly loose, and varied warble, not too long. My notes taken at the time show roughly the following pattern to the warble: $\begin{matrix} x & x & x \\ x & x & x \\ x & x & x \end{matrix}$. The song was slightly similar to that of a Warbling Vireo (*Vireo gilvus*) singing at the same time, but it was not as coarse, abrupt, or loud. It was more musical than the vireo song.

I am familiar with the species from experience in the west. I know of no one else who saw the bird well but Robert Glazier believes he saw it very briefly in the evening. I do not know if it remained beyond the 25th.

This is the first reported Shawnee County record and apparently also the only Kansas record outside Morton and Finney counties (Davis, *Kans. Orn. Soc. Bull.*, 19:15, 1968). Woods,¹ 927 *Medford, Topeka, Kansas 66606.*

Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrows at Topeka, Kansas.—On 8 May 1972 it was my pleasure to discover a number of Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrows (*Ammospiza caudacuta nelsoni*) in a wet meadow adjacent to a small marsh in Topeka, Shawnee County.

I was first attracted to these birds by their song, which I heard many times. It was

¹Robert Sutherland prefers to be known as "The man who walks in the woods" or "woods."

a high thin chip followed by a higher thin trill, rather long and usually somewhat ascending, otherwise on one pitch. The whole song was not very loud. Occasionally two introductory chip notes were given, the first barely audible. There was a trill, not a buzz, and thus the song was not insect-like as is a Grasshopper Sparrow's (*Ammodramus savannarum*).

It was very difficult to see the birds well. Characteristically one would remain hidden until flushed at about five feet. Then, flying low, it would zig-zag and twist before dropping into the grass and out of sight perhaps eighty feet away. It was often possible to follow the bird with binoculars. They appeared to be small brown sparrows with short, pointed tails, best seen when spread as a bird turned sharply. The only obvious field mark was the prominent white stripes down the back, a field mark distinctive of the race *nelsoni*. These were usually seen on each bird flushed. My very rough estimate is of 20 birds. I have previously seen many Sharp-tailed Sparrows outside Kansas and have netted some on Long Island.

The only previous published record for Shawnee County is of three tower-killed birds picked up on 6, 7 and 9 or 10 October 1954; these may have been killed on the same day (Tordoff and Mengel, Studies of birds killed in nocturnal migration. Univ. Kans. Publ. Mus. Nat. Hist., 10:16, 1956; also Topeka Audubon News, 9 (2)). Johnston (A directory to the birds of Kansas, Univ. Kans. Mus. Nat. Hist., Misc. Publ., 41: 57, 1965) mentions late April records for Kansas, but this is apparently the first May record for the state. Woods, 927 *Medford, Topeka, Kansas* 66606.

A note on the early history of the House Sparrow in Kansas.—While researching at the Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka, I found a newspaper article which appears to establish an early date for the first known introduction of the House (or English) Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*) in Kansas. The article, in the *Atchison Daily Globe* of Atchison, Kansas, for 27 June 1904, p. 4, reads in part:

“R. J. Groves recalls that Henry Brandner turned four [English Sparrows] loose in Atchison in 1865: three males, and one female. He had imported three pairs, but two of the females died. That fall, Mr. Groves saw eleven English sparrows down by the river, picking up grain. Mr. Groves believes the original Topeka supply was secured in Atchison. In 1865, there was great excitement in this country over the English sparrow. It was claimed that they would rid the fields of insects. English sparrows were talked of everywhere, and Mr. Brandner sent for three pairs. There are millions and billions of the birds in this vicinity now.”

Walter H. Barrows (The English Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*) in North America, especially in its relation to agriculture, U. S. Dept. Agric., Div. Economic Ornithology and Mammalogy, Bull. No. 1, 1889) provided no date of earliest sighting for Atchison. The earliest Kansas sighting he reports is for Burlingame in 1871 (p. 208) but this date may not be precise (p. 268); no reports for Missouri are earlier than about 1873 (p. 216).

The introduction at Topeka in 1874, previously often regarded as the first for Kansas, is well documented by Barrows (op. cit.) and also by Frye W. Giles (Thirty years in Topeka, Geo. W. Crane & Co., 1886) who was party to this introduction. He writes (pp. 378-379):

“In the month of March, 1874, F. W. Giles, C. W. Jewell, Samuel Davidson, and a few others, purchased and had shipped to them from the city of New York twenty-eight sparrows.” [These were kept until all but five died, then released in 1874.] “The following autumn there were twelve birds, in the second autumn sixty, and in the third about three hundred.”

Although House Sparrows were restricted essentially to eastern Kansas at the end of 1886 (Barrows:map), by 1894 they were “abundant” in Finney County, according to Menke (Birds of Finney County, Kansas, Kans. Univ. Quarterly 3:135).

I thank Richard F. Johnston for his suggestions concerning this note. Woods, 927 *Medford, Topeka, Kansas* 66606.

REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION

Shorebird Recapture Operation:

Several species of shorebirds will be marked with yellow feather dye on the underparts, and yellow streamers attached to the leg, in the 1972 fall migration. Sanderlings will be marked only with leg streamers. Birds will be caught on the Magdalen Islands (Gulf of St. Lawrence).

Reports of sight records should include the locality, date, species, name and address of observer(s). Please weigh the bird and read the band number if taken alive. Information should be sent to: RAYMOND MCNEIL, *Centre de Recherches Ecologiques de Montréal, 4101 est, rue Sherbrooke, Montréal 406, Quebec, Canada.*

Request for your Shawnee County notes:

I am currently gathering material for a study of the birds of Shawnee County, to include occurrence, numbers, egg dates, et cetera. I will sincerely appreciate it if you will please send me **any** notes that you may have of birds seen in Shawnee County (only); they shall be returned in good order, and the information will be respectfully incorporated into a paper hopefully to be published. *THE MAN WHO WALKS IN THE WOODS, 927 Medford, Topeka, Kansas 66606.*

North American Nest-record Card Program:

This program, housed at the Laboratory of Ornithology, Cornell University, is in its seventh year. Its aim is to collect specific data on bird reproduction in a form convenient for statistical analysis. It is continent-wide in scope and solicits nesting data on all bird species. During 1971, over 1,000 contributors submitted almost 22,000 nest-record cards. The Program co-operates with similar programs here and abroad. Recently, Dr. Peakall attended meetings in Europe to discuss methods of uniformity on data collection and mode of analysis for a world-wide monitoring system based on various nest-record programs. Data collected by the Program are made available to interested researchers.

This is a very worthwhile program to which all Kansas birders can contribute. The nest cards are free upon request from the Laboratory of Ornithology or from one of the Kansas Regional Centers. Original cards can not be returned but the Program will supply either extra blank cards (so that you can make duplicates) or a duplicate of the computer card of coded data. Data collected will also be of great value for the proposed Kansas bird "book." Two of the regional centers are at Lawrence (Robert Mengel, Museum of Natural History, University of Kansas, 66044) and at Hays (Charles Ely, Fort Hays Kansas State College, 67601). CAE

Kansas Ornithological Society

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