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### BREEDING AND WINTERING AREAS OF RED-WINGED BLACKBIRDS BANDED IN BARTON COUNTY, KANSAS

Jerome F. Besser and Dolores K. Steffen

A total of 120 Red-winged Blackbirds (*Agelaius phoeniceus*) banded in Kansas has been recovered, the third largest number of recoveries from bandings in the Central Flyways, exceeded only by South Dakota and North Dakota. Most (76) of these resulted from bandings by Frank Robl of Ellinwood, Barton County, Kansas from 1937 to 1940. Two additional recoveries were of birds banded by Robl in 1965. Mr. Robl died in 1976 without publishing information on these recoveries. A 1988 print-out list two other banders in Barton County, E. F. Martinez and Marvin Schwilling. A total of 31 additional recoveries from birds banded in Barton County resulted from the bandings of Martinez (17) and Schwilling (13) in the 1970's. Two other redwing recoveries in 1933-34 resulted from bandings by Preston Osborn of Lakin, Kearney County, who banded in Barton County. Thus, 111 of the 120 Kansas recoveries (92.5%) resulted from Barton County birds. This number gives good insight into the breeding and wintering areas of birds passing through Barton County from August to November and from February to May.

#### Results and Discussion

The best migrational picture emerges from the 78 recoveries by Robl. His farm was on the south shore of the Cheyenne Swamp, now Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Management Area (Robl 1935). Mr. Robl was a pioneer duck bander, fashioning bands from pieces of tin as early as 1924 (Hintz 1974), thus most of his blackbirds were probably captured in baited duck traps. He appeared to band only from February to May and from August to November. The peak of migration of redwings in Barton County occurs in March and September (Table 1).

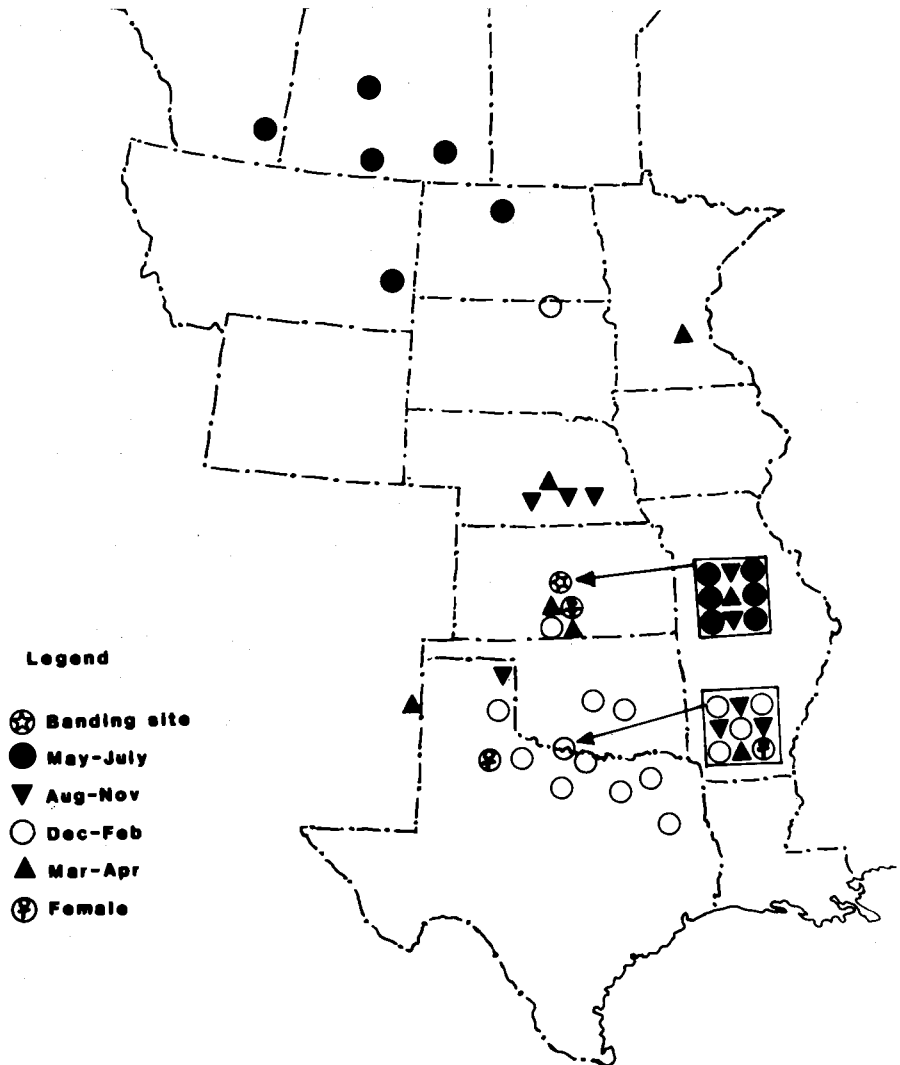
**TABLE 1.**  
**MONTH OF BANDING OF 78 RECOVERIES OF RED-WINGED BLACKBIRDS.**  
**BANDED BY FRANK ROBL AT ELLINWOOD, BARTON COUNTY, KANSAS.**

Month	No.	Percent
February	2	6.3
March	18	56.3
April	11	34.4
May	1	3.1
Total (winter-spring)	32	
August	1	2.2
September	32	69.6
October	8	17.4
November	5	10.9
Total (summer-fall)	46	

Of the 78 redwing recoveries, Robl retrapped 31 himself. Since all but one of these occurred in a month other than the month of its initial capture (Table 2), many birds probably stay in Barton County for extended periods in both spring and fall. The other

**TABLE 2.**  
**MONTH OF BANDING AND RECOVERY OF 31 RED-WINGED BLACKBIRDS.**  
**RETRAPPED BY FRANK ROBL, ELLINWOOD, BARTON COUNTY, KANSAS.**

Month Banded	Month Retrapped						
	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.
March				1	1		1
April		1			2	1	
August				1			
September	2	6	6		1	3	
October	1	1	2				
November					1		
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>



**FIGURE 1.** Recoveries of 47 red-wings banded by Frank Robl at Ellinwood, Barton County, Kansas, 1937-65.

**TABLE 3**  
**SEASONAL RECOVERIES BY THE PUBLIC OF 47 RED-WINGED BLACKBIRDS**  
**BANDED BY FRANK ROBL AT ELLINWOOD, BARTON COUNTY, KANSAS**

<b>Banded</b>			<b>Recovered</b>
<b>Date</b>	<b>Sex</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Location</b>
<b>Breeding Areas</b>			
26 Sept. 37	?	2 May 38	Hudson, Stafford Co., KS
24 Sept. 40	?	4 May 44	Great Bend, Barton Co., KS
3 Mar. 40	?	18 May 44	Mile City, Custer Co., NE
10 Apr. 41	?	25 May 45	Creelman, Saskatchewan
29 Sept. 37	M	29 May 39	Russell, Russell Co., KS
2 Apr. 40	M	3 Jun. 40	Hudson, Stafford Co., KS
6 Mar. 40	?	5 Jun. 40	Strongfield, Saskatchewan
22 Oct. 36	M	6 Jun. 38	Russell, Russell Co., KS
6 Mar. 40	?	7 Jun. 40	Towner, McHenry Co., ND
20 Apr. 40	?	15 Jun. 40	Claflin, Barton Co., KS
1 Apr. 41	?	15 Jun. 45	Flintoft, Saskatchewan
3 Mar. 40	?	13 Jun. 45	Medicine Hat, Alberta
2 Sept. 38	M	25 July 39	Dorrance, Russell Co., KS
<b>Fall Migration</b>			
2 Apr. 40	M	22 Sept. 44	Great Bend, Barton Co., KS
12 Sept. 39	M	8 Oct. 39	Hutchinson, Reno Co., KS
11 Apr. 37	M	? Oct. 41	Grand Island, Hall Co., NE
23 Sept. 37	M	10 Oct. 39	Wichita Falls, Wichita Co., TX
15 Nov. 37	M	10 Nov. 39	Overton, Dawson Co., NE
7 May 40	M	14 Nov. 40	Wichita Falls, Wichita Co., TX
23 Sept. 40	M	21 Nov. 41	Wichita Falls, Wichita Co., TX
2 Sept. 38	F	29 Nov. 38	Vernon, Wilbarger Co., TX
13 Oct. 37	M	30 Nov. 37	Canadian, Hemphill Co., TX
12 Mar. 40	?	? Nov. 41	Thayer, York Co., NE
<b>Winter Areas</b>			
20 Apr. 42	M	5 Dec. 45	Wichita Falls, Wichita Co., TX
18 Apr. 40	F	21 Dec. 40	McAdoo, Crosley Co., TX
25 Mar. 41	?	25 Dec. 42	Britton, Marshall Co., SD
1 Nov. 40	?	25 Dec. 42	Mineral Wells, Palo Pinto Co., TX
20 Feb. 65	M	27 Dec. 67	Troup, Cherokee Co., TX
18 Sept. 38	M	29 Dec. 39	Dallas, Dallas Co., TX
12 Mar. 40	?	3 Jan. 41	Vernon, Wilbarger Co., TX
20 Mar. 37	M	11 Jan. 38	Rhea, Dewey Co., OK
16 Sept. 39	M	12 Jan. 45	Wichita Falls, Wichita Co., TX
23 Sept. 37	M	15 Jan. 42	Crowell, Foard Co., TX
27 Mar. 37	M	31 Jan. 40	Dozier, Collingsworth Co., TX
8 Nov. 37	M	9 Feb. 38	Wewoka, Seminole Co., OK
18 Mar. 40	M	10 Feb. 41	Pratt, Pratt Co., KS
20 Feb. 65	M	13 Feb. 68	Oklahoma City, Oklahoma Co., OK
14 Sept. 40	M	13 Feb. 46	Deport, Lamar Co., TX
1 Nov. 40	M	23 Feb. 41	Nacona, Montague Co., TX
<b>Spring Migration</b>			
6 Mar. 40	M	1 Mar. 44	Conchas Dam, San Miguel Co., NM
27 Mar. 41	?	1 Mar. 43	Stafford, Stafford Co., KS
26 Oct. 40	?	4 Mar. 48	Wichita Falls, Wichita Co., TX
2 Oct. 37	M	9 Mar. 40	Harper, Harper Co., KS
22 Mar. 37	M	26 Mar. 38	Watertown, Carver Co., MN
9 Mar. 40	M	26 Mar. 44	Amelia, Holt Co., NE
4 Mar. 40	?	3 Apr. 40	Great Bend, Barton Co., KS
20 Sept. 39	F	18 Apr. 40	Stafford, Stafford Co., KS

47 recoveries (31 males, 3 females, and 13 of unrecorded sex) were made by the public (Figure 1). This preponderance of males is also reflected in a 24:1 ratio in favor of males for the birds that Robl retrapped (Table 3).

Thirteen breeding season recoveries (2 May to 25 July) disclosed two breeding centers for Robl's birds, southern Saskatchewan and Barton County, Kansas (Figure 1). There were 6 recoveries of northern breeders and 7 of Barton County breeders (Table 3).

Fifteen winter season (5 December to 23 February) recoveries indicated that the center of the wintering area was near Wichita Falls, Texas on the Wichita and Red Rivers. Six winter recoveries were within 80 km of Wichita Falls and four other redwings were recovered in this area in late November and one in early March. Roosts of more than 1 million redwings have been regularly reported at Lake Wichita within the city limits of Wichita Falls (1962, 1963, 1968, 1970; unpublished data), and it is with these roosts that the Barton County birds are associated.

Central Kansas and to a lesser extent, central Nebraska, appear to be the chief fall and spring stopover sites for this population during migration (Table 3, Figure 1).

The four recoveries of redwings banded by Martinez in the 70's were near Kindersley, Saskatchewan and Amelia, Holt County, Nebraska in May, near Sharon, Barber County, Kansas in July, and near Chickasha, Grady County, Oklahoma in December. These are in the corridor formed by Robl-banded recoveries in the 30's and 40's, indicating little change in seasonal patterns in the past three decades.

The age of the 47 birds recovered by the public from Robl's banding is noteworthy. The mean date of recovery after banding was 2.3 years, suggestive of a high annual survival rate for this population. Since the population is not increasingly rapidly, this level of adult longevity may indicate low survival of young.

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### KANSAS COWBIRD HOSTS, A CATALOG UPDATE

Peter E. Lowther

Earlier I (Lowther 1984) prepared a list of 48 species that have served as hosts to the Brown-headed Cowbird (*Molothrus ater*) in Kansas. Since the preparation of that list, I have come across references I had missed or which have been more recently published. Two species are added to the species accounts, and one species should be removed. For completeness of the bibliography, I must mention Friedmann and Kiff (1985), the most recent compilation of cowbird host records by Herbert Friedmann.

#### Species Accounts

Eastern Kingbird, *Tyrannus tyrannus*. – Murphy (1986) found cowbird eggs in 21 of 220 kingbird nests. He noted that parasitism rates on kingbirds increased during the breeding season.

Barn Swallow, *Hirundo rustica*. – My earlier report uncritically accepted all records as published. Wells (1934) noted "several" cases of parasitism. Perhaps these instances were nests which had been usurped by House Sparrows (*Passer domesticus*). House Sparrow eggs do have a general similarity to cowbird eggs. This explanation may be more likely than "several" cases of cowbird parasitism of this infrequent host, since House Sparrows do use Barn Swallow nests (pers. obs.). A problem involving misidentified eggs is evident in Lanz (1883), who wrote of a Harris' Sparrow (*Zonotrichia querula*) parasitizing nests in Kansas. These eggs were misidentified cowbird eggs; the error based on hopes generated by late-spring Harris' Sparrows and written descriptions of their eggs.

White-eyed Vireo, *Vireo griseus*. – One case was noted by Wells (1937) who gave a 8 June 1936 date for a vireo nest with 1 cowbird egg.

Bell's Vireo, *Vireo bellii*. – Wells (1940) listed this vireo as a cowbird host for Anderson County.

Yellow-throated Warbler, *Dendroica dominica*. – Schwilling et al. (1981) observed a 10 s visit by a female cowbird on 4 May 1980 to an inaccessible (11 m in sycamore) nest that they were watching. Their observation is very suggestive of cowbird parasitism of a Yellow-throated Warbler in Kansas.

Kentucky Warbler, *Oporornis formosus*. – Lanz (1885) noted 3 instances of parasitism of Kentucky Warbler near Manhattan. One nest with 2 warbler and 1 cowbird eggs on 21 May 1883; a nest with 3 warbler and 2 cowbird eggs plus another warbler egg on the ground on 31 May 1884; and a family group of 2 warblers and 1 cowbird observed on 18 June 1884.

Blue Grosbeak, *Guiraca caerulea*. – Two of the 8 grosbeak nests mentioned in Lanz (1884) contained cowbird eggs: 2 grosbeak plus 1 cowbird and 2 grosbeak plus 2 cowbird eggs.

Painted Bunting, *Passerina ciris*. – Mengel's (1970) description of the second reported nesting of Painted Bunting in Kansas was of a parasitized nest, found 8 June 1968 with 1 bunting egg as well as 1 cowbird egg. In addition, Mengel described a bunting nest found by J. Barlow on 21 June 1959 which contained 2 bunting and 1 cowbird eggs.

Dickcissel, *Spiza americana*. – Wells mentioned Dickcissels as cowbird hosts in two notes (Wells 1934, 1940). The earlier paper (Wells 1934) mentioned two specific cases: 3 Dickcissel eggs plus 1 cowbird egg on 13 June and 4 Dickcissel eggs plus 1 cowbird egg on 29 June 1934. For this species (and for redwing, meadowlark and grackle below), Fleischer's (1985, 1986) papers expand his abstract which I cited in my 1984 report. Fleischer mentioned 15 parasitized nests out of 23 Dickcissel nests found.

Chipping Sparrow, *Spizella passerina*. – Wells (1940) listed this sparrow as a cowbird host in Anderson County.

Field Sparrow, *Spizella pusilla*. – Wells (1940) included Field Sparrow in his list of cowbird hosts in Anderson County.

Red-winged Blackbird, *Agelaius phoeniceus*. – Fleischer (1985, 1986) recorded 22 parasitized nests of 73 redwing nests he found.

Eastern Meadowlark, *Sturnella magna*. – Fleischer (1985, 1986) found 5 of 10 nests to be parasitized.

Common Grackle, *Quiscalus quiscula*. – Fleischer (1985, 1986) provide more information on the single grackle nest he found in his Kansas studies of cowbirds.

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**Spotted Redshank in Jefferson County, Kansas.** — A Spotted Redshank (*Tringa erythropus*) in breeding plumage was observed, photographed (Figure 1), and sound recordings of its call notes made during the period 1-8 May 1988 at Lower Ferguson Marsh on the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks' Perry Wildlife Management Area on the northeast side of Perry Lake in Jefferson County, Kansas. I first observed the sandpiper on 1 May at 12:00 at a distance of 110 m. For the next 15 minutes, as the bird fed in the shallow water of a mud flat, I noted the following features: size between that of a Lesser Yellowlegs (*T. flavipes*) and Greater Yellowlegs (*T. melanoleuca*); longer legged and longer billed than a Lesser Yellowlegs; head black with a whitish eye-ring; underparts, including belly, black; upper surface of wings black with small white spots forming a regular pattern; bill long, rather thin, straight but with a very slight droop at the tip; basal one-third of the lower mandible red, rest of bill blackish; legs dark. I also noted that in profile, the bird's wings projected less beyond the body than either of the yellowlegs.



**FIGURE 1. Spotted Redshank, Perry Lake (Jefferson Co., Kansas), 5 May 1988. (Photo by John Lebbert).**

At 12:15 the bird flew 60 m southwest to feed in a patch of water stargrass (*Zosterella dubia*). As I approached it again flushed, and I noted its white underwings and the rather uniform, fairly rapid wingbeats compared to the choppy or darting effect of the flight of the Lesser Yellowlegs or the Solitary Sandpiper (*T. solitaria*). In flight it gave two fairly loud, rising, two-syllable call notes, which could be written as "chirrip." At 13:37 I again found the bird, and I was able to approach within 75 m of the bird. When it flushed, I was able to see its black upperwings which contrasted with its white back and noted that its feet projected well beyond the tips of its tail feathers. From 13:45 to 14:00 the bird roosted in the shallow water, placing its bill under its left wing. Once during this period of roosting it flew about 15 m along the shore, giving a series of 3 to 4 call notes which I was unable to satisfactorily record.

On 2 May I returned to the marsh at 07:20 with Pan Hanson where we again found the bird feeding in shallow water. We observed the bird until 09:00. I was unable to locate the bird when I returned with John Lebbert later that day (17:10-19:50). I returned again at 17:55 on 4 May and was able to make several satisfactory recordings of its call notes. An edited version of this recording composed of 11 call notes has been deposited with the records committee of the Kansas Ornithological Society. On 5 and 7 May, the bird was seen by many observers. The last observation was about 10:30 on 8 May by Bob and Wendy Rose, who saw the bird at close range flying through the

deciduous trees bordering the marsh just as a thunderstorm with lightning, high winds, hail, and heavy rain began to strike the area.

The normal breeding range of the Spotted Redshank is from Scandinavia, northern Russia, and northern Siberia south to central Russia, central Siberia, Anadryland, and Kamchakita; but the species has been recorded as accidental along both the northern Atlantic and northern Pacific coasts of North America as well as the Barbados with sight records from Nevada, Ontario, Ohio, New Jersey and Texas (Amer. Ornithologists' Union, 1983. Check-list of North American Birds, 6th edition). Four additional sight records exist: single birds in breeding plumage, 30 April-6 May 1983 (Am. Birds 37: 912) and 14-15 May 1985 (Am. Birds 39: 346) in California; a single bird in juvenile plumage on 25 October 1985 in California (Am. Birds 40: 158); and a single bird in partial breeding plumage, 13-17 May 1987 in North Carolina (Am. Birds 41: 417). As far as I know, this Kansas bird is the only record from the interior of the North American continent.

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