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NESTING OF THE BOBOLINK IN KANSAS

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The late Dr. John M. Porter, who was the leading authority on the birds of north-central Kansas, provided the first evidence of Bobolinks (*Dolichonyx oryzivorus*) nesting in Kansas. Ordinarily the species occurs in Kansas only in migration, and then uncommonly. In 1940, however, Dr. Porter observed that several pairs remained until July 21, near Jamestown State Lake, Cloud County, where he saw two pairs feeding fledglings on June 25.

On May 27, 1956, Luther H. Rogers of Appleton, Wisconsin, and I found several male Bobolinks in a damp meadow of grass and sedge, 16 miles north and 4 miles east of Stafford, Stafford County, Kansas, on the west side of Big Salt Marsh. The behavior of the birds made me suspect that they might be established for nesting.

I returned to Big Salt Marsh on June 16, 1956, with a field party from the University of Kansas; Gary J. Myers, Thane S. Robinson, Terry A. Travis, Glen E. Woolfenden, and Lester B. Woolfenden. Bobolinks were still living in the meadow. On June 17 and 18, we dragged many acres of meadow with weighted ropes, and on the 18th, flushed a female from a nest containing five eggs. We collected the female (KU 33393), her nest, and the male (KU 33394) that seemed to be her mate. Some additional dragging disclosed no more nests, even though we estimated the colony of Bobolinks to contain at least 25 males. The eggs collected were fresh or nearly so.

We left Stafford County on June 23 for field work in western Kansas. We returned, however, on July 16 and continued to work in the vicinity of Big Salt Marsh until July 25.

Some of the meadow had been mowed prior to our return on July 16. Most of the part earlier occupied by the Bobolinks was still uncut, however. The male Bobolinks on this date had ceased territorial behavior and singing and were now usually in one or two flocks. Many of the males showed new feathers of the forthcoming winter plumage on the back and sides of the breast. We counted the males several times in the period July 16 to 25. The highest count was approximately 40 birds. We saw no more than four females with the males in this period and we were unable to find additional females anywhere in the vicinity. Also, we found no young birds (the four females mentioned above were in badly worn plumage and could not have been young birds) and thus have no evidence that any of the birds nested successfully.

Other kinds of birds nesting in the meadows with the Bobolinks were meadowlarks, Red-wings (*Agelaius phoeniceus*), and Marsh Hawks (*Circus cyaneus*), while nearby brushy and weedy areas provided nesting places for Yellow-throats (*Geothlypis trichas*) and Dickcissels (*Spiza americana*). The meadows inhabited by the Bobolinks supported Eastern Meadowlarks (*Sturnella magna*) existing as a small, localized island in a sea of Western Meadowlarks (*S. neglecta*), the species found throughout the rest of this part of Kansas. This colony of Eastern Meadowlarks is the westernmost nesting population of the species known to me in Kansas.

The nesting records from Stafford County represent the southernmost known breeding localities for the Bobolink in the Great Plains. Big Salt Marsh is a saucer-shaped depression approximately three miles by two miles in size. In wet years water stands to a depth of several inches to a foot or more over the central part of the depression. In 1956, the marsh had standing water only in several, mostly small, pools. The remainder of the central part of the depression was bare mud, covered with a crust of salt. The central area is surrounded by damp meadows of grass and sedge, in which, on the west side, the Bobolinks nested. According to Ronald L. McGregor, of the University of Kansas Department of Botany, the most important plant species in the meadows is salt grass, *Distichlis stricta*, which forms 100 per cent of the cover over large areas. In moister areas and shallow water, the sedge *Scirpus paludosus* becomes important, sometimes dominating all other plants. Another sedge, *Scirpus americanus*, occurs in localized colonies in shallow water. It seems likely that the lush growth of grass and sedge induced the Bobolinks to nest in this geographically marginal locality.—HARRISON B. TORDOFF, *Museum of Zoology, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan, October 15, 1957.*

Northeastward extension into Kansas of winter range of Sage Sparrow.—The Sage Sparrow (*Amphispiza belli nevadensis*) ordinarily inhabits sagebrush, but the distribution of the sparrow is much more circumscribed than the distribution of the sagebrush. This statement applies also to other kinds of birds utilizing this habitat; some examples are Sage Grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*), Sage Thrasher (*Oreoscoptes montanus*), and Cassin's Sparrow (*Aimophila cassinii*). In some instances the cause is obvious; for example, one species may be restricted to certain kinds of sagebrush or another species may be restricted altitudinally, still another by rainfall. In the case of the Sage Sparrow, some of the sagebrush south of the breeding range is occupied by the species in winter. The large areas of sagebrush in the Great Plains north of Texas, however, seem not to be inhabited by the species at any season, judging by the literature. This note records wintering of the Sage Sparrow in southwestern Kansas, approximately 400 miles northeast of the previously known winter range.

On November 1, 1956, we collected two Sage Sparrows (male, KU 34031; female, KU 34032), and saw at least two others, 8 miles north of Elkhart, Morton County, Kansas. On January 11, 1957, Tordoff shot a female (KU 33720) weighing 18.8 grams, moderately fat, at another locality approximately 70 miles farther east (1½ miles east and 5 miles south of Kismet, Seward County, Kansas). Tordoff saw at least two other Sage Sparrows in this area on January 10, 1957. These three dates represent three of the four days spent in the field in southwestern Kansas in the winter of 1956–57. All three specimens are referable to *A. b. nevadensis* because of their coloration and large size (wing chords, 77, 73, and 74.5 mm., respectively). The Sage Sparrows, all seen singly, were in sagebrush-covered sand hills within a mile or two of the Cimarron River. Probably a fairly substantial population of Sage Sparrows, a species not previously reported from the state, wintered in the sagebrush-covered areas of southwestern Kansas in 1956–57.—HARRISON B. TORDOFF AND J. R. ALCORN, *Museum of Zoology, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan; Museum of Natural History, University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas, October 15, 1957.*

Additional Records of birds from south-central Kansas.—The occurrences noted below in the winter of 1956–57 seem worthy of record. The specimens mentioned are in the Southwestern College Collection, Winfield, Kansas, where I was a student at the time.

Chondestes grammacus. Lark Sparrow. On January 19, 1957, a flock of approximately 200 Lapland Longspurs, *Calcarius lapponicus*, flew across the road in front of my car two miles east and one-half mile north of Udall, Cowley County, Kansas. All of the birds alighted in a pasture except one that came to rest upon a fence. Believing the bird was a longspur, I shot it. It was a Lark Sparrow. The bird was a male, moderately fat and in seemingly good condition. So far as I know there is no previously published winter record, substantiated by a specimen, for the state. The normal winter range of this species is in the Gulf States.

Anthus spragueii. Sprague's Pipit. On January 20, 1957, I shot a female of this species one mile north and two miles east of Udall, Cowley County, Kansas. This is the first time this species has been recorded as a winter resident in the state. In a previous note (*Bull. Kans. Orni. Soc.*, 7:15), I stated that this pipit appeared to be a transient only. The normal wintering grounds of this pipit are in the Gulf States.

Melospiza melodia montana. Song Sparrow. On February 16, 1957, I shot a male of this subspecies, 3½ miles west of Udall, Sumner County, Kansas. This specimen was checked against a series of specimens of this subspecies at the Museum of Natural History, University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas. This record extends the known range of this subspecies eastward from Trego County, Kansas (see Long, 1941. Check-list of the Birds of Kansas. *Trans. Kans. Acad. Sci.*, 43:456).—MAX THOMPSON, *Museum of Natural History, University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas, October 15, 1957.*

Another record of the Roadrunner in Kansas.—While fishing 6 miles east of McClure, Cherokee County, Kansas, on September 26, 1957, I saw a Roadrunner. It was the first of this species that I have ever seen in this state, however, I am a native of Texas and have seen many Roadrunners there.—N. H. CLARKE, *420 north 27th Street, Parsons, Kansas.*

Yellow-bellied Flycatcher in southwestern Kansas.—On August 5, 1957, while collecting for the University of Kansas, I shot an adult male Yellow-bellied Flycatcher (*Empidonax flaviventris*) along the Cimarron River seven and one-half miles north of Elkhart, Morton County, Kansas. The bird was perched about two feet above the ground in a grove of small cottonwood trees (*Populus deltoides*) averaging about 10 feet in height.

The bird was fat, weighed 13.7 grams, and was in fresh plumage. The testes were small and the skull was completely ossified. The specimen is number 34185 in the Museum of Natural History, University of Kansas.

This is the westernmost record of the Yellow-bellied Flycatcher in Kansas. All other specimens from Kansas were taken in the east, in Johnson, Douglas, and Shawnee counties (Tordoff, 1956. Check-list of the birds of Kansas. *Univ. Kans. Publ., Mus. Nat. Hist.*, 8:334).—NORMAN L. FORD, *Museum of Zoology, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan, October 17, 1957.*

NOTES AND NEWS

[The following note was received from Dr. Richard F. Johnston, soon to assume the position of Assistant Curator of Birds at K.U. It is a suggestion to K.O.S. members concerning a way in which they might contribute valuable information on the spread of the Inca Dove in the state. Dr. Johnston emphasized that this should be included in the Notes and News Section.—J.W.H.]

In the recent past some notable examples of the spread of certain animal populations into new regions of the southwestern United States have been recorded. At the present time at least one of the bird species involved in expansion of range, the Inca dove (*Scardafella inca*), seems to be working north into Kansas (Tordoff, MS). It is important to get first-hand records of the occurrences of these small doves within the Kansan region. These records may possibly be fruitfully compared with similar data collected on these doves in southern New Mexico in the period 1938 to 1945. (At the start of that seven-year period Inca doves were first seen in Las Cruces; at the end of that time they had established breeding populations; they are now successful permanent residents of the area.) If *Scardafella* eventually does establish breeding populations in Kansas, a record of the initial immigration and subsequent colonization would be invaluable.

It is my hope that members of the Kansas Ornithological Society will join in a cooperative effort to document as fully as possible the occurrence of Inca doves in Kansas in 1957-58. The simplest kind of information, that is, location, date, and numbers seen, is useful. More critical data, such as would relate to habitat preference of the doves, dependence on artificial (man-made) conditions, behavior during climatic extremes, incidences of mortality, etc., would of course enhance the value of any set of observations. However, any information about Inca doves in Kansas, no matter how trivial it may seem, is worth reporting.—RICHARD F. JOHNSTON, *New Mexico A. & M. College, State College, New Mexico, received November 3, 1957.*

The attendance of approximately 60 K.O.S. members and guests at the annual fall meeting of this society, held at Lawrence on October 27, 1957, was excellent. The field trips in the morning hours to the Kansas River and Lone Star Lake, while not especially notable in number of species seen, (87) were marked by beautiful weather and the second highest number of species ever recorded on the K.O.S. fall field trip (the high having been at Lake Quivira several years back). The following kinds of birds were seen: Horned Grebe, Eared Grebe, Pied-billed Grebe, White Pelican, Great Blue Heron, Snow Goose, Blue Goose, Mallard, Gadwall, Baldpate, Pintail, Green-winged Teal, Blue-winged Teal, Shoveler, Redhead, Ring-necked Duck, Canvasback, Lesser Scaup, Bufflehead, Ruddy Duck, Cooper's Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, Harlan's Hawk, Red-shouldered Hawk, American Rough-legged Hawk, Marsh Hawk, Sparrow Hawk, Greater Prairie Chicken, Bobwhite, American Coot, Killdeer, Greater Yellowlegs, Dowitcher (*sp?*), Ring-billed Gull, Franklin's Gull, Mourning Dove, Screech Owl, Horned Owl, Belted Kingfisher, Yellow-shafted Flicker, Red-shafted Flicker, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Horned Lark, Blue Jay, Crow, Black-capped Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, White-breasted Nuthatch, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Brown Creeper, House Wren, Carolina Wren, Short-billed Marsh Wren, Robin, Hermit Thrush, Bluebird, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Loggerhead Shrike, Starling, Myrtle Warbler, House Sparrow, Eastern Meadowlark, Western Meadowlark, Red-winged Blackbird, Brewer's Blackbird, Common Grackle, Brown-headed Cowbird, Cardinal, Purple Finch, Pine Siskin, American Goldfinch, Rufous-sided Towhee, Savannah Sparrow, Leconte's Sparrow, Slate-colored Junco, Tree Sparrow, Field Sparrow, Harris's Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, Fox Sparrow, Lincoln's Sparrow, Swamp Sparrow, Song Sparrow.

Minutes of the fall K.O.S. meeting will be published in the next number of the *Bulletin*.—J.W.H.

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