

Kansas Ornithological Society

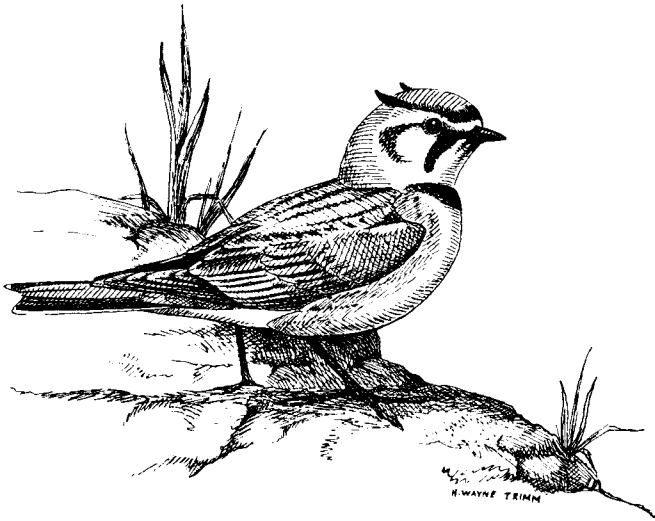
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NESTING OF BEWICK'S WREN IN WYANDOTTE COUNTY, KANSAS

MARY LOUISE MYERS

[Editor's note: The status of Bewick's Wren, *Thryomanes bewickii*, is poorly known for the state of Kansas. According to Tordoff (1956. Check-list of the birds of Kansas. *Univ. Kans. Publ., Mus. Nat. Hist.*, 8:338) the species is common in the south, rare in the north, with nesting records from Shawnee, Johnson, and Montgomery counties. The following note records the first nesting record of Bewick's Wren for Wyandotte County, and presents other pertinent information concerning the nesting of the species.]

The nesting site of a pair of Bewick's Wrens was discovered in a newspaper mail box at Camp Towanyak, one-half mile southeast of the entrance to Lake Quivira in Wyandotte County.

When the nest was in the early stages of construction and the identity of its builders not known, attempts were made to discourage further construction. The persistence of the wrens is shown by the following data.

- May 8, 1957. Nesting material found in box and discarded.
- May 9, 1957. Nesting material found in box and discarded.
- May 10, 1957. Nesting material found in box and discarded.
- May 11, 1957. Nesting material found in box and discarded.
- May 12, 1957. The Bewick's Wrens were seen carrying nest-material into the box. At this time we decided to interfere no more, and another box for the newspaper was mounted on top of the old one which contained the nest.

Within the next few days the nest was completed and then seemingly abandoned. Several weeks later the wrens returned and 5 eggs were laid. These hatched on July 2. The young wrens were feathered and left the nest on July 15.—*Route 2, Camp Towanyak, Kansas City, Kansas.*

The occurrence of the Inca Dove (*Scardafella inca*) in Kansas.—The Inca Dove is a species of the southwestern United States and Mexico which seems to be extending its geographic distribution northeastward in recent years. Johnston (1957. *Bull. Kans. Orni. Soc.*, 8:15) noted that Inca Doves were first seen in the area of Las Cruces, New Mexico, in 1938, and that by 1945 there were breeding populations of the doves in that area. The species was first reported in Kansas when Edna L. Ruth and others observed one daily at Halstead, Harvey County, from November 10, 1951, to January 21, 1952; subsequently, E. J. Rice saw an Inca Dove in Topeka, Shawnee County, the last week in June, 1952 (Tordoff, 1956. Check-list of the birds of Kansas. *Univ. Kans. Publ., Mus. Nat. Hist.*, 8:329). A specimen of the species was taken in neither of the above cases, but their probable authenticity is given support by the most recent records, described below, of Inca Doves in Kansas.

In early winter of 1956-57 (exact date uncertain), Mr. Harry D. Smith, superintendent of the Meade State Game Farm, Meade, Meade County, Kansas, discovered three small doves at the Farm. He identified them as Inca Doves. After the initial observations the birds disappeared for a time but reappeared about the 5th of January. At that time Dr. Harrison B. Tordoff of the Museum of Natural History at the University of Kansas was notified of the presence of the doves at Meade. Tordoff journeyed to Meade, observed the birds and attempted unsuccessfully to live trap them in order to band them.

Mr. Smith (letter to Tordoff, April 10, 1957) observed the doves daily through most of January. One of them was at first without tail feathers. They usually roosted in a Chinese Elm north of the feed room on the Farm, going to roost around 6:00 P.M. and leaving the roost "in the morning after most birds were off the roost." They roosted in the elm in the evening of January 24. That night the temperature dropped to 5° below zero F. The following morning the doves were gone, and afterwards only one

returned. The remaining dove usually continued to roost in the Chinese Elm, but occasionally utilized a nearby cedar tree for that purpose. The bird never exhibited any tendency to become tame, though it remained close to human habitation almost constantly. It stayed at the Meade Game Farm until March 23, 1957. On the evening of that day a blizzard began, lasting through most of the next day. On the morning of March 25, the Inca Dove was discovered by Smith in the snow near the Farm office. When Smith attempted to catch the bird it flew into the grove of cedars south of the exhibition pens. Approximately two hours later it was again discovered in the snow nearby. Smith then captured the bird and took it indoors, where he placed it on a window sill and gave it some food. It fed and seemed to recover some of its strength. However, the bird, a male, flew against a window pane and killed itself the following day and was given to the Museum of Natural History of the University of Kansas, becoming thereby the first specimen (KU 33241) of the Inca Dove for the state. It weighed 45.6 grams and possessed no fat. The bird was molting and its testes measured 3×5 millimeters.

It is interesting to speculate upon the reason why the Inca Dove has appeared in Kansas in recent years. The records may represent extensions of breeding range, but there is no evidence for this as yet. It is possible instead that the records are all accidental and coincidentally grouped within the last few years. However, another southwestern species, the Roadrunner (*Geococcyx californianus*) seems to have become more prevalent northward and eastward in Kansas, in the last five years, nesting in Sumner County (Prophet, 1957. *Bull. Kans. Orn. Soc.* 8:2) and being observed as far east as Cherokee County (Clarke, 1957. *Bull. Kans. Orn. Soc.* 8:15). In addition, records of the Scissortailed Flycatcher (*Muscivora forficata*) throughout eastern Kansas are becoming almost commonplace. It seems to me that the movements of these three species of birds might be correlated with a period of drought and high summer temperatures that has existed in most of Kansas since the flood of 1951. The three species are inhabitants of dry open grasslands, especially the arid areas of short grass. The drought has produced large areas of habitat at least simulating the habitat within the normal range of the three species, and has attracted them to what probably are temporary extensions of their ranges.

Nonetheless, as Johnston (*op. cit.*) has pointed out, it is of value to document in detail the facts of all such immigrations. The behavior, mortality, nesting success, methods of survival, extent of and time required for establishment of breeding populations in new areas are all-important in helping us to understand the factors in the method of change of distribution of organisms on the earth in historic as well as prehistoric time. It is at the periphery of their ranges that animal species most readily reveal the requirements composing a part of their biotic potential, for it is in these areas that reproductive and survival capacities are under the most stress as imposed by severe environmental resistances.—JOHN WILLIAM HARDY, *Museum of Natural History, University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas, January 22, 1958.*

NEW BOOKS

Check-list of North American Birds. Fifth edition.—Alexander Wetmore, Herbert Friedmann, *et al.* American Ornithologists' Union, XIV+691 pp., 1957. Price, \$8.00.—This long awaited work will meet the needs of both amateur and professional as a primary sources of information on nomenclature and distribution of North American birds north of Mexico. The taxonomic treatment incorporates some features of modern scientific concept and is at the same time conservative in that there is no wholesale acceptance of certain recent revisions of families such as Icteridae, Fringillidae and Corvidae.

For the amateur, the best "new feature" of the check-list is the inclusion of common names for all species. These follow tradition for the most part so that most readers will benefit at once from their inclusion. Some names are completely new (causing howls of displeasure from many sources) for familiar species such as the towhee of Kansas

which must now bear the strange (but descriptive) name of Rufous-sided Towhee. Most of these new names are both logical and descriptive. A few are neither, at least to me. The renaming of the Mexican Crested Flycatcher as Wied's Crested Flycatcher is an example of a name that will be difficult to remember and one that will, I wager, eventually slip from our usage, try though we may to uphold it.

To the museum curator, who sees his well-meaning non-professional friends whip off the identification by common name of an obscurely marked subspecies which the curator himself has difficulty determining in the laboratory with a carefully applied pair of dividers, a standard color key, and a series of well preserved skins, the decision to give common names *only* to species is indeed a happy one on the part of the check-list committee. Let's be realistic. Unless you are involved in highly technical studies there ordinarily is no reason for attempting to ascertain whether the Downy Woodpecker seen was a Southern Downy Woodpecker or a Northern Downy Woodpecker!

The range of each species and subspecies is given in detail. A reader may be able to find errors of omission in the range given for his "pet species," which he knows occurs one county farther west than the check-list states. But such omissions are inevitable and do not detract at all from the work. However, major omissions of course ought to be called to the attention of the chairman of the check-list committee.

The new check-list is a monument to the members of the committee who produced it. The work represents the gift of many hours of labor by some of our busiest professional ornithologists. Dr. Wetmore, himself, read over proof of the entire book six times; this gives us some idea of the pains which went in to its preparation. The errors of spelling are few. The printing job is good, and the price of eight dollars makes the book a bargain of the year to any ornithologist.—JOHN WILLIAM HARDY.

Distributional Check-list of the Birds of Mexico.—Parts I and II bound together (complete).—Herbert Friedmann, Ludlow Griscom, and Robert T. Moore. Pacific Coast Avifauna No. 29, Cooper Ornithological Club, Berkeley, California: Part I, 202 pp., 2 plates, 1950; Part II, 436 pp., 7 plates, 1957. Price, \$9.00.—Considering the growing interest of both amateur and professional ornithologists in the truly extravagant bird life of Mexico, the completion of Part II of the present work makes available to all a much needed point of departure for further studies of Mexican birds. Here under one cover is a compilation and up to the minute standard interpretation of our knowledge of the nomenclature and distribution of the Mexican avifauna. It will be out of date quickly; in fact already is. It comes at a time when our studies of Mexican birds are in the transitional stage between lists of species and interpretations of the ecology, behavior, physiology and other facets of that avifauna. The first Mexican field guide or handbook (Blake's) and this first detailed check-list will be historical land-marks of this period of maturation.

The work will serve as an admirable companion to the A.O.U. check-list reviewed above, the two affording together a check-list of birds of the entire North American continent. Both Spanish and English common names are given, the English ones of the species which do not reach the United States being for the most part fabrications (romantic but usually descriptive) by ornithologists who have dealt with Mexican birds. The Spanish names should be valuable in helping tourists (if they speak Spanish) talk with natives concerning birds being sought. Unless you are familiar with the geographic locality names and those of towns and cities you may have difficulty at first in deciding just where a species is found, since no map or particular discussion of localities mentioned is included in the work. Thus, a person traveling in Mexico would find this work of most value in the field if used in connection with a good map.

The book's color plates by Andrew Jackson Grayson certainly deserve comment. Artistically, I suppose, they should be classified as primitive, and as such are pleasing for their naive simplicity, their symmetry, and their honesty. One finds them of limited use in deriving a concept of the bird species they purport to represent. This is not meant as a criticism of the artist who, though untutored in his work, must certainly hold a significant place historically as one of our earliest bird artists, working no doubt

under great hardships, to paint the western and Mexican birds. Though considerably below contemporary standards of bird art in the tradition of Fuertes, Sutton, and others, the plates of course have not been included in the present work for the purpose of aiding the reader in identification of species. Instead their presence pays tribute to a pioneer in the illustration of Mexican birds. The decision to include them was a thoughtful one.

In conclusion the textual matter alone in this check-list is more than enough to make this a valuable work of great need to the professional and of interest to the serious amateur.—JOHN WILLIAM HARDY.

NOTES AND NEWS

Following are the minutes of the fall meeting as compiled by Secretary E. K. Beals.—J.W.H.

Business meeting held after lunch October 27, 1957, at the Museum of Natural History, on the campus of the University of Kansas.

Treasurer Wilson Dingus reported a balance of \$174.79.

President L. B. Carson called for new members since membership has fallen and expenses have risen.

Editor Hardy needs material for the bulletin.

Dr. E. Raymond Hall called attention to a new Biol. Serv. publication on "The Ecology of the Bobwhite in South-Central Kansas" by Thane S. Robinson. Secretary Beals called attention to the Kansas Agric. Experiment Station Bulletin "Coyotes in Kansas" by Dr. H. T. Gier.

Dr. Hall invited the group to see the bird collection and displays at the Museum of Natural History.

Carson reported a Brown Creeper killed at the WIBW TV tower, Topeka, which makes a total of 80-odd species so far recorded as killed there.

Dr. Hall reported that Dr. H. B. Tordoff has transferred to the staff of the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor, a position created by the death of Josselyn VanTyne. Tordoff will be replaced by Dr. Richard Johnston, a graduate of the University of California at Berkeley, and recently of New Mexico A. & M. College.

The minutes of the spring, 1957, K.O.S. meeting at Manhattan, were read by the Secretary and approved.

Members and guests assembled for the field trip at 8:00 a.m. at the museum. Two field trips were held, one to Lone Star Lake and the other along the Kansas river.

Editor Hardy compiled a list of 86 species at noon.

Tordoff's Check-List of Birds of Kansas is now out of print and a new A.O.U. Check-List may be ordered for \$8.00 from: Dr. Chas. Sibley, Fernow Hall, Cornell University, Ithaca, N.Y.

The spring meeting will be held at Baker University, Baldwin, Kansas.

This seems to be a good winter for northern birds in Kansas. Baldwin birders deserve credit for their sharp eyes which spotted a Snowy Owl (some say 3 snowies) in a field 4½ miles west of Overbrook, Kansas, just off of, and visible from, Highway 59. The bird so far as we know is still there after two weeks, in which time it has been observed by many ornithologists in this area. There is likewise a report of two Redpolls seen 1 mile west of Overbrook, again by those Baldwinites.

The Christmas-count issue is next and is being readied by Max Thompson, a graduate student at K.U. Waterfowl are certainly more abundant now than in past years according to your counts.

Needless to say, if you haven't paid your 1958 dues as yet, its time to do it. We need the money and your membership.

If you are near Lawrence we invite you to visit the Museum of Natural History and meet the new curator, Dr. Richard Johnston, who has arrived.

Word from the Tordoffs is that Michigan is great in winter, and that things are going well.—J.W.H.

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