

## THE AMERICAN MAGPIE IN THE OKLAHOMA PANHANDLE

By RALPH C. TATE

IT HAS BEEN SUGGESTED to me on several occasions during the past year that some remarks on the appearance of the American Magpie (*Pica pica hudsonia*) in the Oklahoma Panhandle might be of considerable interest to a number of bird students in the western and plains sections of the country. For this reason, therefore, I am pleased to present the following facts gleaned through personal observation and study and from the notes of certain of my acquaintances.

I have lived in Cimarron County, the extreme western county of the Oklahoma Panhandle, from my early boyhood, and during the last eighteen or twenty years I have devoted a considerable amount of time to the study of the birds and small mammals of not only the panhandle area but of the adjoining territory in eastern New Mexico, southern Colorado and Kansas, and northern Texas. On field trips that early led me into Union County, New Mexico, and Baca and Las Animas counties, Colorado, I became familiar with the American Magpies that inhabited the tree-clad hills and brush-choked valleys of these three counties in fairly large numbers. It soon occurred to me as odd, however, that, while within eight or ten miles of the Oklahoma-New Mexico and Oklahoma-Colorado boundary lines these loud voiced and extremely conspicuous birds were almost as numerous as they were twenty-five or thirty miles farther west, yet none was to be found within the boundaries of Oklahoma itself. I began keeping a close watch for an individual in Cimarron County or even within three or four miles of its boundaries, and requested numbers of my rancher friends to keep a look-out and notify me if they chanced to see one while riding their ranges in that area.

Despite the watchfulness of myself and my cowboy friends, however, a number of years passed before there was a record of a magpie being seen nearer than seven or eight miles of Oklahoma. Then, in 1919, three pairs of the birds appeared on the A. L. Brookhart ranch nearly twenty miles east of the Oklahoma-New Mexico line and three miles south of the Oklahoma-Colorado line—approximately thirty miles east of their former known range. This established the first record for the species in Oklahoma, to be followed soon after by records of an occasional straggler being observed at Gate, Oklahoma, by W. E. Lewis.

Evidently finding the region much to their liking, the six magpies nested on the Brookhart ranch in 1919, and since that time the species has been permanently resident there, with the result that a flock of from fifteen to twenty or more is present the year around. During the nesting season it is possible to find from one to several nests in an hour's walk through the hackberry thickets along two spring-fed creeks.

It is interesting to note in connection with this long eastward extension in range into the Oklahoma Panhandle that these birds have also extended their range eastward into extreme western Kansas, as a recent record in the CONDOR shows. The record in question (Linsdale, Condor, xxviii, 1926, p. 179) is for nesting in Hamilton County, Kansas. Linsdale's article cites Bunker, in his "Birds of Kansas", as stating that the magpie is a rare winter visitant in western Kansas. Goss is also cited as writing in his "History of the Birds of Kansas", "formerly a resident; rare". More is given in the article in question along this line, but aside from the following which Linsdale

mentions from Goss' "Revised Catalogue of the Birds of Kansas", I will quote no further. This is to the effect that the species was found nesting in Graham County, Kansas, in the summer of 1873 or 1874 by a Mr. Jeff Jordan. "The birds were not seen after 1875." In their handbook, "The Birds of Oklahoma" (1924), Margaret Morse Nice and Leonard Blaine Nice, in addition to citing the records of Mr. Lewis for Gate and my record for Cimarron County, go on to state that the magpies are extending their range to the east in North Dakota and Iowa.

While the flock on the Brookhart ranch contains the only members of the species that seem to be year-round residents in Cimarron County, yet it is only reasonable to suppose that in time this flock will divide and other flocks will be built up in widely scattered sections of the county. But whether or not this occurs, the flock now numbering twenty-two or twenty-three and which has occupied the same range for eight years is sufficient to give Oklahoma an authentic record of the American Magpie as a resident.

*Kenton, Oklahoma, April 14, 1927.*

## FROM FIELD AND STUDY

**The Cardinal in San Diego.**—From May 10 to 14, inclusive, of this year I saw a male Cardinal (*Cardinalis cardinalis* subspecies) daily in Balboa Park, San Diego. My identification of the bird was verified by Mr. Clinton G. Abbott, of the San Diego Natural History Museum. Inquiry at the Zoo revealed that the officials there have no record of an escape of this species, nor do any of the employees know of such an escape. Rumor persists, however, in crediting the arrival of this species to that source. The bird is an adult male but lacks the rich coloring of typical *cardinalis*; it is either a faded cage bird or of the subspecies *superbus*. Several other reports of a Cardinal in this city have been received this spring; but whether there is more than the one bird has not as yet been ascertained.—FRANK F. GANDER, *East San Diego, California, May 21, 1927.*

**Breeding of Immature Hawks.**—The mating of an immature hawk with an adult has often been recorded. In some instances this is the result of a female being shot and its mate rounding up an immature to help him to bring up the young, or even to hatch the eggs already laid. A definite instance of an immature of the preceding year laying eggs is as follows.

On April 30 of this year I shot a female Cooper Hawk, an adult that would have laid its first egg in a week. A week later I saw the male ranging the country in quest of a new mate. On May 18, a neighbor asked me to shoot a hawk that had been killing her chickens for two weeks not far from where I shot the female on the last day of April. I soon found the nest and shot the occupant, an ordinary brown immature bird of the preceding year. On dissection this bird proved to contain three eggs; the largest egg would have been laid next day. The rest of the set were probably in the nest to which I did not climb. The male I got over a week later some two miles away.

The valley in which the nest was located had originally at least four pairs of Ruffed Grouse. All or nearly all were killed by these hawks inside of a month. The greatest asset in collecting hawks is the ability to imitate the hoot of the Great Horned Owl. At the nest this is an infallible means of bringing up the owners; in the cases of Falcons, Goshawks, Cooper and Sharp-shinned hawks the birds usually come right up with loud outcries, the males being bolder than the females. In hawks of the *Buteo* type the attraction is just as effective but the hawks are more wary.

I have records of the acquiring of an immature mate after the first adult mate had