

into the nest, all of which were subsequently tossed out by the female.

Northern White-winged Crossbills (*Loxia l. leucoptera*) construct deep, saucer-shaped nests from locally available lichens, coniferous twigs, bark, moss, lichens (including *Usnea*), hair, and mammal fur, either low to the ground or high in pine trees, up to 23 m (Bent, U.S. Natl. Mus. Bull. 237:527, 1968). The Hispaniolan nest appeared to differ little, if at all, from descriptions of the size and shape of nests of the North American race.

Aside from Bond's speculations, the only previous information available on the breeding season of *Loxia leucoptera megaplaga* was descriptions of specimens collected by R. H. Beck and J. Bond. All 11 adults collected by Beck from 23 February to 19 March 1917 that we have examined (AMNH, BM) had labels indicating that the specimens had large or swelling gonads (six males, five females). Bond (pers. comm.) collected two adult males and one adult female in Haiti on 7 and 8 June 1930, and all had minute gonads. Of 15 immatures collected by Beck from 23 February to 19 March 1917, one had a tail only partly grown, and was presumably only a few days out of the nest (5 March); one female had a bill only half the adult size (10 March); and

11 had primaries shorter than adult length (Wetmore and Swales 1931). On the basis of these skins, it is reasonable to conclude that many birds do breed in mid-winter, with young fledging in late February or early March. However, the adults collected in February and March all showed enlarged gonads, suggesting that breeding continues into early spring, which is confirmed by the present observations. The incubation and fledging period in *L. leucoptera* is unknown (Bent 1968; Newton, Finches, p. 81, Collins, London, 1972), but if it is 29–41 days, as it is in *L. curvirostra* and *L. pytyopsittacus* (Newton 1972, p. 76–80), then the breeding season may extend from at least January to May, with Bond's three specimens in June suggesting that breeding later in the year is less likely.

We thank Dean Amadon (American Museum of Natural History) and David Snow (British Museum) for letting us use skins at their museums, Rev. Donald Dod for his great help in getting us to the remote Baoruco Range, James Bond for providing information on crossbills he collected in Haiti, and the late David Lack and the staff at the Edward Grey Institute, Oxford, for providing facilities during the preparation of this note.

Accepted for publication 7 February 1974.

## ROSE-THROATED BECARD IN JEFF DAVIS COUNTY, TEXAS

STEVE R. RUNNELS

Curator of Ornithology  
Dallas Museum of Natural History  
Dallas, Texas 75226

On 11 June 1973 about 15 miles S of Ft. Davis, in Jeff Davis County, Texas, my attention was attracted to an unusual bird call. Upon investigation, a male Rose-throated Becard (*Platypsaris aglaiae*) was found in a Grave's Oak (*Quercus gravesii*). An attempt at collecting this bird failed.

This record is the first from West Texas. The A.O.U. check-list of North American Birds (Fifth ed., 1957) does not list the Rose-throated Becard as occurring in this area. The only documented records of this bird are from southern Arizona and the lower Rio Grande valley of Texas. Wauer (Birds of the Big Bend National Park and vicinity, Univ. Texas Press, 1973:207) mentioned a possible sighting of three males and two females in a flock at the

Santa Elena Canyon picnic site on 24 September 1965 by Richard B. Starr.

On 18 July 1973 in the same area as above, I collected a male Rose-throated Becard. The skull was completely ossified and the remiges showed much wear. Measurements of the specimen (DMNH #6231) were: length 172mm, wing 92.5, tail 67.2, exposed culmen 15.0, width at nostrils 8.5, tarsus 21.2. The weight was 33 g with very little fat. The testes measured  $9.5 \times 4.5$ . I believe that this was the same bird that I had located in June. Both sightings of the becards were in Grave's Oaks (about 35 ft tall), along a precipitous igneous canyon at an altitude of 5400 ft.

The stomach of the bird contained one large caterpillar and several small caterpillars, one aquatic beetle larva, grasshopper parts, beetle parts, one spider, and one nematode.

Whether this occurrence represents an instance of wandering or possibly an extension of breeding range must be determined by future study.

Accepted for publication 7 February 1974.

## SELECTIVE EFFECTS OF PREDATION IN A TERN COLONY

I. C. T. NISBET

Massachusetts Audubon Society  
Lincoln, Massachusetts 01773

Predation is one of the selective pressures which can act to maintain synchronization of nesting in colonial birds (Lack 1968). In circumstances where the food requirements of a predator remain more or less constant, the predator will take a larger fraction of the available prey when few individuals are present (i.e., at the beginning and end of the season) and a smaller fraction in the middle of the season when the larger numbers of individuals are nesting. This has

been demonstrated, for example, by Ashmole (1963) for predation by feral cats (*Felis domestica*) on adult and young Sooty Terns (*Sterna fuscata*), by Patterson (1965) for predation by Carrion Crows (*Corvus corone*) on eggs and chicks of Black-headed Gulls (*Larus ridibundus*), and by Parsons (1971) for cannibalism by Herring Gulls (*Larus argentatus*) on chicks from their own colony. On the other hand, it might be expected that a predator which specializes on chicks would inflict the most damage at the beginning of the season, when the earliest-hatched chicks are small so that correspondingly more are needed to satisfy its appetite. This paper demonstrates this effect—higher predation rates early in the season—for predation on chicks in a colony of Common Terns (*Sterna hirundo*).