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2009

## Birds of the Great Plains: Family Bombycillidae (Waxwings)

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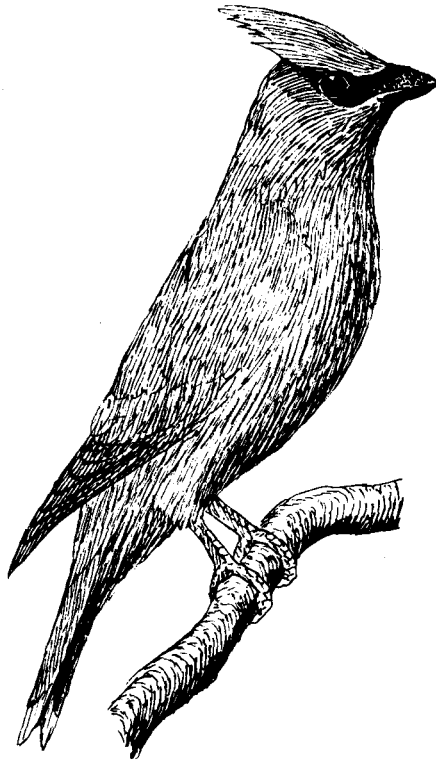
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Johnsgard, Paul A., "Birds of the Great Plains: Family Bombycillidae (Waxwings)" (2009). *Birds of the Great Plains (Revised Edition, 2009)* by Paul Johnsgard. 51.  
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# FAMILY BOMBYCILLIDAE (WAXWINGS)



Cedar Waxwing

## Cedar Waxwing *Bombycilla cedrorum*

**Breeding Status:** Breeding occurs rather commonly throughout Minnesota and North Dakota except in southwestern North Dakota. In South Dakota the species breeds locally in the Black Hills and more generally in the eastern half of the state. Breeding in Nebraska is apparently confined to the Missouri Valley, the Pine Ridge area, and perhaps rarely occurs elsewhere, such as the Bessey Division of Nebraska National Forest and near Scottsbluff (*Nebraska Bird Review* 39:16, 45:3). It is reported to be an uncommon breeder at Squaw Creek N.W.R., Missouri. There are a few breeding records for northeastern Kansas and some old nesting records for northwestern Oklahoma.

**Breeding Habitat:** The species is generally associated in North Dakota with semiopen deciduous woodlands, including floodplain forests, wooded hillsides, and sometimes farmsteads, parks, or residential areas. It sometimes also breeds in stands of cedar in western North Dakota and in other conifers elsewhere.

**Nest Location:** Nests are placed 6–20 feet above the ground in small trees and usually are elevated about 10 feet. The nest is placed on a horizontal limb and is loosely constructed of grasses, weeds, twigs, and fibrous materials, lined with softer and finer materials.

**Clutch Size and Incubation Period:** From 2 to 6 eggs, usually 4–5. The eggs are pale grayish with scattered brownish spots. The incubation is 11–13 days. Sometimes double-brooded.

**Time of Breeding:** North Dakota egg dates are from June 24 to August 2, and dependent fledglings have been seen as early as June 30. In Kansas, eggs have been found in mid-June and nestlings reported as late as July 22.

**Breeding Biology:** Not much is known of the courtship behavior of this rather common and highly gregarious species, which remains in flocks for much of the year. Adult birds often may be seen passing berries back and forth, but whether this is courtship feeding is questionable. Mutual breast-preening and bill-clicking are probable courtship activities. During the period of nest-building the female does perform begging behavior and is fed by her mate. Territoriality is virtually absent in cedar waxwings. The nests are frequently situated colonially, and breeding seems to correspond with the period when berries and fruit ripen. Both sexes build the nest, which requires 2–6 days. The female does the incubating, but she is frequently fed by her mate, and she also broods the young for several days after hatching. The young birds leave the nest when about 16 days old and may remain in the nest vicinity for about a month.

**Suggested Reading:** Lea 1942; Bent 1950.

