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## Notes- *Nebraska Bird Review* June 1988

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NOTES

YOUNG GREAT HORNED OWLS On 5 April 1988 we banded two young Great Horned Owls that were in a nest near Laurel, in Cedar Co., Neb. An adult Owl was first seen on this nest 3 March. The nest was approximately 31 feet above the ground in a dead Siberian elm tree. One adult Owl was in the nest as we approached it at about 7:00 PM. The adult bird flew off the nest and remained about 200 meters away, in a small grove of trees. It took us about 35 minutes to set up our ladder, retrieve and band the owlets, and return them to their nest. The adult bird called occasionally during this time. An interesting discovery was that of the carcass of an American Coot in the nest with the owlets. The head and most of the body had apparently been eaten, but the rump, tail, and legs were still intact.

--- Dave and Lois Stage, Box 354, Laurel, Neb. 68745

A NOCTURNALLY FORAGING WESTERN KINGBIRD IN LANCASTER CO. On 21 August 1987 I observed a nocturnally foraging Western Kingbird (*Tyrannus verticalis*) in Lincoln, Nebraska. The bird could not be found on subsequent evenings.

At 2315 hours the Kingbird was observed flying north across N Street between 9th and 10th streets. the bird alighted in a tree, directly beneath a mercury vapor street lamp, along the N Street frontage and adopted a perch approximately 3.5 meters above the street. From 2317 to 2349 seven forage flights were observed. All flights were initiated from the same perch, the distal end of a leafless branch, with captures made approximately 5 to 6 meters above N Street. All captures were made well within the cone of light supplied by the street lamp, and flying insects were clearly visible to the observer.

In 4 years of observing Kingbird forage behavior I have never observed nor heard of anyone else observing this strange nocturnal behavior. I have, however, observed the attraction of this species to street lamps. Urban Western Kingbirds will often congregate beneath these lights just after daybreak, preying on dead and dying insects drawn to the light during the preceding night. It is quite possible that Western Kingbirds have learned to forage nocturnally in the intensely lit area of downtown Lincoln. This forage behavior would utilize a seemingly superabundant and underexploited resource. Possibly this hypothesis will be confirmed by observations next summer.

--- Kurt Dean, 2221 N. 60th., Lincoln, Neb. 68505

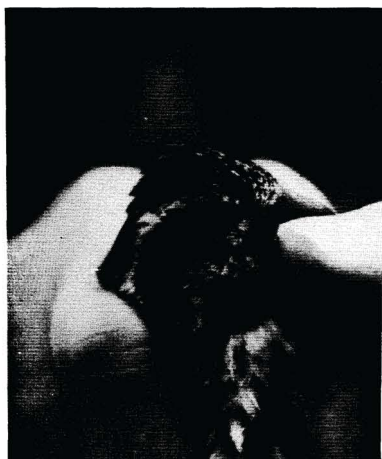
A LATE BLUE GROSBEEK On 11 December 1987 I captured and banded (1341-86576) a Blue Grosbeak (*Gairaca caerulea*) near Laurel, Cedar Co., Neb. I identified it as being a hatching year Blue Grosbeaks as its skull was incompletely ossified. Pyle et al. (1987) indicate that ossification in hatching year Blue Grosbeaks occurs from 1 October through January. This bird's plumage was mostly brown, with two chestnut wing bars, brown head and back, light brown belly, whitish throat feathers and a dark brown upper tail. There was no blue in any of the feathers. Pyle et al. report that hatching year birds cannot be sexed by plumage unless the males show some blue feathers or dull black flight feathers. They also indicate that they may be sexed by wing length, the males ranging from 82 to 94 mm and females from 79 to 88 mm. On this particular bird the length of the right wing was 85.0 mm and the left wing 86.0 mm. Therefore, the bird could not be sexed.

I recaptured this bird on 18 and 25 December. It was not seen again after 25 December. Johnsgard (1986) reports that the latest recorded fall date for Blue Grosbeak in Nebraska is 13 October. Therefore, this appears to be the latest recorded date for Blue Grosbeaks in Nebraska.

Literature Cited

- Johnsgard, P. A. 1986. *A Revised List of the Birds of Nebraska and Adjacent Plains States*. Occasional Papers of the N.O.U. No. 6.  
Pyle, P., S. N. G. Howell, R. P. Yunick, and D. F. DeSante. 1987. *Identification Guide to North American Passerines*. Slate Creek Press, Bolinas, California.

--- David Stage, Box 354, Laurel, Neb. 68745



Gape



Incomplete feather tract

#### YOUNG PURPLE FINCH.

On 20 April 1987 I banded an immature (Hatching Year) Purple Finch in my yard. The band number was 2051/04115. I have banded hundreds of Purple Finches, but have never seen but this one that had an orange gape and juvenile plumage with an incomplete feather tract. This bird had to have been fledged relatively close, and it is presumed that Purple Finches do



Juvenile plumage

not breed in eastern Nebraska. I am enclosing pictures to prove the age of this bird. It can also be verified by Bruce Lund, Director, Kay Young, Chief Naturalist, and Gail Roebuck, Naturalist, all of Fontenelle Forest. This record has been accepted by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Banding Laboratory.

--- Ruth Green, 506 W. 31st Avenue, Bellevue, Neb. 68005

**PANDORA SPHINX MOTH.** In October 1987 a third-grade student brought in a rather large moth for me to identify. His father had found it in their garage, and even though it was dead it was still in excellent condition. I took one look at it and knew I had never seen one like it in Nebraska before. I couldn't find it in the small reference book I had, so I went to the Fontenelle Forest Nature Center for a larger book and all the help I could get. Bruce Lund and Russ Benedict helped identify the dark green and black insect as the Pandora sphinx moth. It is not usually seen north of Kansas in the Midwest, though its range is further north in the eastern states. It feeds on grape and Virginia creeper and also petunias. It is crepuscular in its feeding habits, which means it is active at dawn and dusk. It may have been out of range,

but like birds, moths have wings and they fly.

--- Ruth Green, 506 W. 31st Avenue, Bellevue, Neb. 68006

CHIMNEY SWIFTS. On 3 October 1984 I got a telephone call to come to Avery School, in Bellevue, and "see if you can do something about these bats, or barn swallows, or SOMETHING that are flying about in the boiler room!". Needless to say, I wasted no time in getting there as quickly as I could, for I had a pretty good idea of what the "somethings" would be. I walked into a small, unused boiler room and I saw several Chimney Swifts clinging to the walls. Neither the custodian, Craig Parks, nor I could figure out how they got inside the building, and the Swifts couldn't figure out how to get out. I wanted to get them out as quickly as possible because sure death awaited them unless they had access to food in a short time. I decided to use a butterfly net to pick them off the walls. Of course that sounds a lot easier than it was. Several of them found a crevice inside a window well to hide in and that presented another problem how to get up that high. But Craig was a real sport so up he went over dusty boiler and pipes to fish them out. There were moments when he was clinging as precariously to his perch as the Swifts, but between the two of us we managed to reach down 25 birds without a single injury. It was a real thrill to release these little high-flying birds and send them on their way to their wintering grounds in the Amazon River Valley of South America.

--- Ruth C. Green, 506 W. 31st Avenue, Bellevue, Neb. 68006

(Quoted from *A Bird's Eye View*, XIII, No. 9.)