

Kansas Ornithological Society

BULLETIN

PUBLISHED QUARTERLY

Vol. 34

September, 1983

No. 3

Nesting Records of the Northern Harrier from Kansas — The Northern Harrier (*Circus cyaneus*) appears from the records to be an uncommon breeding bird in Kansas. A recent record from Cowley County prompted me to look at all the state records known. Johnston (1964. The breeding birds of Kansas. Univ. Kansas Publ. Mus. Nat. Hist., 12:575-655) lists 16 records with laying dates from 11 April - 20 May. The average nesting starts approximately 5 May. Although Johnston found that most of the nesting records were from east of the Flint Hills, recent records seem to indicate otherwise. The following are counties with breeding records, followed by the number of records known: Anderson (6), Barber (3), Bourbon (1), Coffey (1), Barton (2), Kingman (2), Sheridan (1), Trego (1), Phillips (1), Ellis (2), Decatur (6), Russell (1), Sumner (confirmed nesting, no actual records recorded), Stafford (1), Pawnee (1) (Fig. 1).

On 7 July 1983, Gene McCauley, Kansas Fish and Game warden, brought in a young hawk to the Southwestern College Natural History Museum. The young bird which was close to fledging had been injured by a combine in a wheat field, 8 km south and approximately 1.6 km west of Udall, Cowley County. The bird died of severe injuries and has been preserved at Southwestern College (SC 5901). There were no other young reported from the nest. This represents the first known nesting from the county.

The Northern Harrier nests on the ground, usually in areas of native grasses. The Cowley County record is the first record from Kansas that I can find where the species utilized a wheat field. Kansas records indicate that the average clutch size in the state is approximately 4.8 with the extremes from one (probably an incomplete clutch) to ten eggs.

Additional nesting records of this species are needed to give us a more complete picture of its breeding distribution within the State of Kansas.

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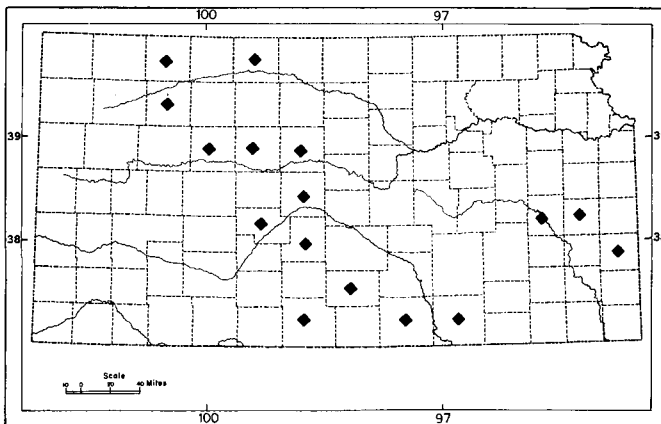


Figure 1. Counties with Northern Harrier nesting records.

White-faced Ibis Nests at Quivira National Wildlife Refuge — The White-faced Ibis (*Plegadis chihi*) is listed as a rare migrant on the Quivira National Wildlife Refuge checklist, although the species does nest to the north at the Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Area in Barton County (Nossaman. 1952. Kansas Fish and Game 9:7, Zuvanich. 1963. Kansas Ornithol. Soc. Bull. 14:11). Sight records, however, indicate that the White-faced Ibis has been seen annually on the refuge since 1977; but no breeding activity had been observed until the spring of 1981.

On 20 May 1981 about 25 adult White-faced Ibis were observed flying out of a half acre clump of cattails (*Typha* sp.) on the east edge of the Big Salt Marsh on Water Unit #58 of the Quivira National Wildlife Refuge, Stafford County, Kansas. On 12 June, 27 adult birds were counted, and this area was searched that afternoon resulting in the locating of 13 White-faced Ibis nests. The nests were constructed as platforms of matted cattail and bulrush (*Scirpus* sp.) about 30 to 46 cm above the water surface. Twelve of the nests contained four eggs each, and one contained five eggs. All the eggs were pale blue. One egg was pipped, indicating that hatching would soon occur. When the colony was revisited on 18 June, hatching was in progress. One to three young ibis were found in each of seven nests that were checked. I took photographs of the newly-hatched ibis during this visit. On 2 July additional photographs were taken of half-grown, flightless young.

About 50 adult White-faced Ibis returned to the Quivira Refuge in 1982. The birds began nesting on Water Unit #63, about 1.5 km northeast of where the colony was located in 1981. Nest platforms placed from 15 to 30 cm above the water which was 91 cm deep were constructed in a thick stand of residual vegetation comprised mostly of *Kochia* sp. On 10 June 1982, 22 nests were located. Two of the nests contained eggs that were in the hatching stage. When the colony was revisited on 28 June, only six of the original 22 nests remained. The others were probably destroyed by a heavy thunderstorm. Six additional nests were found, however, about 46 m to the west in the same type of vegetative cover. Three of these nests each had three young ibises that were about one-third grown. On 29 June six more ibis nests were found on Water Unit #61, 0.8 km south of Water Unit #63. These nests were found in a dense stand of cattail. I suspect that this was a re-nesting attempt after most of the first colony had been destroyed. In late summer of 1982, 95 adult and young White-faced Ibis were counted feeding in flooded salt grass and other marsh areas near their nesting locations.

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American Woodcock Nest in Bourbon County — On 8 April 1983, T. E. Webster discovered a nest of the American Woodcock (*Scolopax minor*) along the west shore of Bourbon State Fishing Lake (T26S, R21E, Sec. 14). The bird flushed from the nest only when Mr. Webster stepped from a tractor within inches of the nest. The tractor had previously passed several times less than a meter from the nest without flushing the incubating bird. Mr. Webster showed Schwillig the nest on the morning of 18 April, and the bird was photographed at close range. Tom Glick and Dudley Foster also had taken photos of the nest with Foster obtaining pictures of the eggs.

American Woodcocks probably migrate statewide through Kansas, and low numbers are harvested by hunters in eastern Kansas. We have documented records of their occurrence in only 29 counties, most in eastern Kansas but some from as far west as Kearny County. Previous nesting records come from Woodson County (Goss. 1891, History of the birds of Kansas, Topeka; Clubine. 1975. Kansas Ornithol. Soc. Bull. 26:22-23), Jefferson County (Cink. 1976. Kansas Ornithol. Soc. Bull. 27:9), and Lyon County (Mosher, personal comm.). The species is also suspected of nesting in Douglas County (Fitch. 1958. Univ. Kansas Publ. Mus. Nat. Hist. 11: 63-326). Nest documentation is difficult due to their secretive behavior and reluctance to flush from the nest. Although densities are low, it appears that woodcock nesting is increasing over a sizeable area of eastern Kansas.

Marvin D. Schwilling, Kansas Fish and Game Commission, 832 E. 6th St., Emporia, KS 66801 and T. E. Webster, Kansas Fish and Game Commission, Rt. 4, Parsons, KS 67357.

Eared Grebes Make First Recorded Nesting Attempt in Kansas — On the Big Salt Marsh at the Quivira National Wildlife Refuge in Stafford County, a colony of 150 Eared Grebes (*Podiceps nigricollis*) began constructing nests on 28 June 1982. The nests were located in open water which was about 46 cm deep. Each nest was a floating platform of coontail (*Ceratophyllum demersum*) and sago pondweed (*Potamogeton pectinatus*). On 13 July, 107 nests were counted; most contained eggs being incubated. Unfortunately that evening a severe thunderstorm moved across the area, and strong winds caused high waves that destroyed the colony. This was the first confirmed nesting of Eared Grebes in Kansas. The grebes made no observed attempts to re-nest the remainder of the season.

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Black Rat Snake Predation on Nestling Pileated Woodpeckers — On 8 May 1983 a Pileated Woodpecker (*Dryocopus pileatus*) nest was discovered in Cowley county, 7.2 km east and 1.6 km south of Arkansas City, KS. The nest cavity was approximately 5 m high in a 7 m high dead black willow (*Salix nigra*). The tree leaned to the southwest and the diameter of the tree at nest height was approximately 35 cm. The entrance hole faced south-southwest and was slightly triangular (peaked above and leveled below) and approximately 9 cm in diameter. Due to the length of time the adult spent in the nest, it was assumed that eggs were present.

Feeding activity was observed on 24 May by Gerald Wiens. At least two young could be seen as they thrust their heads high to receive food from the adult bird. On 27 May at 13:15 we both arrived at the nest site to photograph the birds from a blind approximately 10 m from the base of the nest tree. Both adults were at the nest site when it was approached and we assumed that the young birds had just been fed. Between 13:15 and 14:10 an adult bird was seen in the area on two occasions, but no attempt was made to feed the nestlings.

At 14:30 a black rat snake (*Elaphe obsoleta*) was observed entering the nest cavity. Poison ivy (*Toxicodendron radicans*) vines attached to the tree provided the snake with easy access. Although part of the snake was already in the hole when it was first observed, the snake's girth indicated that it was not a large snake (approximately 75 - 90 cm long). Since the tree was dead, unstable and covered with poison ivy, the decision was made not to remove the snake but to observe the encounter.

The snake immediately began to eat the young woodpeckers. As it ate, the snake occasionally looped a portion of its body out of the hole. Due to the small size of the nesting cavity, a considerable amount of snake movement was observed. At one point a sizeable lump could be seen in the snake as it had another nestling by the head attempting to swallow it. The young woodpeckers were quiet throughout the entire encounter. The snake was still feeding presumably on the last young, when the female Pileated Woodpecker returned to the nest cavity at 15:30.

The adult's bill was held slightly ajar by a food bolus that could be seen in the back of the mouth. The adult perched just outside the hole and spent several minutes looking in at the snake. No alarm call was given by the adult woodpecker. After approximately ten minutes, the bird poked its head into the hole and began to peck at the snake. It would peck into the hole several times and then watch for several seconds before pecking again. Occasionally the woodpecker would lunge backwards as if the snake were also striking back. The pecking intensity increased as time elapsed. The snake was observed thrashing about in an attempt to get away from the bird. Approximately 25 minutes after the adult woodpecker arrived at the nest, the snake crawled from the hole and fell to the ground. For the next 20 minutes the female woodpecker would look into the hole, circle the tree,

then move to look into the hole again. It was assumed that no young remained in the nest. The male Pileated Woodpecker was not observed during this encounter.

Hoping to capture the snake, the blind was abandoned at 16:15. The adult woodpecker then left the area. On the ground, directly below the nest, a dead, starling-sized woodpecker fledgling was found. The bird was naked except for the presence of small feather shafts that were beginning to form. The snake apparently regurgitated the young bird after landing on the ground. No snake was found after a thorough search of the area.

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