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Volume 16 1988 Number 1

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FIRST NESTING RECORD OF THE REDHEAD (Aythya americana)
FOR SOUTHEASTERN NEW MEXICO

STEVE WEST
Box 2489, Carlsbad, NM 88220

MIKE MEDRANO
1433 Smedley, Carlsbad, NM 88220

The Redhead (Aythya americana) has previously been reported only as a casual to occasional species in summer in southeastern New Mexico, with no evidence of breeding (Hubbard 1978). The New Mexico localities where nesting by Redheads has been confirmed and that are nearest to the southeastern corner of the state are Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge in the middle Rio Grande Valley and Tucumcari Lake in northeastern New Mexico (details below). The statement by Johnsgard (1975:317) that Redheads bred once at Carlsbad, New Mexico, is an error; that record (Aud. Field Notes 13:455, 1959) refers to Carlsbad, California.

In 1987 we documented breeding by a pair of Redheads on a borrow pit along U.S. 285, 3.2 km southeast of Otis, Eddy County, New Mexico. This pond is part of the Cass Draw drainage, which continues on through irrigated farmland until it reaches the Pecos River some 3 km to the east. Although the site had often been marshy, it did not become a reliable source of water until it was excavated for gravel in the 1960's. Since excavation, water in the pond has become more-or-less dependable, and has been permanent at least since 1983. The pond measures 100 m X 20 m, and during the summer of 1987 had a maximum depth of about 3 m; it is surrounded by vegetation, with the southern end being dominated by cattails (Typha) and other emergents.

On 10 July 1987, as we were investigating the pond for possible breeding waterbirds, we found a male-female pair of Redheads; a pair of Ruddy Ducks (Oxyura jamaicensis) was also present. At the time we assumed these ducks were late spring migrants. However, Medrano made additional visits to the pond during subsequent weeks and continued to find the Redhead pair present.

On 5 July 1987, we found the pair of adult Redheads escorting a brood of six young; photographs of the family group were obtained. On 26 July, we observed the adult pair with five young, at which time the young birds were judged to be almost equal in size to the adults. Medrano returned on 29 and 31 July, finding the adult pair and four large young on each date. This brood constitutes the first breeding record for the species in Eddy County and in southeastern New Mexico.

Elsewhere in New Mexico, Redheads have nested at Bosque del Apache NWR in Socorro County (some 300 km northwest of the Eddy County site) at least since 1968 (NMOS Field Notes 7(2):8, 1968) and perhaps since as early as 1952 (Zahm 1977), with additional nests and/or broods recorded there during the 1970's and most recently in 1984 (Am. Birds 38:1050, 1984). Breeding at Tucumcari Lake in Quay County (some 300 km north of the Eddy County site) was confirmed in 1983, when over 100 Redheads summered there and young birds were recorded (Am. Birds 37:1015, 1983). Redheads historically have nested on mountain lakes in Rio Arriba County (Bailey 1928), where the species continues to summer and breed, while recently breeding has been confirmed elsewhere in northern New Mexico at Black Lake in Colfax County in 1982 (Am. Birds 37:211, 1983) and in western New Mexico at Black Rock Reservoir in McKinley County in 1982 (NMOS Breeding Bird Record files).

In adjacent western Texas, Redheads were found nesting about playa lakes in Lubbock County in 1968 and in Castro County in 1977 (Rhodes 1979), while in southeastern Arizona a pair nested successfully at Patagonia Lake in 1983 (Am. Birds 37:1013, 1983). To the south, Redheads recently have been found nesting in the Mexican highlands in the state of Jalisco (Williams 1975) and in the Distrito Federal (Wilson and Ceballos-L. 1986). The Eddy County nesting may be part of an overall pattern of more southerly nesting by this species.

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BOREAL OWL IN NEW MEXICO - REQUEST FOR ASSISTANCE

DALE W. STAHLCKER
Eagle Ecological Services, P. O. Box 6233,
Albuquerque, NM 87197

In 1987, the Boreal Owl (*Aegolius funereus*) was added to the list of New Mexico's avifauna with photographs (Am. Birds 41: 380 & 474, 1987) and sightings at three separate localities in the San Juan and Sangre de Cristo mountains of northern New Mexico. Although once thought to breed only in Alaska and Canada, in recent years the Boreal Owl has been found in suitable habitat throughout the Rocky Mountains (Haywood et al., Condor 89:431-432, 1987; Ryder et al., pp. 169-174 in Biology and Conservation of Northern Owls, 1987). Most of the 124 documented sightings from Colorado have been from high-elevation spruce-fir forests, and so far the species has been found in similar habitats in New Mexico. In Idaho, however, the species also occurs in Douglas-fir forests.

Documentation of the Boreal Owl in northern New Mexico was predictable, considering the species' occurrence in nearby areas in Colorado. Also, it is reasonable to expect that the species may be found at the southern end of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains. Of particular interest, however, is whether Boreal Owls exist in isolated mountain ranges elsewhere in New Mexico and Arizona. The Carson National Forest and the Share With Wildlife Program of the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish are supporting my efforts to locate more Boreal Owls and to document habitat use. Boreal Owls are most easily found during late winter (February into April) when they are calling to attract mates. Snow at 10,000 feet is often deep, night-time temperatures are well below freezing, and potential habitat is generally distant from open roads. Surveys are arduous, but the potential rewards are great. Anyone wishing to assist in this effort is invited to contact me at the above address, or at (505) 345-2827.

NMOS BULLETIN 16(1):5, 1988

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