

GENERAL NOTES

Nesting of the Ringed Kingfisher in the United States.—According to the A.O.U. Check-list (fifth Ed., Baltimore, Amer. Ornithol. Union, 1957) the widespread neotropical Ringed Kingfisher (*Megaceryle torquata*) is known from the United States only as “accidental on the lower Rio Grande in Texas (Laredo, June 2, 1888).” More recent publications (Wolfe, Check-list of the birds of Texas, Lancaster, Pennsylvania, Intelligencer Printing Co., 1956; Davis, Birds of the Rio Grande Delta Region, Harlingen, Texas, published by the author, 1966) list it as a casual or extremely rare visitant in the Rio Grande valley. From early winter 1966 to the present (May 1970) it has been seen with increasing frequency along that part of the lower Rio Grande between Falcon Dam on the west to about 30 miles above Brownsville on the east, a stretch of approximately 100 miles. Most of the sightings in the lower part of this area have been at the Santa Ana Wildlife Refuge, the Bentsen State Park, and at or near Anzalduas Dam. From 15 September to 5 October 1968 a single bird remained around North Lake at the Santa Ana Refuge. At Bentsen State Park one bird, and rarely two, were seen during most of October and early November 1968.

During the winter of 1969–70 at least three pairs were resident on that part of the river lying between the town of Roma and Falcon Dam, a distance of about 15 miles. Falcon Dam controls the water supply for irrigation and power generation, and the level of the river below the dam may be high or low depending on how much water is being released. If it happens to be low, otherwise inaccessible places may be reached by wading.

While exploring a series of arroyos some 2 miles below Falcon Dam on 8 April 1970, I heard a bird rattling excitedly. A moment later a female lit in a dead willow near the river's edge with a large minnow in her bill. At the head of a nearby small arroyo or gully, which was only about 50 feet long, was a large hole, and the little furrows made by the birds' feet as they entered or left the burrow were plainly visible.

The female remained in the dead willow cackling occasionally. In very few minutes she left her perch and made several sorties before finally entering the burrow with the fish in her bill. In a few minutes she emerged without the minnow, passed overhead giving a low cluck, and disappeared up the river. An hour and 15 minutes elapsed before a bird (sex undetermined) returned carrying a large minnow. After one false sortie it entered the burrow.

Watching from a blind made out of young willows, I soon saw a male arrive at the dead willow with a 4-inch minnow in its beak and photographed it. He perched there for about 15 minutes, occasionally jerking his tail and bobbing up and down, then went to the burrow. While I remained in the blind for 2 more hours neither bird came to the dead willow, although one of them made at least one more trip to the nest. From 07:30, when the nest was discovered, until I left the blind at 13:30, the birds made five trips with food. From then until 16:00, when the watch was abandoned, no birds appeared.

Every time a bird left the nest it uttered one or two low clucks. When traveling up or down the river it gave a continuous, evenly spaced, rhythmic “cluck-cluck-cluck.” At times I could hear the bird before it came into view.

This nest was situated about 200 feet from the river at the head of a small arroyo whose sides had caved in below the burrow. The entrance was 4 feet below the top of the bank and was shaped like an inverted bell or pear. Measured

flush with the bank the entrance was 9 inches from top to bottom, 7 inches across at the top, and $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches wide at the bottom. From the entrance the burrow sloped upward and inward for 6 inches before going straight back to a depth of 8 feet 4 inches. From where it went straight back the burrow was practically round and 4 inches in diameter

As reaching this nest entailed a round trip of 150 miles, it was not practical to keep it under constant surveillance. On 10 April I watched the nest from daylight until 11:00. At a little after 09:00 the female appeared flying upstream, clucking away as she went by. Just before 11:00 she returned to perch in the dead willow but carried no food. In 5-6 minutes she left going back upstream. On 15 April one bird was seen at 07:00 flying upstream. By 13:00 it had not returned so the watch was abandoned. On 25 and 30 April no bird was seen. On 1 May the male came to the dead willow without food, remained 15 minutes, and departed. The disappearance of the foot furrows at the entrance hole by then showed the nest was apparently no longer occupied. The hole was probed with a steel tape to ascertain its depth and to attempt to find out if there might be dead birds in the nest. The tape came out clean and with no odor. Evidently the young were either fully fledged on 8 April and left the nest that day or the next, or some disaster befell them prior to 10 April.

A thorough search of the many arroyos in this area revealed several old holes of the proper size for Ringed Kingfishers, so it is highly probable that they have nested here in former years.—ALBERT D. MCGREW, 410 North Main Street, McAllen, Texas 78501. Accepted 8 Sep. 70.

Comparison of two presumed European X American Widgeon hybrids.

—Only two wild-taken, presumed hybrid specimens have been reported between the European Widgeon (*Anas penelope*) and the American Widgeon (*A americana*). To the best of my knowledge these have never been compared directly to each other. The first reported is an adult male taken at Back Bay, Princess Anne County, Virginia on 28 November 1918 (Bailey, Wilson Bull., 31: 25, 1919). The second is also an adult male, taken in Florida in 1858, and reported in some detail in comparison with the presumed parental forms by Watson (Auk, 87: 353, 1970). In view of the extreme rarity of this cross in nature and because the Virginia specimen was not described in detail, it seems worthwhile to publish the results of a comparison. Besides the two hybrids I also used 11 male *penelope* and 6 male *americana*, all from the New World and all in the Bailey-Law Collection. The Virginia hybrid (HHB 1372) was also formerly in that collection, but has now been deposited in the Smithsonian Institution (USNM 532826). I am grateful to Richard C. Banks for the loan of the Florida specimen from that collection and to George E. Watson for reading and commenting on this manuscript.

To describe the Virginia hybrid and compare it to the one from Florida (and with the presumed parents) I have used the table of characters Watson (*ibid.*) employed. The numerical index of characters is my own, and without a more thorough study of the intrinsic variation in these two species it must be regarded as very tentative, but it does serve to quantify the characters of the two hybrids for present purposes.

Table 1 shows that the Virginia hybrid is more nearly intermediate in its overall characteristics than the Florida hybrid, which is closer to *penelope*. The two hybrids agree closely in bill and frontal feathering and perhaps did in forehead color