

Recent Breeding Range Expansion of the Cedar Waxwing in South-Central North Carolina: Additional Information

Douglas B. McNair
Tall Timbers Research Station
13093 Henry Beadel Drive
Tallahassee, Florida 32312-9712

Lee and Hendrickson (1998) documented the breeding range expansion of the Cedar Waxwing (*Bombycilla cedrorum*) to the southeast Piedmont, Sandhills, and Coastal Plain of North Carolina in the 1980s and 1990s. Their paper did not document confirmed breeding from these regions for the counties on the South Carolina border. This note augments the information presented in Lee and Hendrickson (1998) by providing documentation for a confirmed breeding record of the Cedar Waxwing for the southeast Piedmont from Anson County, plus additional breeding-season information from Richmond (Sandhills) and Robeson (Coastal Plain) counties.

One pair of Cedar Waxwings nested on the property of Carolina Power and Light Company at Blewett Falls Lake Dam, Anson County, N.C., in 1994. The general habitat was a park-like area with picnic grounds and an expansive view of the lake. Four loblolly pine (*Pinus taeda*) trees were planted in a row along a gravel road near the tip of a peninsula that jutted out into the lake. On 15 June, I located the bulky grassy nest of a Cedar Waxwing. The nest was 13 m up in a 15.25 m pine. The nest was placed in the last sturdy crotch of an ascending limb, 0.6 m from the tip, and 3 m from the trunk. The nest was partially shaded by pine cones and was almost directly over the road.

The female Cedar Waxwing sat in the nest while the male sang occasionally from a nearby pine. From 1200-1315 hr, the female left the nest twice and foraged while the male consorted with her. The female returned and resumed sitting on the nest. I interpret these behaviors to indicate that the female was incubating eggs.

At the McKinney Lake Fish Hatchery, near Hoffman, Richmond County, N.C., I located three adult Cedar Waxwings from 7 June to 9 July 1988. The center of their activities was longleaf pine (*P. palustris*) woods that surrounded a rural yard adjacent to fish pools and a pond. I observed territorial behavior (persistent singing and courtship) among a pair of waxwings. On 25 June, an adult returned repeatedly to one place high in a pine, but I was unable to locate a nest or other direct breeding evidence.

At Richmond Community College, Hamlet, Richmond County, N.C., I located two adult Cedar Waxwings in an open grove of longleaf and loblolly pines next to a pond on 22 June 1989, but obtained no breeding evidence.

At the North Carolina Indian Cultural Center near Pembroke, Robeson County, N.C., I located one adult Cedar Waxwing in pines and cypress trees at the golf course alongside a cypress swamp on 17 June 1994, but I obtained no breeding evidence.

I provided a brief overview for the breeding range expansion of the Cedar Waxwing in the southeastern United States (McNair 1987). Nicholson (1997) and Lee and Hendrickson (1998) have provided much more detailed evaluations of the waxwing's numerical increase and breeding range expansion in Tennessee and North Carolina, respectively. These accounts complement each other. Both Nicholson (*op. cit.*) and Lee and Hendrickson (*op. cit.*) stated that nest-building behavior constituted confirmed breeding. Adults, however, may not finish nests or may abandon completed nests prior to egg-laying (*cf.*, Witmer *et al.* 1997). I believe that the use of nest-building as a criterion for confirmed breeding is too permissive for a species expanding its breeding range.

Finally, Lee and Hendrickson (1998) overlooked that an adult Cedar Waxwing was reported feeding a nestling as late as 16 September (Duyck and McNair 1991), and a pair with dependent fledglings not fully grown was found as late as 14 October at Cashiers, N.C. (McNair 1987).

One caveat is that an extralimital breeding record of the Cedar Waxwing from the lower Coastal Plain of South Carolina (Rodgers and Post 1989) may not be valid (W. Post, pers. comm.). Thus, the breeding range expansion of the Cedar Waxwing into the South Carolina coastal plain may not be as rapid as suggested by Lee and Hendrickson (1998). The timing of this record is suspicious. The record occurred in 1968, 20-25 years prior to other breeding-season records of the Cedar Waxwing from the coastal plain of South Carolina or adjacent North Carolina (McNair and Post 1993, Lee and Hendrickson 1998, this paper). Furthermore, the nest site and general habitat was a large water oak (*Quercus niger*) in a suburban area. The characteristic nest sites and general breeding habitat of Cedar Waxwings in the coastal plain are large pines in open pinewoods in rural areas adjacent to bodies of water (Lee and Hendrickson 1998, this study).

Acknowledgments

I thank DS Lee and W Post for their comments on a draft of this manuscript.

Literature Cited

- Duyck, B, and DB McNair. 1991. Late-season high-elevation breeding record of Cedar Waxwing in the North Carolina mountains. *Chat* 55:7-8.
- Lee, DS, and HT Hendrickson. 1998. Recent breeding range expansion of Cedar Waxwings in North Carolina. *Chat* 62:141-148.
- McNair, DB. 1987. Recent breeding information on birds in a portion of the Southern Appalachian Mountains. *Migrant* 58:109-134.
- McNair, DB, and W Post. 1993. Supplement to status and distribution of SC birds. Charleston Museum Ornithol. Contrib. No. 8.
- Nicholson, CP 1997. Cedar Waxwing. Pages 256-258 in *Atlas of the Breeding Birds of Tennessee* (CP Nicholson, ed.). Univ. Tennessee Press, Knoxville.
- Rodgers, SP, and W Post. 1989. Cedar Waxwings breeding on the lower coastal plain of South Carolina. *Chat* 53:92.
- Witmer, MC, DJ Mountjoy, and L Elliot. 1997. Cedar Waxwing (*Bombycilla cedrorum*). *The Birds of North America*, No. 309 (A. Poole and F. Gill, eds.). The Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and the American Ornithologists' Union, Washington, DC.

CAROLINABIRDS

Carolinabirds is an Internet e-mail discussion group about birds and birding in the Carolinas. Subscribers frequently post sightings to it similar to those found in Briefs for the Files, but unusual behavior receives more attention. Subscriptions are free. To subscribe, address an e-mail message to <majordomo@duke.edu>. Don't fill in the subject line. As your message, simply put, "subscribe carolinabirds" (without the quotes). You will receive a confirmation and more information shortly. Submissions for Briefs for the Files should be sent directly to Ricky Davis.
