

NOTES

ROBINS EXTENDING BREEDING RANGE INTO TUCSON

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American Robins (*Turdus migratorius*) have not been reported nesting in the hot desert areas of the southwest. On 18 June 1965 I found a pair nesting in a White Mulberry (*Morus alba*) near the University of Arizona in central Tucson, Pima County, Arizona (Snider 1965). The resident of the property told me a pair had successively bred there for 2 or 3 years. In 1966 a pair nested in the same tree and in the late spring of 1967 I saw a pair in the vicinity but a nest was not located. Phil Norton told me he saw a pair in the late spring of 1971 in the same area. Doug Danforth observed a single bird at San Xavier Mission near Tucson 18 June 1974 (Monson 1974) and Stephen Russell found an apparently summering robin in Himmel Park, a mile from the University, 11 September 1974 (Monson 1974). Throughout the spring of 1975 I observed a pair nesting in a California Fan Palm (*Washingtonia filifera*) in Himmel Park. The robins fledged one young on 12 May. Harold Fetter saw adults feeding young in a nest in Evergreen Cemetery, 1.5 miles northwest of the University, 20 May 1975 (Monson pers. comm.). Two pairs of robins built their nests in Aleppo Pines (*Pinus halepensis*) in Himmel Park in 1976 and were feeding young in the nest in mid April but it is doubtful if any survived. The same year in Evergreen Cemetery six robins were present throughout the spring; the area was not checked during July and August, but two were present in September. In the spring of 1977 two to six robins were frequently seen in Himmel Park and males were heard singing, but it was not until 3 May I found a pair building a nest high in a Red Gum Eucalyptus (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*). All of the nests have been in introduced trees that are more numerous in the city and probably offer a more suitable habitat than indigenous trees.

The American Robin winters in southern Arizona from mid October to early May in Sonoran zones. It is a common summer resident of openings in Transition and Boreal zones, and locally in moist Upper Sonoran riparian woodland (Phillips et al. 1964). Phillips reports some low altitude breeding sites near the edge of the desert in mountain canyons, such as Madera and Florida canyons in the Santa Rita Mountains and Cave Creek Canyon in the Chiricahua Mountains. There are no breeding records for robins in metropolitan Phoenix, Arizona, or El Paso, Texas, which share an arid climate with Tucson (Janet Witzeman pers. comm.).

More robins are present now than in colonial days because the robin adapts itself to man's structures (Bent 1949). They have been extending their range both north and south (Howell 1942). In earlier periods in California they bred in the mountains from 5000 to 12000 feet but since 1890 they have moved to the lowlands to breed as man altered the land by irrigation and provided suitable habitat (Howell 1942). At present in southern California the robin nests in the mountains and also in foothills, lowland suburbs and urban parks (Small 1974).

Tucson's older neighborhoods, parks and cemeteries are an oasis in the desert and the well established trees, bushes and lawns now offer adequate habitat for

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breeding robins. The number of birds and nests found in the past 3 years indicates breeding may be increasing.

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Sketch by Tim Manolis