

LEUCISTIC RED-SHOULDERED HAWK  
IN BEAVER COUNTY, OKLAHOMASCOTT MCCONNELL<sup>1</sup>, JAMES LISH<sup>2</sup>, WILLIAM VOELKER<sup>3</sup>, AND JAN KELLER<sup>4</sup><sup>1</sup>Department of Zoology, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK 74078;<sup>2</sup>Center for Veterinary Health Sciences, Oklahoma State University,Stillwater, OK 74078; <sup>3</sup>P. O. Box 341, Cyril, OK 73029;<sup>4</sup>Route 2, Box 18C, Turpin, OK 73950.

At 0900 h on 24 September 2005, JK's family noted a white hawk next to a pond in their backyard in Turpin, Beaver County, Oklahoma. Over the next hour, they took several photographs and videos of the bird as it drank at the pond and preened in a willow tree.



**Fig 1.** Leucistic Red-shouldered Hawk photographed near Turpin, Oklahoma, 24 September 2005. Photo by Jan Keller.

Later examination of the photos (Fig. 1) indicated that the bird was a leucistic hatch-year Red-shouldered Hawk (*Buteo lineatus*). The bird's plumage was almost entirely white, but the faint, brownish markings on the breast, tail, and wings helped us make the identification. The photos clearly showed typical markings in the ventral view of the tail. The faint markings of the secondaries also showed typical markings of *B. lineatus*. The tarsus was

longer proportionate to the body than that of the Red-tailed (*B. jamaicensis*) or Swainson's hawks (*B. swainsoni*), and finer in girth. Feathering of the tarsus did not extend as far down the leg as in the other *Buteos* in question. Toe and talon proportions were consistent with the Red-shouldered Hawk. Having worked with both species in the hand, the beak also impressed us with the laterally compressed form typical of the Red-shouldered Hawk and not at all like the Red-tailed Hawk. The eye was a pale bluish-gray, indicative of a hatch-year bird.

Leucistic Red-shouldered Hawks are apparently rare. Palmer (1988: 414) said "a few completely white (albinistic) individuals are known" but gave no references. Dr. H. Meng supplied us with a photograph of a captive albino Red-shouldered Hawk removed as a nestling in Woodstock, New York, in 1952.

The bird described here (Fig. 1) was presumably a migrant, but any Red-shouldered Hawk in Beaver County may be an unusual sighting. The area is west of the species' breeding range. Sutton's (1974) westernmost records were of wintering birds in Alfalfa and Caddo counties (>200 km from Turpin); the westernmost blocks in which the species was found during the Oklahoma Breeding Bird Atlas (Reinking 2004) and the first 2 years of the Oklahoma Winter Bird Atlas (Reinking pers. comm.) were in Blaine County, also ca. 200 km from Turpin.

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### Literature Cited

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- Reinking, D. L., Ed. 2004. Oklahoma breeding bird atlas. University of Oklahoma Press, Norman.
- Sutton, G. M. 1974. A check-list of Oklahoma birds. Stovall Museum of Science and History, University of Oklahoma, Norman

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**First nesting of Tree Swallows in Comanche County and Fort Sill, Oklahoma.**—While visiting nest boxes designed for Eastern Bluebirds (*Sialia sialis*) on 9 May 2005 on Fort Sill Military Reservation West Range (1.6 km west of Deyo Mission Road and 1.6 km north to McKenzie Hill Road), Comanche County, southwestern Oklahoma, I was attacked by what I thought was a Eastern Bluebird. In my 15+ years of checking nest boxes, a bluebird had never attacked me. Upon raising my head, I realized it was not an Eastern Bluebird but likely a Tree Swallow (*Tachycineta bicolor*). I studied the bird for a few minutes but never saw definitive color characteristics of the Tree Swallow due to the light conditions. I did notice a white cheek

patch underneath the eyes, the beak, and the flight pattern, which were all characteristic of a Tree Swallow. I went back on other occasions to see if the bird was still present. At times the bird was present, and the dark, glossy greenish-blue color was noticeable.

I checked the nest box on 25 May 2005 and discovered a nest and eggs present in the box. I did not count the eggs on that particular day due to ongoing precipitation, because I did not want to delay the female's return to the nest. The nest contained large feathers resembling those of the Great Blue Heron (*Ardea herodias*), which were covering the eggs. This is typical of Tree Swallow nesting behavior. T. Hodgkins and I checked the nest on 5 June 2005 and found 6 eggs. Four eggs hatched around 21 June 2005 and young fledged around 19 July 2005. This nest was collected and deposited in the Cameron University Museum as specimen number (CUMZ-NEST 01).

Fort Sill also had two other active Tree Swallow nests in 2005. Nest Box 57 on West Range was empty on a check on 7 May but by 6 June contained 3 Tree Swallow hatchlings. On 21 June, the box had 4 Tree Swallow hatchlings. The nest was empty on 28 June, except for 1 egg that failed to hatch.

Tree Swallow nest material was found in Nest Box 17 on 6 June 2005. This box had just fledged 4 Eastern Bluebirds. Five Tree Swallow eggs were found on 21 June 2005. Three hatchlings and 2 eggs were in the nest on 28 June 2005 and the young fledged around 19 July 2005.

A dead Tree Swallow was found in nest box #2 on the Craig Hill Trail Bluebird Trail on Fort Sill (Dennis and Carol Stayer, *pers. comm.*). There was no nest material found in this box. This trail is located just off I-44 and Apache Gate near Ft. Sill. It is not known how this bird died.

Fort Sill maintains about 140 bluebird boxes on West Range, which have fledged 11 different species. Three types of nest boxes are used in the trail system. Most are 6-inch PVC with PVC lids. Fort Sill also uses the normal wood nest boxes and 4-inch PVC. Tree Swallow nests were found in the 6-inch PVC nest box while the dead Tree Swallow was found in a 4-inch PVC nest box. Boxes that contained the Tree Swallows were found in the Mesquite Savanna habitat (Johnson, Forrest L., et al. 1990. Flora inventory of Fort Sill, Oklahoma. Oklahoma Biological Survey, Norman.)

G. M. Sutton (1967. Oklahoma Birds. Oklahoma Press. Norman, Oklahoma) calls the Tree Swallow transient but moving into and throughout the state. Sutton mentioned no nesting for the state. F. M. Baumgartner and A. M. Baumgartner (1992. Oklahoma Bird Life. Oklahoma Press. Norman, Oklahoma) mentioned the first known nesting in the state in 1979 at Lake Carl Etling. Other nestings have been reported in Nowata County and Sequoyah National Wildlife Refuge (Baumgartner and Baumgartner 1992), Delaware, McCurtain, Muskogee, and Sequoyah counties (Melynda Hickman, Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation, *pers. comm.*). Nesting also has been reported in Stephens County in 1993 and 1998 (Tyler, J. D. 2005. Birds of southwestern Oklahoma and north central Texas. Transcript Press, Norman, Oklahoma). A Tree Swallow was also spotted flying on East Range on 7 May 2006 near Elgin Pond about 4 km south of Elgin,

Comanche County, by K. McCurdy and T. Hodgkins. J. Tyler (*pers. comm.*) said that Tree Swallows have been reported in the Lake Ellsworth area of Comanche County but with no reported nestings. Brown (2004, Tree Swallow. Pgs. 286-287 in Oklahoma Breeding Bird Atlas, D.L. Reinking, Ed., University of Oklahoma Press, Norman) reported that the species remains rare and localized statewide, but suggests, as our report confirms, will likely expand as a breeding species in the state with their increasing use of blue-bird boxes.

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KEVIN MCCURDY, *Natural Resources, Environmental Quality Division, Department of Public Works, Fort Sill, OK, 73503-5100, E-mail: mcurdyk@sill.army.mil*

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