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OCCURRENCE OF ALBINISTIC HUMMINGBIRDS IN OKLAHOMA

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In 1984 I was granted permit No. 22056 by the Bird Banding Laboratory of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service to band hummingbirds in the state of Oklahoma. It was also in 1984, at Tejunga Canyon, California, that I observed and photographed a mostly white hummingbird with dark bill, eyes and feet. That experience piqued my curiosity and led to this paper.

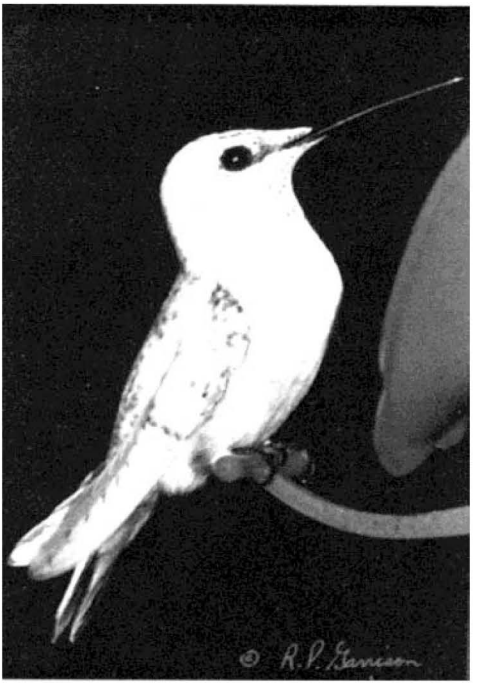
Alfred O. Gross (1965, The incidence of albinism in North American birds, *Bird-Banding* 36:67-71) reported albinism in four species of hummingbirds involving 16 of 1847 individuals among 54 families. The categories he used are defined by John K. Terres (1987, *Audubon Society encyclopedia of North American birds*, Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., New York, p.11) thusly:

"**Total** (or pure) **Albinism:** The rarest form, in which the bird has a complete absence of melanin (dark coloring pigment) from the eyes, skin, and feathers.

Incomplete Albinism: Pigment is completely absent from either eyes, skin, or feathers but not all three.

Imperfect Albinism: Pigment formation is partially inhibited (reduced) in eyes, skin, or feathers but pigment is not totally inhibited in any.

ALBINO HUMMINGBIRD



Schizochroistic hummingbird photographed 31 August, 1987 at the home of William Bass, Norman, Cleveland County, Oklahoma. The photographer, Pat Garrison, authorized use of this excellent photograph.

Table 1. Albinistic hummingbirds known for Oklahoma.

SPECIES	LOCATION	DATE	DEGREE OF ALBINISM	OBSERVER	REFERENCE	COMMENTS
Unk	Cherokee Co., ca. 10 mi E Muskogee	1970	Unk	Opal King, James L. Norman	*Nature Soc. News*, Nov 1986	
Unk	Ottawa Co., near Quapaw	1983	Schizochroistic (buff head and neck, o/w white)	Elsie Hutchins, m. ob.	*Bird Watcher's Digest*, Jul/Aug 1984	Photographed by Terry Wilcox in Sep
Unk	McIntosh Co., Checotah	Lt. Aug-13 Sep 1986	Unk	Mr./Mrs. Chick Boothman & Mr./Mrs. Curtis Finch	*Nature Soc. News*, Nov 1986	2 birds, 1 larger & whiter
Unk	Wagoner Co., Muskogee	19-20 Sep 1986	Schizochroistic (almost grayish)	Vera Jennings, Jeri McMahon, m. ob.	*Nature Soc. News*, Nov 1986	
Rufous?	Cleveland Co., Norman	10 Aug-7 Sep 1987	Schizochroistic (tan washes on wings & scapulars, few buff feather tips)	Wm. Bass, Bob E. & Jean Ragsdale, m. ob.	Bass, W., 1988, *Bull. Oklahoma Ornithol. Soc.* 21:20-21	Photo by Janice Higgins-Blunck published in *Norman Transcript*, 1 Sep 1987
Unk	Rogers Co., near Talala	Aug & Sep 1987	Unk	Lee Bob & Lynn Roberts		2 birds, 1 larger & whiter; author has photo of one
Rufous?	Comanche Co., 1 mi. N, 5.5 mi. E Meers	6 & 26 Aug 1991	Unk	June Hewes	Hewes, J., & A. McCoy, 1991, *Bull. Oklahoma Ornithol. Soc.* 24:33-34	Larger than Ruby-throat

Table 1. (Cont.)

SPECIES	LOCATION	DATE	DEGREE OF ALBINISM	OBSERVER	REFERENCE	COMMENTS
Unk	Comanche Co., Lawton	19 Sep-1 Oct 1991	Schizochroistic (lt. gray on wings & tail)	Anita & Charles T. McCoy	Hewes & McCoy, *loc. cit.*	Photo on file at CUMZ[1]
Unk	Mayes Co., near Disney	7-15 Sep 1991	Unk	Karen & Dave Shepardson		Photo in author's file
Ruby-throated (HY♀)	Tulsa Co., Tulsa	21 Aug-late Aug 1992	Schizochroistic (dorsum soft gray, wings dark, o/w white)	Lloyd, Pat & Virginia Seibert, Dee Isted, the author		Photo in author's file Band No. T75601 (24 Aug)
Unk	Creek Co., Sapulpa	21-27 Aug 1992	Schizochroistic (buffy crown, back, tail, o/w white)	Willard & Marjorie Buckner, the author		
Unk	Haskell Co., near Porum	Sep-Oct 1993	Incomplete (white except dark eyes & bill)	O.D. Walker, Jeri McMahon, James & Marion Norman		Copy of videotape of bird in author's file

[1]CUMZ - Cameron University Museum of Zoology, Lawton, Oklahoma.

Partial Albinism: The commonest form; complete or partial albinism within local parts of the body which may involve certain feathers only; it is often symmetrical and each side of the bird may show white feathers in the same pattern."

In addition, the terms "schizochroism" and "leucism" should be explained. Van Tyne and Berger (1959, *Fundamentals of ornithology*, John Wiley & Sons, New York, p.160) define the former as a condition in which there are one or more pigments absent from the plumage, resulting in an abnormally pale, washed-out appearance. The terms "dilute" and "pale mutant" probably fall into this category. "Leucism" is similar and is caused by "varying degrees of dilution of normal pigmentation..." ranging from "... a rufous leucism to a pale ginger, and then on to silver-gray and to an almost or even absolutely total albino" (Thomson, A.L., 1964, *A new dictionary of birds*, Thomas Nelson Ltd., London, pp. 643-644).

While banding nearly 3000 Ruby-throated Hummingbirds (*Archilochus colubris*), I have encountered only a handful with any evidence of albinism. Most of these exhibited only minor traces, such as the adult female (T21079) banded on 29 April 1990 which exhibited a small area of white sprinkled with normally colored feathers at the base of her upper mandible. On 7 May 1990 I banded another adult female (T21117) with white feathers scattered asymmetrically over her body, including a white tip on her left seventh primary. It is not known whether or not these white feathers remained after her next complete molt. The following table omits these records but summarizes mostly or entirely albinistic hummingbirds known by the author to have occurred in Oklahoma.

Reports that several of these albinistic hummingbirds were larger than Ruby-throats should be considered, but conclusions must be guarded. All sightings were in the fall with migration well under way. There is wide variation in hummingbird weight at this time, ranging from small recently-fledged young to birds easily one and one-half times heavier than their spring weight. Color also plays a part in visual evaluation of size.

In cases where two white birds are reported and one is larger and whiter than the other, the possibility exists that they are female (larger) and male siblings. It is believed that adult male Ruby-throats begin migration first, followed by adult females, then the young. Each individual apparently follows its own instincts rather than migrating in a family group.

Another possible explanation for differences in size or appearance is that some of the larger hummingbirds may not be Ruby-throats. Although this is the only species known to breed in the eastern third of the United States, many states in the Atlantic Flyway and the Midwest increasingly identify other hummingbirds, especially during fall migration. Most commonly reported in Oklahoma are species in the genus *Selasphorus*. No Allen's Hummingbird (*S. sasin*) has ever been confirmed in the state, and in most plumages it cannot safely be separated in the field from the Rufous (*S. rufus*). Adult male Rufous Hummingbirds often, but not always, are distinguishable by sight. Since 1991, twelve Rufous Hummingbirds and seven *Selasphorus* sp. are documented in my file of Oklahoma extralimitals. Three of the Rufous were banded: an adult male (T31054) in Grove, Delaware County, on 11 August 1992; a hatching year female (T75883) also in Grove on 5 November 1993; and an adult female (T75884) in Tulsa, Tulsa County, on 12 November 1993.

Rufous Hummingbirds tend to be slightly larger than Ruby-throats, and with the number of sightings apparently increasing each year, we may even consider them "expected," though not common, in fall migration. While some albinistic individuals appearing "larger than Ruby-throats" could be Rufous or some other species,

there is enough variation in weights and measurements within each species, as well as between sexes of the same species, that positive identification is tenuous without physical examination of each bird.

Albinism in hummingbirds remains a prime interest of the author. New sightings and any additional information would be gratefully received.

1022 South Sycamore Drive, Grove, Oklahoma 74344, 6 August 1994.

GENERAL NOTES

Roseate Spoonbills and Wood Storks in Johnston County, Oklahoma. — The Roseate Spoonbill (*Ajaia ajaja*) is a "very rare summer and fall visitant at large impoundments and rivers, chiefly in eastern and central Oklahoma..." (F.M. Baumgartner and A.M. Baumgartner, 1992, *Oklahoma bird life*, Univ. Oklahoma Press, Norman, p. 75). On 17 August 1994 we spotted two pinkish immature Roseate Spoonbills in a slough 50 yards south of Nida Point on the Tishomingo National Wildlife Refuge in Johnston County, Oklahoma. Here, exposed mudflats and shallow pools of water were interspersed with numerous willow stumps. The slough was 30 to 60 yards wide and surrounded by woodlands except for its confluence with the lake at the north end.

The spoonbills were loafing and preening in the shallows with several Snowy Egrets (*Egretta thula*), Great Egrets (*Casmerodias albus*), Great Blue Herons (*Ardea herodias*), Green Herons (*Butorides striatus*), and a few female Wood Ducks (*Aix sponsa*). When they became aware of our presence, the two spoonbills flew off to the west and landed near the outflow of Pennington Creek from Cumberland Pool.

On the morning of 19 August, Jeri McMahon, James L. and Marion Norman and the senior author watched the spoonbills in the same place for 45 minutes. At 1830, June Ketchum, John Sterling and the authors returned. In addition to the aforementioned associates, the spoonbills were consorting loosely with several American White Pelicans (*Pelicanus erythrorynchos*). The spoonbills were not seen again at Nida Point.

We spotted probably the same two spoonbills at Big Bottom on the Tishomingo Wildlife Management Unit on 5 September. Big Bottom is a 200-acre diked field along the banks of the Washita River 4 miles west of Nida Point. The large pink waders were feeding in a large shallow pool near the dike at the south end of the field, together with several Great Egrets and Great Blue Herons.

Four days later, Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation game warden Mike Stafford reported sighting 10 Wood Storks (*Mycteria americana*) at Big Bottom. This species, too, is rarely encountered in the state (see Baumgartner and Baumgartner, *op. cit.*, p. 76). At 1700 on 11 September, the authors, Arnella Trent, Steve Metz, and John Sterling found four Wood Storks, two immature spoonbills, and three Great Egrets perched in a large dead tree 50 yards south of the Big Bottom dike. However, we did not realize that the spoonbills were present until we were within about 300 yards of the roost. They left the tree and fed in the shallow pool at the base of the dike at 1800.

On 15 September the authors and Leonard and June Ketchum observed a single Wood Stork at Reeves Ravine on the Tishomingo Wildlife Management Unit. It was roosting in a large dead tree in standing water just east of the ravine. Several egrets and vultures were also present in the same and adjacent trees. We studied the stork from 50 yards for 15 minutes before darkness and traffic forced us to leave. — Mike and Cindy Goddard, *Tishomingo National Wildlife Refuge, Rt. 1, Box 151, Tishomingo, Oklahoma 73460, 6 October 1994.*