

**FIRST NESTING RECORD OF THE BLACK-BELLIED WHISTLING-DUCK  
(*Dendrocygna autumnalis*) IN SOUTHWEST OKLAHOMA**

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*Abstract*—We documented breeding by Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks (*Dendrocygna autumnalis*) in Comanche County, Oklahoma. This represents the first nesting record for this species in southwest Oklahoma and the fifth county with confirmed breeding in the state.

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**INTRODUCTION**

First recorded in Oklahoma in 1983 (Baumgartner and Baumgartner 1992), Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks (*Dendrocygna autumnalis*) have since been documented breeding in Osage, Kingfisher, Tulsa (Kamp and Loyd 2001), and McCurtain (Heck and Arbour 2001) counties. Additionally, Arterburn (2004) reported a “probable” nesting record from a breeding bird atlas block along the borders of Major, Garfield, and Kingfisher counties. Here we report on the first record of Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks successfully nesting in southwestern Oklahoma.

**NESTING RECORD**

While attending an outdoor social function in Cache, Oklahoma (Comanche County) on 29 August 2015, B. Wiginton and G. Wiginton were drawn to the sound of objects striking metal in a scrap metal pile in an area of riparian forest along Crater Creek (34.602772N, -98.618261W) at approximately 1:00 PM. Upon searching the area, the couple noticed ducklings dropping from a large post oak tree (*Quercus stellata*) onto



**Fig. 1.** An injured Black-bellied Whistling-Duck (*Dendrocygna autumnalis*) duckling that was recovered in Cache, Comanche County, Oklahoma and taken to the Breaden Wildlife Rehab Center in Lawton, Oklahoma, 29 August 2015. Photo taken by Gabriel Wiginton.

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sheets of tin set vertically as a fence along one side of the scrap metal pile. They saw at least five ducklings drop from the tree. Perched on one of the tin sheets was an adult Black-bellied Whistling-Duck which quickly took flight and began circling overhead. Once on the ground, all but one duckling made their way through a small opening at the base of the fence, at which point the adult stopped circling, landed, and guided the ducklings across the dry creek bed and into an adjacent field. The neighboring field contained several cattle ponds that the ducks could have moved to, but we were unable to search for them on the private property. One of the ducklings was stuck underneath a trailer after its fall and appeared injured. It was recovered by B. Wiginton (Figure 1) and taken to Wallie Breaden at Breaden Wildlife Rehab Center in Lawton, Oklahoma, but it died three days later, apparently due to internal injuries (W. Breaden, pers. comm.).

While a later examination of the apparent nest tree did not confirm a specific nest site, several natural cavities of sufficient size were observed in the tree, all at heights greater than five meters. While Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks have been reported periodically in neighboring Tillman and Kiowa counties (Tyler 2005, L. Truex pers. comm.), to our knowledge, no evidence of potential nesting has been described for the region prior to our observation.

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