



Figure 2. C-banded karyotype of the Red-tailed Hawk.

THE NESTING OF AN ALBINISTIC RED-TAILED HAWK (*BUTEO JAMAICENSIS*) IN OREGON

by

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Although albinism among Red-tailed Hawks (*Buteo jamaicensis*) has been reported (Emerson 1897, Ross 1963, Gross 1965, West 1971, Melquist and Shroeder 1974, Eckert 1974, Harris 1977, Follen 1979), there are few reports of the pairing and nesting of albinistic Red-tailed Hawks. Emerson (1897) stated that the albinistic bird he observed was paired, but he was unable to locate the nesting site. Recently Follen (1979) reported the pairing of an albinistic Redtail, but he gave no information whether nesting occurred.

Because of the lack of data regarding the nesting of albinistic Red-tailed Hawks, and also because of the supposed rarity of albino western Redtails (Austing 1964, Melquist and Shroeder 1974), we believe the following information to be noteworthy.

An albinistic male Red-tailed Hawk was observed by us every month from April 1977 to May 1979 and had been reported in the area by competent observers since 1972. This bird occupied a nesting territory in a second growth Douglas fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*) forest bordering farmland approximately 6.5 km southwest of Philomath, Benton County, Oregon (section 28, T.12S, R.6W, 230 m elevation). The hawk was almost completely white except for a slight reddish tint on the rectrices and a few dark-tipped feathers on the breast, nape, and rear of the crown. The beak appeared to have normal coloration and the eyes appeared dark (fig. 1). Using the terminology of Pettingill (1970), we would classify this buteo as an imperfect albino. The pigment was reduced or diluted in the plumage but was not completely absent.

This imperfect albino nested with a normally pigmented female in 1977 and 1978. In the spring of 1978, nuptial displays occurred in late February and early March. Both birds constructed the nest approximately 25 m high in a Douglas fir tree. Copulation was observed on 15 March and on several occasions shortly thereafter. Incubation started on 1 April and was subsequently carried on by both parents. Young were seen in the nest on 15 May. All of the young were of normal plumage, as was the case in 1977. During the incubation and nestling period, the male, on several occasions, chased a normal-colored, immature Redtail from the nest area. The pair did not use the same nest in 1979, and we do not know whether they nested again or not.

Sage (1962) reported that albinism in birds may be either congenital, in which case it is recessive; or environmental, in which case it is due to factors such as diet, injury, shock, or disease. In either case it is not surprising that the offspring of this albino male have not exhibited any of his color characteristics. However, we believe it is significant that a bird of this coloration has survived so long in the wild and has nested successfully.

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Figure 1. Imperfect albino Red-tailed Hawk perched near nest tree in Benton County, Oregon.

SURVIVAL OF THE SMALLEST NESTLING IN GOSHAWKS

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Abstract

A nest containing four Goshawk chicks was observed during the 1979 breeding season. One young was smaller than its siblings throughout most of the nestling period. It called more during feedings and received less food. The adult female varied in her response to the small bird as the season progressed. She ignored calls early in the season, yet the young hawk was fed in the nest after all other chicks had flown. Possible reasons for this contradiction in adult behavior and its relation to food supply are discussed.

Introduction

Asynchronous hatching can be regarded as an adaptation to an unpredictable food supply, enabling all young to survive in times of plenty, but ensuring rapid reduction of the brood to an appropriate level in times of scarcity (Newton 1978a). This paper documents the survival of a young Goshawk (*Accipiter gentilis*) despite a 1-3 day age difference at hatching among the four chicks and an 18-day difference in dates of leaving the nest from first to last young. Lack (1968) stated that it is probably important for young