

AN ALBINISTIC BAND-TAILED PIGEON IN EVERGREEN, COLORADO

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At 1230 on 26 August 1980, while making counts of Band-tailed Pigeons (*Columba fasciata*) at an artificial bait site, I observed an albinistic bandtail near Evergreen, Jefferson County, Colorado. This pigeon was with four normally-colored bandtails and landed in a tree approximately 40 m from my vehicle. I viewed the aberrant pigeon through a 15-60x spotting scope and recorded its general appearance. The feathers on the head, back and dorsal side of the wings and tail were buff-yellow to cream-colored (Smithe 1975). The tip of the tail was lighter but the terminal band was indistinct. The nape was purple-iridescent but the neck crescent was absent. The breast feathers were buff-colored. The pigeon had spectrum yellow legs and feet but a glaucous bill, and appeared similar in size to another nearby immature bandtail.

The buff-yellow plumage of this bandtail was almost certainly caused by loss of pigment or schizochroism (Harrison 1963). In Rock Doves (*C. livia*), "yellow" plumage refers to a dilute erythristic form. Both the normal eumelanin and phalomesanin pigment concentrations were probably reduced in the plumage of the observed pigeon. It could be classified as a nonmelanic schizochroic (Harrison 1966).

From May through August 1979 and 1980, I observed between 10 and 1500 Band-tailed Pigeons per day, at least four days per week, as part of a study to evaluate census methods. Despite the large number of pigeons observed, only this single bandtail with abnormal plumage was recorded.

Braun et al. (1979), handling over 30,000 bandtails, found only 18 birds with plumage abnormalities. Most aberrant pigeons in their report exhibited partial albinism (feathers with white blotching or patches of white feathers). Two of the 18 birds were classified as nonmelanic schizochroics. Entirely pale bandtails, such as the one I observed, appear to occur infrequently in wild populations.

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LITERATURE CITED

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