

## NOTE

### ALBINISTIC RED-BREASTED SAPSUCKER

ROGER D. HARRIS, Department of Forestry and Resource Management, University of California, Berkeley, California 94720

On 5 July 1982 I photographed and observed an albinistic Red-breasted Sapsucker (*Sphyrapicus ruber*) for 20 min, 200 m east of the dam on Lake Almanor, Plumas County, California, elevation 1380 m. Gross (Bird-banding 36:67-71, 1965) reported 48 records of albinism among 10 species (and subspecies) in the family Picidae, although he did not indicate whether any were *Sphyrapicus*. I am not aware of any previous records of albinism for this species.

The bird was a juvenile with all-white plumage except for a faint red-orange cap. Carotenoid pigments, which produce reds, oranges and yellows, are resistant to albinism (Sage, Brit. Birds 55:201-225, 1962). Typical of albino birds, legs and bill were ivory-colored, and eyes were bright pink.

A normally pigmented sibling accompanied the albino and repeatedly pecked at it. The albino did not peck back. Nero (Auk 71:137-155, 1954) noted albino birds being harassed by conspecifics. Both recently fledged sapsuckers called constantly to at least one normally pigmented adult, which attended them approximately equally.

I approached to within a meter of the albinistic bird before it flushed. It had a weak flight and repeatedly landed on small branches, where it would lose its balance and then hang upside-down for 5 to 10 s before flying again. The normally pigmented sibling had a stronger flight and flew past small branches to land directly and exclusively on tree trunks. Presumably the albino had defective eyesight as it landed on small branches more often than on tree trunks. Defective eyesight has been noted for albino birds (McIlhenny, J. Heredity 41:433-438, 1940; Lincoln, Auk 75:220-221, 1958).

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