

FEMALE TREE SWALLOW NESTS SUCCESSFULLY FOLLOWING LOSS OF EYE

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In early July 1983 a pair of Tree Swallows (*Tachycineta bicolor*) began a late nesting in one of my nest boxes about 6.7 km S of Rollinsville, Gilpin County, Colorado. The box contained four newly-laid eggs on 10 July. The female did not have a band, and when I captured her for banding on 16 July I discovered that both her right eye and eyelid had recently been torn open and her crown had been stripped of feathers along a narrow line extending from the right orbital area across to the other side of the head. The wound to the eye was still open and exuding fluid. Examination of her plumage coloration indicated that she was at least 2 years old (Cohen, J. *Colo.-Wyo. Acad. Sci.* 12:44-45, 1980; Hussell, J. *Field Ornithol.* 54:313-318, 1983).

On 25 July the box had four nestlings about 4 days old, and both the female and the male were feeding the nestlings very actively. When I approached the box the female dived repeatedly at me to defend the nest, passing close enough that I could clearly see without binoculars that she lacked a functional right eye. On 3 August, in visiting the box to band the nestlings, I recaptured the female as she brought food to the nestlings and found that her right orbital area had dried, sunk in, and healed over with skin. On 6 August, when the nestlings were about 18 days old and about 3 days from fledging, I again saw both parents feeding the nestlings. When I next visited the box in October to clean it, examination of the nest condition indicated that the nestlings had fledged successfully.

The perseverance of this female in nesting following severe injury and her ability to forage successfully and raise a brood with only monocular vision and reduced depth perception are remarkable. The following year (1984) I captured almost all adult Tree Swallows breeding in my nest boxes, but this female did not reappear nor did any of the nestlings. However, in this breeding population the proportion of successfully-breeding females that return to breed the following year is only about 50% and the proportion of fledglings that return to breed the following year is only about 10% (Cohen, unpubl. data).

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