

Two White Swainson's Warbler Nestlings Banded in South Carolina

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On 5 July 2000, two incomplete albinistic Swainson's Warbler (*Limnothlypis swainsonii*) nestlings were banded and photographed in the Franklin L. Gravely Wildlife Management Area, western Pickens County, South Carolina (35°02'N, 082°50'W). I refer to this occurrence as incomplete albinism because while the nestlings' feathers were white, their eyes were normal colored and not red as in total albinism (Gross, 1965). A similar case where two Alder Flycatchers (*Empidonax alnorum*) of "normal" appearance produced a brood of two "normal" and two white feathered nestlings with normal colored eyes was reported near Dixboro, Michigan (Berger, 1954).

On 8 June 2000 (08:30 h EST) a Swainson's Warbler nest was found complete, lined and empty. It was about 2.1 m high in a small (<1 cm diameter at breast height) eastern hemlock (*Tsuga canadensis*) growing under the branches of a large (>10 cm dbh) rhododendron (*Rhododendron maximum*), in a site dominated by second growth (25 to 30 m in height) yellow poplar (*Liriodendron tulipifera*). The nest tree was about 20 m from an unnamed mountain stream of about 1 m in width and 2 to 3 cm in depth.

On 14 June (09:30 h) the nest contained four eggs. On 28 June (10:40 h) three of the four eggs had hatched. On this date, I also observed one nestling was larger than the other two and one of the two smaller hatchlings had what looked like a "mop" of long, white, neossoptiles attached to the top of its head. The comparison was striking, since in the gloominess of the habitat and the shadow of the nest rim the neossoptiles of the normally colored nestlings were invisible.

On 30 June (10:50 h) an adult male was captured in a mist net erected about 7 m from the nest, and color leg-bands (striped/blue) were applied along with a uniquely numbered stainless steel leg-band. The other adult was not flushed from the nest and was still brooding when I left the area.

On 5 July (09:03 h), I returned to the nest with a Nikon N60 camera with a Mini Zoom Macro 28-80 Sigma Lens. I removed the four nestlings from the nest, applied a uniquely numbered stainless steel leg-band to each, placed the



Figure 1. Two white and one normally colored Swainson's Warbler nestlings of 6 or 7 days of age. 05 July 2000. Photo by Stanlee Miller.

nestlings on a folded piece of white felt cloth, and attempted to photograph them (Figure 1). But one of the "normal-colored" nestling kept trying to run away and was not photographed. This same nestling repeatedly jumped out of the nest, while the other three nestlings settled quietly back into the nest cup when returned.

Also on this date, I captured the adult female in a mist net erected about 3 m from the nest and color leg-bands (pink/striped) and a uniquely numbered stainless steel leg-band were applied. Afterwards, I watched the nest site for two hours and observed that the male (ST/B) continued to bring food to the three nestlings in the nest, while the female (P/ST) only brought food to the nestling on the ground.

On 7 July (08:34 h) three of the nestlings, including both of the white ones, were still in the nest. The grounded nestling was not seen, but the female was seen doing the wing and tail drag distraction display (Graves, 1992) about 10 m west of the nest.

On 10 July (09:00 h), the thirteenth day after hatching, the nest was empty, and no fledglings were seen. There was no way to determine the fate of the nestlings, but fledging usually occurs 10 d to 12 d after hatching, in this species (Sims and DeGarmo, 1948) (Meanley, 1971).

Between 9 May and 11 June 2001, the same male (ST/B) and a new female (striped/yellow) reared four "normal" colored warblers in a nest built about 20 m south of last year's nest. Last year's female (P/ST) was not seen.

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