

себе партнёра на основе симпатий и антипатий — это скрытый, не сопровождающийся какими-либо выраженными поведенческими особенностями этап, протекающий в феврале, и судить о его наличии можно лишь на основе встреч отдельных пар, часто попадающих вне стай, а также стремления многих членов стай держаться, перемещаться, кормиться, взлетать и уходить от преследования парами. Максимальное возбуждение, охватывающее всех самцов в стае и вызывающее напряжение внутри существующей группировки, приводит к усилению конфликтов между членами стаи, которые сопровождаются характерным демонстрационным поведением — групповым токованием; спаривания в этот период не отмечено. Данный этап краток, но приводит к резкому ускорению распада зимовочных стай, поэтому может считаться границей, разделяющей зимний, стайный период в жизни куропаток и гнездовый период, на протяжении которого птицы проявляют территориальность, а брачное поведение между членами семейной пары завершается спариванием.

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First record of the albino Common Swift (Apus apus) in Tver, Russia

Первое сообщение о находке особи-альбиноса чёрного стрижа (Apus apus) в Твери, Россия

Although quite rare in a wild, the phenomenon of albinism is widespread in almost all the species of birds and generally related to the lack of melanins' synthesis due to the recessive gene mutation. Term albino generally stays for birds, which fully lack melanins, thus having not only dull white plumage, bill and claws, but red (or, rather, pinkish) eyes and legs. As we look through the literature and reports, we see that swifts are by no means an exclusion from this rule.

One of the first records belongs to Wing (1939), who reported his observations upon albino **Chimney Swift** (*Chaetura pelagica*) in a flock of about a dozen feeding birds. The more relevant information due to its relation to the species in question comes from Gerber (1958). He reported a complete albino Common Swift, found dead in Leipzig on September 4th, 1951. No also mentioned an oral report by Dathe, who has seen «einen weißen Mauersegler über der Südvorstadt» of the same city as early as in spring of 1944, along with an information of Schifferli, who met a partial albino Common Swift in Sempach in 1956. Another partial albino was met by Catley on June, 28th and July, 2nd of 1977 in Humberside (Catley, Sharrock, 1978). On July, 21st of 1970 Britton (1979) observed a Common Swift, which had a plumage patterns similar to those of **Alpine Swift** (*Apus melba*). The latter is an example of certain difficulty in identifying partially pigmented swifts in flight, since a considerable number of swift species normally have white patterns in plumage (f. i. *A. melba*, *A. caffer*, *A. affinis*, *A. pacificus*) (Catley, Sharrock, 1978; Tenovuo, 2003). There are a number of relatively recent records of partial and complete albinos of Common Swift. Partial albinos have been seen and photographed by Catley in 2003–2004 (Catley, 2005) and Haupt (2003), as well as a complete albino is reported on Stratford Islands, UK (Anon., 2006).

As we can see from the short synopsis given above, most of the recordings belong to partial albinos, which are thus met more frequently. As for the so called pure albinos, only a few of them have been collected; observations in flight are definitely not sufficient for identification of such a variation. The observation presented here shows, that such an identification in flight must be made with caution.

The first for the region of Tver albino Common Swift has been found on August, 14th of 2006 by a schoolboy in the vicinity of a group of nine-storied buildings, where swifts regularly nest. The bird was lying on the ground and apparently dying. After its death in a few hours, the swift has been brought to the Zoology Dept. of Tver State University, where it was measured and prepared as stuffed specimen. The measurements of the first-year male swift were: total body length — 141.0

mm, wing length — 133.0 mm, tail length — 50.0 mm, bill length — 5.9 mm, bill height — 2.4 mm, bill width — 6.3 mm. They are significantly smaller, than those reported for normal birds of the subspecies from Eastern Europe (Ptushenko, 1951). The bird body weight was not taken.

Due to the find of the bird on the ground it can not be told for certain, whether it flew or not. It might have fallen from a nest without any attempt to fly. At least, external and internal observations did not reveal any causes of the death of specimen. We strongly doubt that the death might have been caused by the predator, since the white colour in swifts does not show the bird to predators more, than the black color of normal forms. One of the explanations is that true albinos are less robust, often have deficient eyesight and hearing and rarely survive for long. The other is contained in the above mentioned article by Wing (1938; p. 80). He noticed, that «the other members of the group seemed to recognize its (albino Chimney Swift — AZ) anomalous condition, for they pursued it from time to time. No other bird received this attention. The flock rarely permitted the albino to remain unmolested during my half-hour of observation. At times the dives at the albino appeared to be very savage, and the attacked one escaped only by dodging».

Despite its overall dull white appearance, typical for albino red eyes and feet, as well as white bill and claws, the specimen in question at closer look turned out not to be a complete albino (Photo). All feathers, except for those of the head, wings and tail, had traces of melanin in proximal two thirds. We have not met in the literature the description of such type of an albinism in birds. However, something similar is observed in humans and called oculocutaneous albinism type 1 (OCA1), where in one of subtypes a small amount of melanin may show up in hairs while eyes stay red (Oetting et al., 1996).

We are grateful to the schoolboy, Ilya Burdinsky, for the providing of the unique specimen.



Photo. The stuffed albino Common Swift. Note blurred dark areas on the back and rump, showing melanin-bearing proximal parts of corresponding contour feathers.

Фото. Чучело альбиноса чёрного стрижа. На спине и надхвостье имеются размытые тёмные пятна, образованные меланин-содержащими проксимальными частями соответствующих контурных перьев.

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