

NOTES

Florida Field Naturalist 36(4):90-91, 2008.

SWALLOW-TAILED KITE PREYS ON FLORIDA SCRUB-JAY NESTLINGS

GINA M. MORGAN, TRAVIS E. WILCOXEN, AND MICHELLE A. RENSEL
Department of Biology, University of Memphis, 3774 Walker Ave.
Memphis, TN 38152 USA

On 1 May 2007, TEW studied a Florida Scrub-Jay (*Aphelocoma coerulescens*; FSJ) nest from a blind at a distance of 45 m on the grounds of Archbold Biological Station, Highlands Co., Florida. The nest, in a scrub oak (*Quercus inopina*), held three nestlings that were three days old, and a breeding pair and two non-breeding adult birds occupied the territory. At 0910 EST a Swallow-tailed Kite (*Elanoides forficatus*; STK) flew into the FSJ territory and circled the nest site once. When the kite completed the circle, the territory holders began to scold it. The male breeder FSJ and a non-breeding female FSJ flew toward the kite, continuing to call. The STK circled back and dove toward the nest, and three jays from a neighboring territory joined the resident jays in mobbing it. The STK again circled back to dive at the nest, at which time TEW stood up out of the blind and the kite flew away to the north.

MAR visited the nest at 0940 on 2 May 2007 to monitor nestling growth, and all three nestlings were present. On 5 May 2007, GMM was conducting a foraging watch at a nearby territory. Between 1835 and 1845 she left the focal territory and drove toward the territory in which TEW saw the kite activity. Upon arriving, GMM saw an STK flying approximately 40 m southwest from the nest with an FSJ nestling in its talons. At least two scolding adult FSJs chased the kite. GMM saw the STK begin to eat the nestling while in flight. The adult FSJs chased the STK for approximately 100 m before returning to their territory. GMM then checked the nest and found it empty.

Though we cannot conclude that only one STK was responsible, all three nestlings were lost between 2 May and 5 May 2007, when the final nestling was taken by a Swallow-tailed Kite. STKs will rob the nests of other bird species (Robertson 1988, Meyer 1995). In Florida, STKs have been seen robbing the nests of Mourning Doves (*Zenaidura macroura*) (Stevenson 1958), Northern Mockingbirds (*Mimus polyglottos*) and Loggerhead Shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus*) (Lohrer and Winegarner 1980), Eastern Kingbirds (*Tyrannus tyrannus*) (Lohrer and Lohrer 1984), and Blue Jays (*Cyanocitta cristata*) (Tarvin and Garvin 2002).

Previous observations also suggest that STKs will return to the same nest multiple times until it is empty (Lohrer and Lohrer 1984). The STK has been implicated as a potential Florida Scrub-Jay nest predator by Schaub (1990), Schaub et al. (1992), and Franzeb (2007), but these authors never saw a STK prey on a scrub-jay nest. We believe this to be the first account of Florida Scrub-Jay nest predation by a Swallow-tailed Kite.

LITERATURE CITED

- FRANZEB, K. E. 2007. Reproductive success and nest depredation of the Florida Scrub-Jay. *Wilson Journal of Ornithology* 119:162-169.
- LOHRER, F., AND C. LOHRER. 1984. Persistent predation by American Swallow-tailed Kites on Eastern Kingbirds. *Florida Field Naturalist* 12:42-43.
- LOHRER, F., AND C. E. WINEGARNER. 1980. Swallow-tailed Kite predation on nestling Mockingbird and Loggerhead Shrike. *Florida Field Naturalist* 8:47-48.

- MEYER, K. D. 1995. Swallow-tailed Kite (*Elanoides forficatus*), The Birds of North America Online (A. Poole, ed.). Ithaca: Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Retrieved 1 September 2008 from the Birds of North America Online: <http://bna.birds.cornell.edu/bna/species/138>
- ROBERTSON, W. B. 1988. American Swallow-tailed Kite (*Elanoides forficatus*). In Handbook of North American Birds, Vol. 4. (R. S. Palmer, ed.). Yale University Press, New Haven and London.
- SCHAUB, R. 1990. Predation on the eggs and nestlings of Florida Scrub-Jays. Unpublished Master's Thesis. Tampa, University of South Florida.
- SCHAUB, R., R. MUMME, AND G. E. WOOLFENDEN. 1992. Predation on the eggs and nestlings of Florida Scrub-Jays. *Auk* 109:585-593.
- STEVENSON, H. M. 1958. Florida Region. *Audubon Field Notes* 12:344-348.
- TARVIN, K. A., AND M. C. GARVIN. 2002. Habitat and nesting success of Blue Jays (*Cyanocitta cristata*): importance of scale. *Auk* 119:971-983.