



Left: Male Scarlet Tanager at nest with female Summer Tanager, Swallow Cliff, Palos Preserves, Cook County. 13 July 2006. Photo by Paul Dacko. Note black wing of male Scarlet Tanager compared to its lighter-colored flanks.

Below: Male Summer Tanager with food for young, Swallow Cliff, Palos Preserves, Cook County. 13 July 2006. Photo by Paul Dacko.

Bottom: Summer Tanager pair at nest, Swallow Cliff, Palos Preserves, Cook County. 13 July 2006. Photo by Paul Dacko.

these were fed by males of both Summer and Scarlet Tanagers.

On 13 July, Paul Dacko obtained photos of a male Scarlet Tanager removing a fecal sac from the nest. The males of the two species were also seen aggressively attacking one another, while the female Summer Tanager repeatedly chased the male Scarlet. These observations gave rise to questions about the true male parent. Since Robinson's account cited above lists only one previous instance of a Summer x Scarlet Tanager hybrid (a male discovered in a collection of skins in Omaha in 1892; see McCormick 1893), and since the nest was indeed being maintained by a pair of Summer Tanagers, hybrid parentage seemed unlikely.

Steve Bailey of the Illinois Natural History Survey provided a likely scenario for the role of the Scarlet Tanager in the nesting. He postulated that the male Scarlet Tanager had had its nest (and possibly its mate) predated and was following its instinct to keep feeding young. Bailey noted that such behavior is amply documented, even across boundaries of essentially unrelated families of birds.

John Duran noted both young still in the nest on 15 July, being fed by males of both species of tanagers. The following morning, only one young remained in the nest. Duran saw this nestling take its first flight at about 10 a.m., again tended by the two males. The status of the second nestling and the female remain unknown.



I located the male Summer Tanager feeding a fledgling (which I photographed) in a bush about five feet off the ground on 19 July; this was the last date the species was seen.

Literature Cited

McCormick, L. M. 1893. A hybrid tanager. *Auk*: 10.3:302-303.

Robinson, W. Douglas. 1996.. Summer Tanager (*Piranga rubra*). In: *The Birds of North America*, No. 248 (A. Poole and F. Gill, eds.). The Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia.

— Wes Serafin
14150 S. 84th Ave.
Orland Park, IL 60462-2316

