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# FIRST RECORD OF THE CAVE SWALLOW FOR NEBRASKA

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#### FIRST RECORD OF THE CAVE SWALLOW FOR NEBRASKA

The Cave Swallow (*Hirundo fulva*) is patchily distributed from central Texas and southeastern New Mexico south to southern Chihuahua, Coahuila, and San Luis Potosi; in central Chiapas, Yucatan, and Quintana Roo; in the Greater Antilles east to Puerto Rico; and in southwestern Ecuador and northwestern Peru (A.O.U. 1983). Vagrants are occasionally recorded in Arizona, Florida, and along the Gulf and East Coasts of the United States north to Nova Scotia. The Cave Swallow has seldom, if ever, been reported in the north-central U.S. The species is unknown for Nebraska (N.O.U.R.C. 1988, 1989), and, from examination of *American Birds* and *Audubon Field Notes* from 1947 to the present, we could not find any records for Kansas, Oklahoma, Colorado, Wyoming, Iowa, or South Dakota. No records of Cave Swallows for the Great Plains were listed in Johnsgard (1979).

On May 31, 1991, we, along with Bara MacNeill and Jessica Thomson, mist-netted a juvenile Cave Swallow (Fig. 1) at a road culvert under Highway 26 near Ash Hollow State Park in Garden County, Nebraska. About 140 active Cliff Swallow (*H. pyrrhonota*) nests were also in this culvert, and the Cave Swallow probably had been attracted to the site by the activity of the Cliff Swallows. We were initially unsure of the bird's identity, so we took it to the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's Cedar Point Biological Station in Keith County for further study and photography. We banded the bird with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service band no. 2081-89857, and released it near the biological station later in the day on May 31.

#### DESCRIPTION

The overall dull coloration of the bird, the yellowish corners of the mouth, and the dull-buff tips of the inner secondaries, tertiaries, and upper tail-coverts (Fig. 1) indicated that it was a juvenile, most likely only a few weeks old. The auricular region was dusky to light gray; the chin and throat were white with virtually no speckling or streaking of any color; the forehead patch, which was light brown with small amounts of white speckling, appeared narrow and not well-defined. The bird had an apparent healed wound on the forehead, which ruffled the feathers and caused them to protrude outward, giving the bird the appearance of having a "growth" on its forehead (Fig. 1). The pileum was dull fuscous-black, and the back was dark fuscous to dull fuscous-black with a few whitish streaks. There was little, if any, metallic sheen on the upper parts. The breast was noticeably darker than the throat, and darker than the whitish belly and flanks (Fig. 1). The tawny brown of the breast gave the bird the appearance of having a breast band. The rump patch was light gray to light tawny with faint flecks of rufous cinnamon. The sex of the bird was unknown.

#### MEASUREMENTS

Unflattened wing chord, 104 mm; culmen length, 4.1 mm; culmen width at nostrils, 4.25 mm; tarsus length, 13 mm; tail, 40.95 mm; interorbital distance, 12.1 mm; weight, 19.5 g.

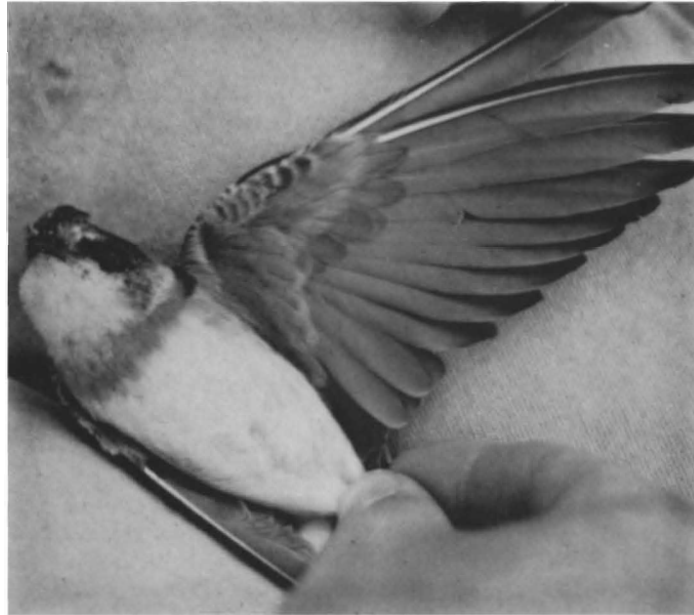


Fig.1. Ventral and dorsal views of juvenile Cave Swallow found in Garden County, Nebraska, May 31, 1991. Photographs by Charles R. Brown.

## SUBSPECIFIC DESIGNATION

The very pale rump, dull black pileum, and palish sides of the head (Ridgway 1904) suggest that this bird was *H. f. pallida*, the race of the Cave Swallow found in central Texas and southeastern New Mexico (Oberholser 1974). The bird matched closely six juvenile Cave Swallows taken in Uvalde County, Texas (Fig. 2; Texas Memorial Museum nos. RFM 159-164) and one taken near George West, Texas (Texas Cooperative Wildlife Collection no. 11761). The bird's overall coloration, and the rump patch in particular, were much lighter than those shown by a juvenile *H. f. poeciloma* from Puerto Rico (U.S. National Museum no. 238961).

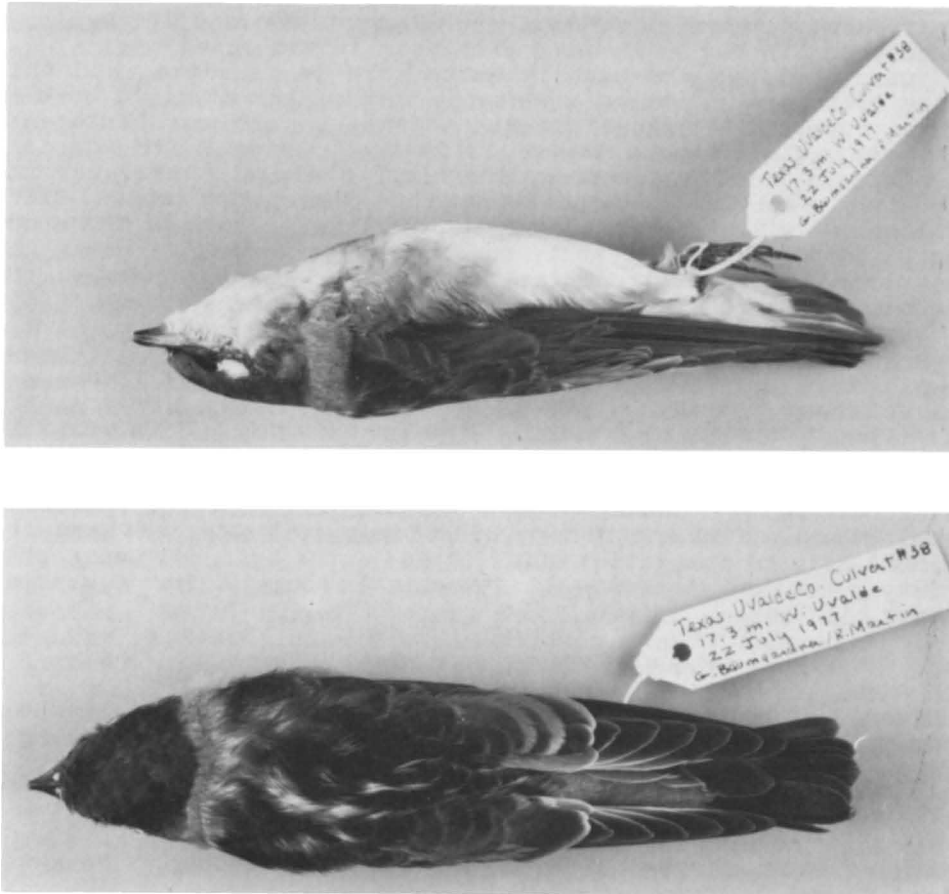


Fig. 2. Juvenile Cave Swallow, *Hirundo fulva pallida*, taken in Uvalde County, Texas, July 22, 1977 (Texas Memorial Museum no. RFM 162). Photographs by William K. Sacco.

## OCCURRENCE IN NEBRASKA

We think it likely that this bird was hatched in central Texas in early spring, 1991, and after fledging, moved north with migrant Cliff Swallows. Cave Swallows in Texas were reported by Oberholser (1974) to lay eggs as early as April 5, and they probably lay eggs in March, since large numbers now winter in central Texas (Lasley and Sexton 1989, 1991), and perhaps raise up to three broods a season (Lasley and Sexton 1988). A bird hatched by mid April would be fledged by early May, in time to appear in Nebraska on the date we found this individual. Large numbers of Cliff Swallows are still arriving at colony sites in southwestern Nebraska at the end of May each year, enabling juvenile Cave Swallows from farther south to join them en route. The bird we found could not have been reared locally; the earliest time when Barn (*H. rustica*) or Cliff Swallows fledge young in our study area each year is mid June.

Cave Swallows are clearly quite rare in Nebraska, and this rarity does not reflect to any degree merely lack of field work or difficulty in identification. Since 1982, we and our assistants have handled and banded 44,186 Cliff Swallows in Keith, Garden, Lincoln, and Morrill Counties. The bird on May 31, 1991, was the only Cave Swallow we have found thus far among these Cliff Swallows. We will watch for this Cave Swallow's return to the study area in 1992, a not completely unreasonable possibility given the repeated return of extralimital individual Cave Swallows to the same Tucson, Arizona nesting site in successive years (Huels 1985).

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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