

NOTES

Bull. Oklahoma Ornithol. Soc. 32:6-7, 1999

Breeding record of the Tree Swallow in McCurtain County, Oklahoma.—On 25 May 1998, I observed a pair of Tree Swallows (*Tachycineta bicolor*) flying over a 1.2 ha pond, 9.5 km north of Eagletown, McCurtain County, Oklahoma. Several dead trees containing cavities stood in the water, and the swallows were entering and leaving a cavity 4.5 m above the water. Their frequent arrivals and departures suggested that they were feeding young. On 31 May and 8 June, I again observed two Tree Swallows entering and leaving the same cavity, and on each day, a swallow carried a fecal sac from the cavity. On 15 June, two fully feathered Tree Swallows in juvenal plumage were sitting in the entrance of the cavity being fed by their parents.

On 5 December 1998, the Oklahoma Bird Records Committee accepted this record as the first breeding record of the Tree Swallow for McCurtain County (J. Grzybowski, pers. comm.). Through 1967, the Tree Swallow was considered an uncommon migrant in Oklahoma, with the nearest known nesting in Colorado and in the northeastern corner of Kansas (Sutton, G. M., Oklahoma birds, Univ. Oklahoma Press, 1967). However, by 1992, records of several nestings on the eastern border of the state appeared to indicate a southward expansion of the Tree Swallow's breeding range (Baumgartner, F. M., and A. M. Baumgartner, Oklahoma bird life, Univ. Oklahoma Press, Norman, 1992). Recent nesting reports indicate a further southward expansion of this species in Oklahoma and adjoining states. By 1993, nesting had been documented in Cimmaron, Stephens, Sequoyah, Wagner, and Cherokee counties (Neeld, F., *Bull. Oklahoma Ornithol. Soc.* 26:40-41, 1993) and by 1997 in Delaware County (Long, M. P., and C. I. Long, *Bull. Oklahoma Ornithol. Soc.* 30:21-23, 1997) and at the bayou in Fort Gibson in Muskogee County (J. McMahon, pers. comm.). By 1998, nesting also was known to have occurred in Nowata, Washington, Osage, Kay, Noble, Pawnee, Creek, and Okmulgee counties based on fieldwork by James Hoffman (pers. comm.).

Two recent nesting reports for Tree Swallows in southwestern Arkansas are known. Numerous nestings were observed in dead timber at Millwood Lake, Howard County, Arkansas, from 1988 to 1998 (C. Mills, pers. comm.). Nesting was also observed at DeQueen Lake, Sevier County, Arkansas, in 1996 (D. Arbour, pers. comm.). These Arkansas sites are approximately 60 km southeast and 20 km east of the McCurtain County breeding site, respectively. In northeastern Texas, Tree Swallow nestings were observed at Big Creek Lake, Delta County, in 1991, 1992, and 1994; at Lake Fork, Wood County, in 1991 and 1994; and at Martin Creek Lake, Rusk County, in 1997 and 1998 (D. Brotherton, pers. comm.). The relatively recent expansion of the Tree Swallow's breeding range into eastern Oklahoma, western Arkansas, and northeastern Texas may be related to

the abundance of dead timber that stands in the upper reaches of many of the reservoirs that were constructed in these areas in the 1950s. As this timber rots and falls, Tree Swallows may disappear as a nesting species in eastern Oklahoma.

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Recent Literature

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BABY BIRD PORTRAITS BY GEORGE MIKSCH SUTTON, WATER-COLORS IN THE FIELD MUSEUM. By Paul A. Johnsgard, forewords by Benjamin W. Williams and William R. Johnson. 1998. University of Oklahoma Press, Norman. 81 pp., 32 color plates. \$24.95.

This is a charming little book. Who can fail to be entranced by watercolors of baby birds, especially if painted by George Miksch Sutton? Nineteen species are depicted in 32 color plates. This includes an assortment of nestlings, fledgling, downy chicks, and a few adults. As is always true of Sutton's paintings, each little bird has its own personality and flair. Nearly half of the species included are grassland sparrows, with others being upland and wetland birds. Some of the illustrations are published here for the first time. Each plate is accompanied by a short essay discussing the natural history of the species illustrated, including a short bibliography. In the essays, Johnsgard includes information from Sutton's own ornithological studies, providing insight into both Sutton the ornithologist and Sutton the artist. Students of Sutton's life, science, and art will appreciate the information provided in the two forewords, the preface, and the section on Sutton's art and science. This includes material on Sutton's development as an artist and how the watercolors came to be in the possession of the Field Museum. Johnsgard writes in a comfortable, conversational style. The watercolors are reproduced very nicely. The format of the book is also attractive, with the text appearing on the left side and the plate on the right side. If you are a fan of Oklahoma ornithology, George Miksch Sutton, or are simply charmed by baby birds, this little book is for you.—MARY BOMBERGER BROWN

SWALLOW SUMMER. By Charles R. Brown. 1998. University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln. 371 pp., 24 black-and-white photographs. \$16.95.

This book is the saga of a field season spent collecting data from colonies of Cliff Swallows (*Petrochelidon pyrrhonota*). It offers the layperson a detailed and easily comprehended insight into the hard work that is required to make scientific discoveries. Although placed in bookstores

under the section of natural history, it could be classified as an **adventure** because the reader vicariously becomes a member of the research **team** for a season. The book is nicely organized in the form of a journal; the reader experiences the field season from the first day to the final day in chronological order.

Through each day's tale, the reader learns the techniques used in capturing the swallows, recording measurements, and observing the birds. The personalities of both the Cliff Swallows and the members of the research team become evident, and the inevitable conflicts between both team members and the birds themselves are revealed. Bird villains steal from neighbors, lay or transfer their eggs into neighboring nests, and generally torment each other. While the researchers do not resort to such behavior, they do have difficulties at times in dealing with the lack of amenities at the field sites and in working together. In addition, the team experiences the amusing interactions of would-be helpful and curious townsfolk. The joys of scientific research are relayed along with the inevitable trials of such a study. Brown and his collaborator/wife Mary deal with the fickle weather, the green field assistants, and the challenge of collecting data while maintaining an intense passion and love for both their research and the Cliff Swallows.

Another attractive aspect of the book is that as the season progresses, the reader gains the background information from the research of previous seasons. The history of this now seventeen-year project is fascinating. From the initial selection of the study animal and establishment of sites to the discoveries made over the years, the reader comes to appreciate just how much hard work is required to study birds in the field. Few books written by scientists offer such a frank and detailed behind-the-scenes view of research.

Further enhancements include photographs from the season, maps of the study area, and clever epigrams to open each chapter. *Swallow Summer* is ideal for those interested specifically in the study of birds but is also entertaining for anyone with an interest in natural history or science.—CHERYL G. ORMSTON

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