

Results

On February 12, 1977, the first martins of the 1977 breeding season arrived. On Thursday, February 17, studies resumed. Banding is still being carried out, with an expected goal of 200+. The first returns are also beginning to filter in. However, in no way are they to be considered conclusive.

The only returns so far have been females. This is not to say that males do not return to the same colony. It is too early to say that any return is anything more than accidental. In a recent conversation with Charles R. Brown, it was noted that in a similar study being conducted in North Central Texas (where only local birds are being banded), the exact opposite results have occurred. There are at least two more years of study before any conclusions can be obtained. However, this limited information does tend to provide new angles from which to explore this fascinating creature, the Purple Martin.

If anyone in the West Alabama area has a colony they would like to include in the study, I will be happy to try to fit it into my schedule.

90 Woodridge
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BARN SWALLOWS BREEDING IN SOUTHEAST ALABAMA

Brent Ortego

Within the last 15 years, the northern breeding population of Barn Swallows has been extending its range southward in Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama (Stewart 1964, 1965, 1968; Holmes 1974; Kennedy 1974). In Alabama, Imhof (1975) illustrated that the northern breeding population of Barn Swallows nested throughout the state, except in the Piedmont, the Southeast and the lower tier of counties. (Barn Swallows nesting in lower Mobile and Baldwin Counties are from a southern breeding population.) This range expansion of the northern population has been associated with man's building activities (bridges, culverts, etc.) in areas of suitable habitat.

I located no previously published accounts of this species nesting in southeast Alabama and southwest Georgia. During May and June, 1977, I examined all bridges located over the Walter F. George Reservoir south of Ft. Benning and many bridges and culverts in Lee, Russell and Barbour Counties, Alabama, for active Barn Swallow nests. Active nests were located: Alabama - five 2.1 miles north and ten 0.3 miles south of the Lee County Hwy. 81 intersection with Ala. Hwy. 169; 16 at the Ala. Hwy. 165 crossing of Hatchechubbee Creek, Russell County; 26 and 18 at the Barbour County Hwy. 97 crossing of the south- and mid-forks of Cowikee Creek, respectively; 13 at the U.S. Hwy. 431 crossing of Cheneyhatchee Creek, Barbour County; 8 at the Ala. Hwy. 95 crossing of White Oak Creek, Barbour and Henry Counties; 2 at the Old River Road crossing of Harbridge Creek, Henry County; Georgia - 8 at the Florence Landing Marina, Stewart County; 27 at the Ga. Hwy. 39 crossing of Pataula Creek, Clay County. In Lee County, two colonies were located in culverts adjacent to lowland pastures. Near large open areas, concrete bridges spanning creeks were almost solely used for nesting at the Walter F. George Reservoir. Although several steel and wooden bridges were examined at similar sites in Stewart and Quitman Counties, no nests were found. During a nest-site selection study in east-central Mississippi, Jackson and Burchfield (1975) also found that Barn Swallows selected concrete over wooden and steel bridges.

After reviewing the literature and actively searching for colonies, I have come to the conclusion that the limiting factor controlling further expansion of the breeding range of the northern Barn Swallow in lower Alabama is the development of suitable nesting sites in the form of concrete bridges over water adjacent to large open areas and culverts next to lakes or large pastures.

I thank Gail Bader for helping me gather data.

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GREAT WHITE HERON SIGHTED AT MARION, ALABAMA

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A Great White Heron, Ardea herodias occidentalis, white phase of the Great Blue Heron, Ardea herodias, was observed at Lakeland Farms, Marion, Alabama, on September 8, 1977. The bird was viewed for 30 minutes with a 20-power balscope at about 100 yards distance. The large yellowish-colored bill and pale yellowish legs were noted. In the same scope view was a Great Blue Heron and on the same lake was a Great Egret for comparison. The size of this heron, which stood in water near the Great Blue Heron, made a significant comparison of the larger size of the Great White Heron. Hurricane Babe passed through the Florida Keys striking the west coast of Louisiana on the night of September 4, 1977. The storm then moved inland in a northeasterly course passing through the Marion area near midnight of September 6. It is possible that this heron was picked up by Hurricane Babe and then carried by the resulting storm to this "alien land." Other observers in the party were Susan Holt, Helen Kittinger and Ann Miller.

TELEVISION TOWER CASUALTIES AT HUNTSVILLE

FALL, 1976

C. Dwight Cooley

In the fall of 1976, regular collections were made and daily records kept of bird casualties at WHNT television tower in Huntsville, Alabama. The tower is located east of Huntsville, Madison County, Alabama, atop Monte Sano Mountain and is of the needle-type construction. WHNT tower, supported by 12 cables, is 1000 ft. tall and reaches an altitude of approximately 2600 ft. above sea level.

Collections were begun on September 30 and terminated October 31. During this period of 32 consecutive days of collection, 42 individuals of 18 species were recorded. Table 1 depicts the species list, total number of birds and the collection dates. Since one cannot determine whether a bird fell before or after midnight, the morning collection dates are used.