

**TREE SWALLOWS (*TACHYGINETA BICOLOR*)
FOUND NESTING AT WEISS LAKE**

Bill Summerour

On 10 June of this year, Ken Wills, a biology student at Jacksonville State University, called to say that he had seen a swallow "with a green back" sitting next to a bird box that was attached to a channel marker post in Weiss Lake in Cherokee County. He said he didn't get a real good look, but was almost certain the bird was a Tree Swallow (*Tachycineta bicolor*).

On 12 June Ken and I went back to Weiss Lake to check the box and to verify the sighting. As we approached the channel marker, we could see a Tree Swallow sitting in the hole of the box which was nailed to the post about two m (six ft) above the water. The box was a dilapidated affair, cracked and weathered and dangling from the post by one nail. The swallow flushed upon our approach and a quick check revealed a partially completed nest of grasses and feathers, but no eggs or young.

Ken checked the box again on 8 July and the nest contained "three or four" nestlings in the pinfeather stage, probably about ten days old. He was not able to get back again until 26 Aug, at which time he was disappointed to find three dead, mummified nestlings. He brought them back for me to see, and it is puzzling as to why the birds failed to leave the nest. They were fully feathered and appeared old enough to have been capable of flying.

Ken's discovery is only the second nesting record for the Tree Swallow in Alabama. The first was reported by Franklin (1987), who described a nest containing young that he and his wife, Rose Marie, and Ann Miller of Birmingham found on 18 July 1987 on the Swan Creek Management Area in north Alabama. These records now extend the southern limits of the breeding range of the Tree Swallow in the east from North Carolina to North Alabama, west-central Mississippi and northwestern Louisiana.

Reid (1975) has documented the invasion of Barn Swallows (*Hirundo rustica*) into Alabama, which took place in the 60's and 70's, and has recently updated (1988) the current range expansion of Cliff Swallows (*Petrochelidon pyrrhonota*) into the state. Now it appears Tree Swallows may be the next to move in. This spring when the swallows return to Weiss Lake, they will find a lot more boxes to provide them with places to nest.

Literature Cited

Franklin, Paul 1987. Tree Swallows (*Tachycineta bicolor*) found nesting in North Alabama near Decatur. *Alabama Birdlife* 34: 1-2.

Reid, Robert R. 1975. Range expansion and habits of the Barn Swallow in Alabama. *Alabama Birdlife* 23: 1-2.

Reid, Robert R. 1988. Cliff Swallows expand range in Alabama. *Alabama Birdlife* 35: 15-16.

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**SOUTHWESTERN SUBSPECIES OF CLIFF SWALLOW
(*PETROCHELIDON PYRRHONOTA*) NESTING IN
MOBILE COLONY**

Bill Summerour

This past spring I had an opportunity to observe ^{several dozen} some of the Mobile colony Cliff Swallows (*Petrochelidon pyrrhonota*) as they concentrated around a mudhole near Hwy. 98 just east of the tunnel and a short distance from their colony site under I-10. Since the birds made frequent trips to the mudhole, and remained relatively still for a few seconds as they gathered mud pellets for their nests, it was possible to set up a Questar spotting scope and study them in some detail.

I was surprised to find that most of the birds had dark chestnut rather than white foreheads. These chestnut-fronted birds belong to one of the southwestern subspecies, probably *P.p. minima* or *P.p. tachina*. Both races have chestnut or cinnamon foreheads with *minima* having the darkest, a deep chestnut to cinnamon-rufous, rather than pale cinnamon or fawn colored as in *trachina* (Oberholser, 1974). Based on field observations and an interpretation of the forehead color only, most of the birds appeared to be *minima*, which breeds in southeastern Arizona, eastern Sonora and Western Chihuahua (AOU 1957). But *tachina* breeds in southern Texas (AOU 1957) and cannot be ruled out. Obviously, more detailed observations are needed. No Cave Swallows (*Petrochelidon fulva*) were found. All of the birds with chestnut foreheads also had dark throats; none of them had pale or buffy throats.

The predominance of chestnut-fronted birds is convincing evidence