

CLIFF SWALLOWS NESTING AT ROSS BARNETT RESERVOIR, MISSISSIPPI

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On 9 May 1992, Steve and Carole Peterson and I observed Cliff Swallows (*Hirundo pyrrhonota*) at Ross Barnett Reservoir, Rankin Co., Mississippi, near a boat ramp located southeast of the Pelahatchie Bay bridge. The Cliff Swallows were gathering mud and flying to the bridge. From a boat, on 10 May, I observed Cliff Swallow nests under the bridge. On 10 May I also observed Cliff Swallows gathering mud in a parking lot southeast of the Barnett Reservoir spillway and flying to the underside of the spillway bridge on the south side of the dam. On 9 May I also saw Cliff swallows at the Mississippi highway 43 bridge over the Pearl River at the upper end of Ross Barnett Reservoir, Madison County. From a boat I found Cliff Swallow nests there on 6 July. These are the first recorded nests of Cliff Swallows in Rankin and Madison counties.

On 19 June 1992, R.L. Jones and I counted 34 Cliff Swallow nests under the Pelahatchie bridge, but saw no Cliff Swallows. On 12 July I saw two Cliff Swallows on the east side of the bridge. Nests at this site were grouped in three locations under this bridge: 17 on the east side, 10 on the west, and 7 under the center span. All nests were attached to the concrete structure of the bridge, while Barn Swallows (*Hirundo rustica*), which were nesting in abundance, had constructed their nests on the steel I-beams located under the center of the bridge. Photographs of the Cliff Swallow nests have been deposited in the Mississippi Ornithological Society files at the Mississippi Museum of Natural Science.

On 16 July, Al Gibson and I visited the highway 43 bridge by boat and counted 26 Cliff Swallow nests and several Barn Swallow nests under the bridge. Nests of both species were attached to the concrete structure of the bridge. Ten of the Cliff Swallow nests were on the northeast side of the bridge, 16 on the southwest side. Although widely distributed, clusters of two and three Cliff Swallow nests were noted at six sites. We saw nesting activity at two

nests, including two young visible at the entrance of one nest and an adult seen to enter another nest. Several other Cliff Swallows were flying under and around the bridge.

Spence and Toups (1986) summarized the breeding range extension of Cliff Swallows into ten Mississippi counties. Rankin and Madison counties are the easternmost counties in central Mississippi where nesting has been recorded.

The colonies at the Pelahatchie Bay bridge and the Highway 43 bridge support Weber's contention that Cliff Swallows seem to be attracted to Barn Swallow colonies and prefer to nest on long concrete bridges near large bodies of water.

Literature Cited

- Spence, J.L., and J.A. Toups. 1986. First nesting of the Cliff Swallow on the Mississippi coast. *Mississippi Kite* 16:20-21.
- Weber, W.C. 1979. Recent notes on the Cliff Swallow in Mississippi. *Mississippi Kite* 9:7-9.