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Fish and Wildlife Service

Washington, D. C.

CHIMNEY SWIFT'S WINTER HOME DISCOVERED

BY FREDERICK C. LINCOLN

AMONG the few unsolved distribution mysteries regarding North American birds, probably none has excited such widespread interest as the winter range of the Chimney Swift (*Chaetura pelagica*). Although abundant throughout most of its breeding range, its disappearance during the winter season has been so nearly complete that even serious-minded Elliott Coues was inclined to give some credence to the hibernation belief of the Middle Ages ('Birds of the Colorado Valley': 377, 1878). The fall concentrations of these birds, that are noted each year in the southeastern part of the country, are truly

enormous, and flocks numbering many thousands have been frequently observed going to roost in a single chimney. The exodus from this region usually is sudden and, as is well known, records from any points south of the United States are conspicuous by their scarcity.

The phraseology used in the 1931 Check-List, in describing the range of this species south of the United States, is somewhat misleading, as "common spring transient in Haiti and reported from Mexico and Central America" implies a numerical status in the areas cited that does not agree with the facts as reported. Wetmore and Swales ('Birds of Haiti and the Dominican Republic': 260-261, 1931) summarize the few actual records for the island of Hispaniola, which include a specimen taken by W. L. Abbott on Tortue Island, May 18, 1917. Among these data, the largest number of birds reported is in an observation by Wetmore who, in the early morning of April 15, 1927, "noted a flock of forty or fifty circling over his camp on La Selle at an altitude of 1,900 meters . . ." During the next two weeks he observed others at Hinche, Haiti, and near Comendador, D. R. The species also has been observed by one or two other travelers in Haiti (*op. cit.*).

Trace the bird south on the mainland and it is found that very few records are available. The files on geographic distribution of the Fish and Wildlife Service contain the following records for this region:

MEXICO

Rancho Rinconada, southwestern Tamaulipas; a male, collected or April 15, and a female on April 27, 1941, were both taken from flocks of "small dark swifts" (Sutton and Pettingill, *Auk*, 59: 17, 1942).

Nuevo Leon; exact locality unknown but a specimen recorded in the catalogue of the Thayer Collection was listed as taken on April 24, 1911.

Tamazunchale and Matlapa, San Luis Potosi; a male and a female taken on April 18 and 23 (Sutton and Burleigh, *Wilson Bull.*, 52: 225, 1940).

Pueblo Viejo, Vera Cruz; one was taken on April 5, 1902, by Breninger and identified by E. W. Nelson. A supplementary note by the collector is to the effect that swifts were "crossing the lagoon all day, going north."

Presidio, Vera Cruz; a specimen was taken on May 6, 1925 (Bangs and Peters, *Bull. Mus. Comp. Zoöl.*, 67: 474, 1927).

Cozumel Island; Quintana Roo; Griscom (*Am. Mus. Novitates*, no. 236: 9, 1926) records several swifts that he believed were this species during the periods February 5-7 and 14-27, 1926, adding the

statement that it had been collected at this point. This latter reference is probably to specimens in the British Museum (Hartert, *Cat. Birds Brit. Mus.*, 16: 480, 1892).

Rio Givicia, Oaxaca; a female was collected on March 21, 1906, by J. H. Batty (Chapman, *Auk*, 48: 120, 1931).

GUATEMALA

The only record for Guatemala is a rather dubious one based upon a skin found in the collection of Lord Tweeddale without any further data and listed by Salvin and Godman ('*Biologica Centrali-Americana*,' 2: 374, 1893). It is not recognized by Griscom ('*Distribution of Bird-Life in Guatemala*,' 1932).

BRITISH HONDURAS

According to a letter from P. A. Taverner under date of April 14, 1913, a specimen was "said to have been taken" in March, 1905. It was identified as this species by Morton E. Peck but was subsequently destroyed by accident. This record is included for what it may be worth.

NICARAGUA

Two females were taken at Eden on April 1, 1922 (Huber, *Proc. Acad. Nat. Sci. Phila.*, 84: 218, 1932).

COSTA RICA

On October 24, 1933, at Vitla Quesada in the District of San Carlos at an altitude of 2100 feet, a flock of more than 50 was seen and specimens were obtained (Smith, *Oologist*, 51: 100, 1934).

PANAMA

As a result of more extensive ornithological work in Panama, a larger series of records is available for this country than any other in Central America. All, however, are of comparatively recent date.

The first specimen was obtained on October 23, 1926, on the Changuinola River in the Almirante Bay region and recorded by Peters (*Bull. Mus. Comp. Zool.*, 71: 314, 1931).

A year later, on October 28, two others were taken at Cocoplum, Boca del Toro and recorded by Chapman (*Auk*, 48: 119-121, 1931).

To these fall records, Rogers (*Auk*, 54: 392, 1937, and 56: 82, 1939) adds data for four collected in the spring by H. Wedel and preserved in the collections of the Princeton Museum of Zoology. The first two (questionably sexed as a pair) were taken on April 24 and 25, 1934, at Port Obaldia on the Caribbean coast of extreme eastern

Panama, while the other two (both males) were taken on April 12 and May 14, 1937, respectively, on the Cricamola, about sixteen miles south of its mouth.

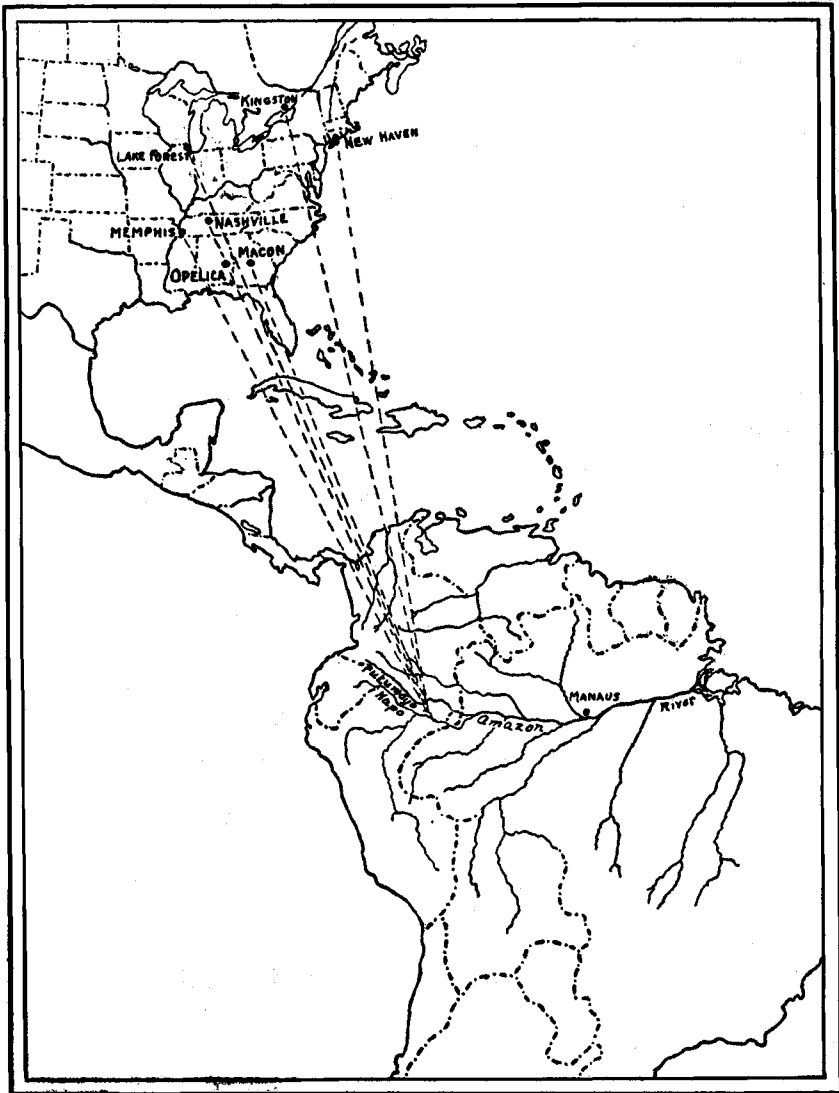
Added to this specimen evidence is the observation of Chapman (Auk, 54: 392, 1937) who "saw a loose flock of about forty swifts resembling *Chaetura pelagica*" on April 18, 1937, "about two and a half hours out of Cristobal and ten miles north of the Panama mainland near Porto Bello. Captain Swinson of the S. S. 'Ancon,' who was with him at the time, subsequently told him that about half an hour later he saw another flock of about one hundred of "those cutting birds."

At Panama the trail has ended, the southernmost records being the 1934 Rogers specimens (*loc. cit.*) which were obtained near the Colombian boundary.

The probable location of the winter range very naturally has been the subject of much conjecture, the general concensus being that it was somewhere in the vast valley of the Amazon River. The first confirmation of this hypothesis is the recent observation by E. Thomas Gilliard (Auk, 61: 134-144, 1944). He reports that at dusk on March 28, 29, and 30, 1943, he observed "a cloud of thousands of swifts, resembling in every detail our North American Chimney Swift (*Chaetura pelagica*) was seen hanging over a large abandoned, red chimney in the town of Manaus, situated on the Rio Negro about a thousand miles up the Amazon valley." While no specimens were obtained, the whole incident is so typical of Chimney Swifts that there seems little reason to doubt the identification, particularly in view of the following banding data now at hand:

During the past ten years the large-scale banding of Chimney Swifts has been a popular activity at several stations. From southern Canada to points adjacent to the Gulf Coast, these birds have been taken in large numbers during both spring and fall migrations. The total number that have been banded is nearly 375,000 and hundreds of birds banded at some stations have been retaken at others. In fact, data now available will make possible a detailed study of the migration of the swift in North America.

A constant hope has been that the band from one of these birds would be reported from its winter range, but to receive 13 in a single communication was beyond wildest expectations. The report comes from the American Embassy at Lima, Peru, which through the State Department, returned the 13 bands recovered "from some swallows killed by Indians on the River Yanayaco in the region between the



**Points of Banding and of Recovery in Peru
of Thirteen Chimney Swifts**

Putumayo and the Napo Rivers." Under date of May 23, 1944, the report states that the birds were taken "some six months ago" which would mean the last of November or the first part of December, 1943. The banding data for this series are as follows:

<i>Band No.</i>	<i>Locality of Banding</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Bander</i>
38-87399	Ont., Kingston	5/19/40	R. W. Smith
38-169645	Ga., Macon	9/17/39	R. J. Fleetwood
37-108787	Ala., Opelika	10/ 3/36	H. S. Peters
139-36718	Conn., New Haven	5/24/40	H. L. Hutchins
239-12620	Ill., Lake Forest	8/ 8/39	P. E. Downing
39-71442	Tenn., Nashville	8/31/38	J. B. Calhoun
39-83055	Tenn., Nashville	9/ 5/38	J. B. Calhoun
38-21419	Tenn., Memphis	10/ 4/37	B. B. Coffey, Jr.
39-95532	Tenn., Memphis	9/21/38	B. B. Coffey, Jr.
39-96804	Tenn., Memphis	9/21/38	B. B. Coffey, Jr.
40-82881	Tenn., Memphis	10/13/40	B. B. Coffey, Jr.
40-57724	Tenn., Memphis	10/ 8/39	B. B. Coffey, Jr.
140-44267	Tenn., Nashville	10/13/40	Mrs. F. C. Laskey

According to the latest map available to me (Nat. Geog. Soc., Oct., 1942), the Putumayo River, except at its lowest end, forms the boundary between Peru and Colombia. It is a tributary of the Solimoes, the largest southern branch of the Amazon. The Napo follows a roughly parallel course through northern Peru about 100 miles to the southwest and the Yanayaco is apparently one of two small unnamed (on my maps) streams, both tributary to the Napo and entirely in Peru. This region is roughly one thousand miles air-line west of Manaus, Brazil, the site of the observations by Mr. Gilliard (See map).¹

Fish and Wildlife Service
Washington, D. C.

A SURVEY OF THE PRAIRIE FALCON IN COLORADO

BY HAROLD WEBSTER, JR.

Plate 27

THE Prairie Falcon (*Falco mexicanus*) ranges throughout Colorado, showing a marked preference for the lower foothills wherein to nest and raise its young. Some rather warm-blooded individuals have been recorded in this state nesting as high as 10,000 feet, but I am sure

¹ The Yanayacu, as it is shown on Peruvian maps, is an affluent of the Napo from the north, emptying into the larger river about 75 miles from its mouth and some 40 miles due north from Iquitos. It is a little west of the point shown on Mr. Lincoln's map.—Ed.