

Death of a Rough-winged Swallow, *Stelgidopteryx ruficollis*.—While watching Rough-winged Swallows course in their rather steady, even flight over South Egremont Pond, Berkshire County, Massachusetts, on June 8, 1949, we witnessed a peculiar event. In front of us and near the shore, three Rough-wings met in a swirling flight, flying for a moment in a tight circle, and one bird was seen to collide with a second. I heard a definite "click," as though a bill had struck a bony structure and one of the birds fell four or five feet to the water. It made no attempt to rise; the wings remained motionless, the eyelids moved once or twice, and then the bill and head disappeared under water. Retrieved by one of the party within ten minutes, the bird was dead and without any sign of external injury. It proved to be an adult female.—DOROTHY E. SNYDER, *Peabody Museum, Salem, Mass.*

A Note about the Wren-babbler, *Spelaeornis*.—The opportunity of seeing a number of specimens of this shy little Wren-babbler prompts me to discuss herewith the species of the genus. Delacour (Oiseaux, 16: 24, 1947) in his review of the Time-line genera lists several species under this genus but omits others. It seems necessary to make a definitive arrangement. I am most grateful to the authorities of the museums in London, Paris, and New York for the opportunity of examining material in their care, and to Mr. Kinnear for advising me of conclusions in the unpublished manuscripts of Messrs. Ticehurst and Whistler.

SPELAEORNIS

The genus can be defined as one of the small wren-like babblers with strong bill and legs, tail of ten feathers ranging in length from short to equal in length to the wing, and with little sexual dimorphism. Two close relatives are *Pnoepyga* and *Sphenocichla*. The former has a very short tail of six feathers and rather pronounced sexual dimorphism, plus plumage color phases. The latter is a monotypic genus characterized by distinctive size and a marked out-size, wedge-shaped bill.

SPECIES AND HABITS

Extraordinarily little is known about the habits or the ranges of these elusive birds. What notes there are on habits may be found in Stuart Baker ('Fauna Brit. India: Birds,' 449-457, 1922), Stanford (Ibis, 83: 215-217, 1941) and Ludlow (Ibis, 79: 252-253, 1937, and 86: 178, 1944). Several forms are still known only from single specimens obtained by traps, nets or native hunters. Examination of existing specimens shows that some ranges of obviously closely related forms are overlapping so that care must be exercised in arranging any list of species and subspecies. My list follows:

1. *Spelaeornis formosus* (Walden). Range: Darjeeling, Sikkim, Daffa Hills, Fukien, up to 9,000 feet.
2. *Spelaeornis haplonotus* (Stuart Baker). Range: Known from a single specimen and a nest with three eggs taken at Hungrum, N. Cachar Hills, Assam, at 6,400 feet.
3. *Spelaeornis troglodytoides sherriffi* Kinnear. Range: Eastern Bhutan at 12,000 feet and upwards. A good race.
4. *Spelaeornis troglodytoides souliei* Oustalet. Range: Southeast Tibet, extreme north Burma and Northwest Yunnan, west of the Mekong River.
5. *Spelaeornis troglodytoides rocki* Riley. Range: Yungning, Northwest Yunnan east of the Mekong River.
6. *Spelaeornis troglodytoides troglodytoides* (Verreaux). Range: Western and southern Szechuan. I have been able to examine one of the two specimens in Paris, collected by M. Dejean at Wa-tao-ko, Tatsienlu. The wing measures 48 mm. It is obviously conspecific with the forms previously listed under *souliei*.

7. *Spelaeornis troglodytoides halsueti* (David). Range: Tsin-ling Mountains, southern Kansu and Shensi. Known only from the type.

8. *Spelaeornis caudatus* (Blyth). Range: Darjeeling, Sikkim and East Bhutan, east of the Manas River from 6,000–10,000 feet.

9. *Spelaeornis badeigularis* Ripley. Range: Known from a single specimen taken in the Mishmi Hills, Northeast Assam at 6,000 feet. The ranges of this form and *caudatus* in northern Assam need to be worked out. In appearance, it is close to the latter species, but see below.

10. *Spelaeornis longicaudatus* (Horsfield and Moore). Range: From the Khasia Hills east to Kedimai, Manipur, Assam. Mr. Kinnear pointed out to me that Ticehurst and Whistler had found a specimen of this species from Manipur in the collection of the British Museum. I have examined this specimen and find it to differ from *chocolatinus* of the same locality. The latter is a distinct form and has the terminal barring below found in the other races with which it is included.

11. *Spelaeornis chocolatinus chocolatinus* (Godwin-Austen). Range: Known from two specimens collected at Kedimai, Manipur State, Assam at 4,000 feet. Wing: (type) 48 mm., 51; tail: (type) 40, 40, culmen: (type) 11.5, 11.5. These specimens have black terminal edging on the feathers of the chest and upper abdomen which is lacking in *longicaudatus*.

12. *Spelaeornis chocolatinus oatesi* (Rippon). Range: Mt. Victoria, Chin Hills, Burma, above 5,000 feet.

13. *Spelaeornis chocolatinus reptatus* (Bingham). Range: Burma from the Myitkina District south through Bhamo and the southern Shan States east to western Yunnan from the Shweli-Salween Divide to the Mekong. (Synonyms are *S. c. sinlumensis* and *S. c. kauriensis*, Harington, Ann. Mag. Nat. Hist. ser. 8, 2: 246, 1908).

14. *Spelaeornis chocolatinus kinneari* Delacour and Jabouille. Range: Chapa and Laokay, northern Tonkin, Indochina.—S. DILLON RIPLEY, *Peabody Museum Natural History, Yale University, New Haven, Conn.*

Roosting Brown Creepers, *Certhia familiaris*.—On the afternoon of February 27, 1949, Mr. and Mrs. Allen Benton and I observed two Brown Creepers coming in to roost along side the chimney of the house to the south of the home of Dr. and Mrs. Frank Studer, Schenectady, New York. At 4:15 p. m., both birds suddenly appeared low on the stucco siding and quickly ascended to the upper corner of the east side where the chimney meets the overhang of the roof. One bird flew up much of the distance. At this spot the remainder of a mud dauber wasp nest projects from the chimney and forms a partition parallel to the house wall. The creepers snuggled tightly into the nook thus formed; their toes were anchored to the chimney and their tails and bodies were pressed tightly against it. They pushed their bills straight up, into the wood of the roof. In this position they were motionless. We observed this performance with the Studers, from within their home and with 8 by 30 binoculars at a distance of 15 to 25 feet. The Studers say the birds have been roosting in this fashion, with slight variations, for over a month.—RUDOLPH H. STONE, 505 Bedford Rd., Schenectady 8, N. Y.

House Wren, *Troglodytes a. aedon*, Utilizing Nest of Baltimore Oriole, *Icterus galbula*.—A. C. Bent, in discussing the life history of the House Wren, states that there are three records of this species utilizing nests of the Baltimore Oriole (U. S. Nat. Mus. Bull. 125: 119, 1948). Another such nest was found in the yard of Mr. and Mrs. Maurice Hall of Victory, Cayuga county, New York, on July 27, 1948.