

NOTES

MORE RECORDS OF BREEDING BARN SWALLOWS IN RIVERSIDE, CALIFORNIA

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On 21 August 1990 Robert McKernan discovered a pair of Barn Swallows (*Hirundo rustica*) nesting near the city of Riverside. The observation was reported as the first breeding record in Riverside County in "recent history" (*American Birds* 44:1188). Grinnell and Miller (1944) and Garrett and Dunn (1981) indicated that the breeding range of the Barn Swallow in southern California is restricted to coastal regions from Los Angeles County north and scattered localities in Orange, San Diego, and Imperial counties. No mention was made of breeding in Riverside and San Bernardino counties.

My observations from 1990 to 1994 indicate that the Barn Swallow is a fairly common spring and summer resident in and around the city of Riverside. Most observations were of single pairs frequenting a small locale throughout the entire breeding season, so it is unlikely that these sightings pertain to migrants. During 1990, I found four pairs scattered throughout the city. All frequented open habitats (coastal sage scrub, vacant lot, and football field) within or on the edge of the city limits, and often near ponds or canals. Until 1994 I found no juveniles or nests, though I conducted no special search. At two localities (University of California and John W. North High School), a pair has returned every year since the breeding season of 1990. From 1990 to 1994, I made at least fifteen other sightings of individual and paired Barn Swallows.

On 9 June 1994, I discovered two pairs of Barn Swallows at the Riverside National Cemetery. A subsequent search for nests revealed two cup nests, both inside drainage culverts that could be reached only by crawling through a narrow concrete pipe. The pairs were bringing food to their nests, and within weeks young were feeding with parents over the cemetery's lakes. Later the same month, I found two other nesting pairs attending young in other parts of the city (along the Gage Canal and Magnolia Avenue). The nests were located inside a concrete-lined drainage culvert and under the overpass of a concrete-lined canal. Thus all four breeding pairs were near water.

My observations indicate that Barn Swallows are regular spring and summer visitors in Riverside, breeding more commonly than previously recorded. The only other nesting record I know of is of a pair returning from 1979 to at least 1982 in a drainage culvert near La Sierra (M. A. Patten pers. comm.). The dearth of observations in the historical literature suggests that recent sightings of Barn Swallows in Riverside represent a new influx of breeding pairs. It is tempting to speculate that such an influx may be a response to an increase in favorable nesting habitat, that is, man-made water sources and nest substrates. However, the site of one nest, the Gage Canal, has been around since the turn of this century. Keeping tabs on the breeding status and habitat preferences of Barn Swallows in Riverside County in upcoming years can shed light on this matter.

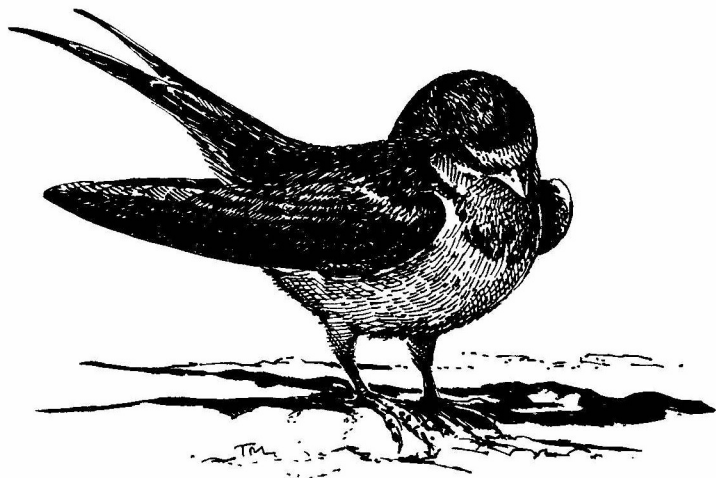
I greatly appreciate the gentle and sagacious comments of Michael Patten and Philip Unitt.

NOTES

LITERATURE CITED

- Garrett, K., and Dunn, J. 1981. The Birds of Southern California: Status and Distribution. Los Angeles Audubon Soc., Los Angeles.
- Grinnell, J., and Miller, A. H. 1944. The distribution of the birds of California. Pac. Coast Avifauna 27.

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Barn Swallow

Sketch by Tim Manolis