

## Literature Cited

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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 <sup>several dozen</sup> 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

## ALABAMA BIRDLIFE

that the Mobile colony was established by western birds expanding their range eastward along the coast. Colonies in the Tennessee Valley and other areas in the northern part of the state, however, are more likely to be composed of the northern white-fronted race, *P.p. pyrrhonota*, expanding their range southward. The invasion of Cliff Swallows into Alabama, therefore, appears to be progressing from west to east along the coast and from north to south inland.

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### HELPING BRING BACK THE BLUEBIRD (*SIALIA SIALIS*) – 1988 BLUEBIRD TRAIL REPORT

John Findlay, III

In spite of a severe drought, natural predation, and increasing encroachment by man, the Eastern Bluebirds (*Sialia sialis*) using my boxes had their best year yet in 1988. The trail, maintained for the past 11 years in Shelby and Jefferson Counties, with most nest boxes located in Oak Mountain State Park, produced 463 fledgings, bringing the all time 11 year total of successfully fledged young close to 3000 birds.

Of a total of 148 boxes, 119 were occupied by bluebirds. One hundred of the 119 produced nestlings, and of these, 98 fledged young. Counting all nesting attempts, usually two, sometimes three per season, there were 225 nests containing a total of 898 eggs (average of four per nest) from which 483 nestlings hatched (54%). Of these, 463 fledged successfully.

A total of ten boxes was used by Carolina Chickadees, Tufted Titmice, and White-breasted and Brown-headed Nuthatches. House Sparrows occupied five boxes and flying squirrels 37. Flying squirrels have no difficulty getting into the one-and-a-half inch openings. They not only