

THE DISTRIBUTION OF THE ROUGH-WINGED SWALLOW IN NEW ENGLAND

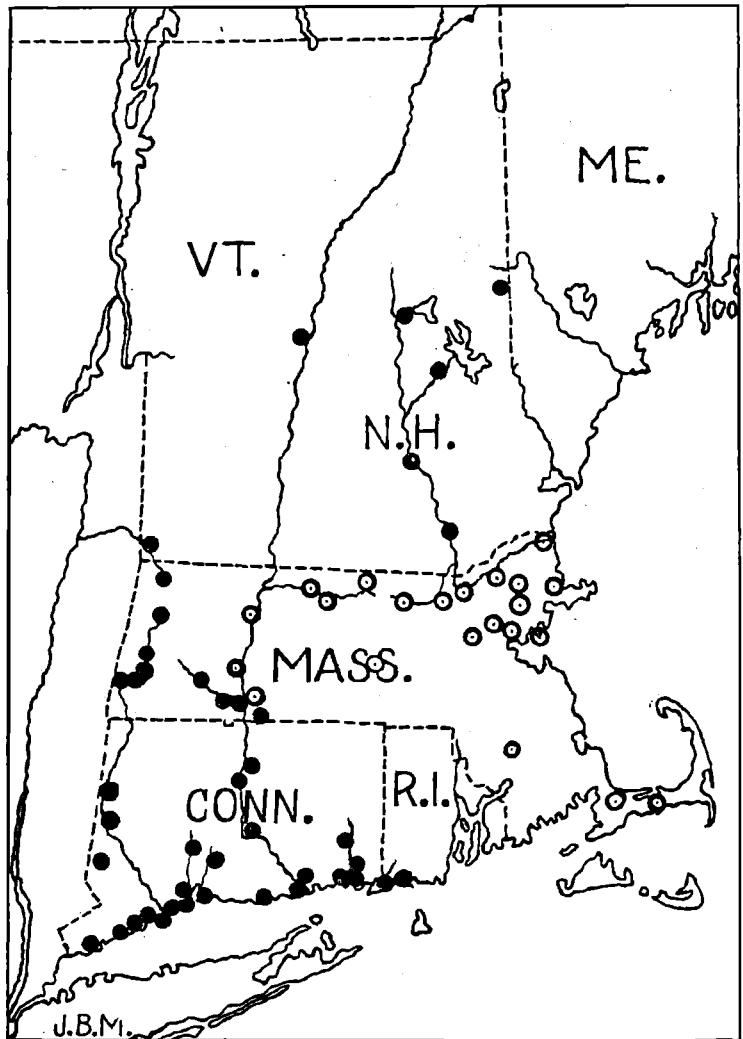
By JOHN B. MAY

It was my privilege to be asked by the late Edward Howe Forbush to contribute a brief biography of the Rough-winged Swallow (*Stelgidopteryx serripennis*) for the final volume of "The Birds of Massachusetts and Other New England States." As part of that biography a map was prepared showing our present knowledge of the distribution of this bird in our region.

Thirty years ago the bird was considered a very rare straggler to New England except in southwestern Connecticut. Outside of that area, there was but one definite breeding-record, that of a pair of birds which were found nesting at North Adams, Massachusetts, in June, 1895, by Walter Faxon. The only other Massachusetts record of the species was that of a single bird taken at Easthampton in 1851. The bird was unknown in Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, and Rhode Island, and was considered decidedly rare and local in Connecticut. Since that time, however, it has been recorded as breeding in every State in New England except Maine, and it is now regarded as quite common in Connecticut, though still locally distributed. The species has undoubtedly increased in numbers and extended its range within the last half-century, though the fact that there are many more observers in the field to-day than fifty years ago must be considered in weighing the evidence of our records.

In Connecticut the Rough-winged Swallow was first recorded as a straggler in 1874, when a single bird was taken at Suffield, but it is now considered a regular and not rare breeder in most of the towns along the coast, and it also breeds in numerous inland localities in the valleys of the Housatonic, Naugatuck, Quinnipiack, Connecticut, and Thames Rivers. In recent years it has apparently extended its range into southwestern Rhode Island, where Harry S. Hathaway found it breeding at Westerly in 1917 and in Charlestown in 1929.

The next appearance of the Rough-winged Swallow in Massachusetts, after Faxon reported his North Adams birds, was apparently in 1903, when the species was noted as breeding in Cheshire in Berkshire County. That same year it was observed several times at Groton in northwestern Middlesex County, where it probably bred, although no nest was found or young birds observed. Since that time it has been reported as undoubtedly breeding at Pittsfield, Stockbridge, West Stock-



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Breeding records, black circles

Migration records in Massachusetts, black rings



ROUGH-WINGED SWALLOW

Above, nesting-site on Asquam River, New Hampshire. Centre, adult with insects for young. Below, nest opening in Bank.

Photographs by John B. May.

bridge, and Lenox in Berkshire County, Longmeadow, West Springfield, and Westfield in Hampden County, and Huntington in Hampshire County. It was first reported from the coast in 1916, when a pair were seen at Ipswich. There are a number of later reports from Essex County and northern Middlesex, and in May, 1929, a pair were observed at Middleton, Essex County, carrying nesting-material into a burrow, but the nesting-site was abandoned before the eggs were laid.

In Vermont the first authentic record of the Rough-winged Swallow was the nesting of a pair at Norwich in 1905 and 1906, and in the latter year a pair were found breeding at Bennington. Since then the birds have been observed several different summers in the Bennington region. In 1918 a pair was noted several times during June at St. Johnsbury, but no nest was located. There is also the record of a bird taken at Rutland, and one seen at Lunenburg. This last record, if accepted, would be the farthest north that the bird has been found in New England.

The first New Hampshire record to which I have access is that of the Norwich birds, which, in 1905 and 1906, were frequently seen flying about on the New Hampshire side of the Connecticut River at Hanover. In July, 1909, F. I. Martin found Rough-wings breeding at Boscawen in the Merrimack Valley above Concord, but this record was not published, and the first printed account of the nesting of this species in the state was that of Ellen S. Webster, who reported in *Bird-Lore* for 1915 that several pairs nested at Winnisquam in 1913. In 1916 I observed a pair on the Asquam River in Ashland, and in June, 1917, I found a nest and captured and photographed one of the parent birds. Unfortunately bird-banding had not become popular at that time and the bird was released unbanded. In 1923 A. F. McGowan found the birds nesting near Manchester, and in 1925 Grace M. Snow discovered the farthest northeastern breeding-place of the species at Snowville, in the township of Eaton, close to the boundary between Maine and New Hampshire. According to Arthur H. Norton, the species has never been recorded in Maine either as a breeding bird or as a migrant.

The accompanying map, which shows the known breeding-places in New England and the migration or summer records of this bird in Massachusetts, brings out the fondness of this species for the sea-coast and for river valleys. This is especially evident in Connecticut.

The North Adams and Bennington stations are in the valley of the Hoosick River, and the birds apparently enter this

section of New England by way of the Hudson Valley. We have reports from the Connecticut Valley as far north as St. Johnsbury and perhaps Lunenburg in Vermont; the birds have followed its tributary the Millers River to Orange, Athol, and Winchendon in Massachusetts; and perhaps the visitors to the Merrimack watershed have reached that area by following a Connecticut-Millers River-Squamacook-Nashua River route.

The almost complete absence of reports of the Rough-winged Swallow from southeastern Massachusetts is significant and lends force to the hypothesis that this species follows river valleys in migration. The region south and east of the Charles River, which exhibits many traces of the Carolinian fauna and flora, has brought me but three reports of this bird, all stragglers during the migration period.

A more systematic search for nesting-places of this species might bring us much valuable data. The nesting-holes are often large enough for the young to be easily reached for banding, and the adults can be captured by slipping a small landing-net such as most anglers own, over the entrance to the nest when the young birds are being fed. The bird shows a catholic taste in selecting nesting-places, however, as it sometimes apparently excavates its own burrow, but it more often uses that of a Kingfisher or a Bank Swallow, a cranny in a ledge, or a crevice in the foundations of a bridge or factory, and it even at times uses an open tile drain in a river-bank.

Cohasset, Massachusetts.

TWO ADDITIONAL FOOT DISEASES ON BIRDS

By T. E. MUSSELMAN, A.M.

A FOOT MANGE ON CATBIRD No. 441180

On July 29, 1928, I captured a transient Catbird (*Dumetella carolinensis*) which had not formerly included my yard in its normal feeding-area. Seldom have I seen a bird so severely afflicted. I was forced to use a band a size and a half larger than is normally required for a Catbird because of huge scabs. Both legs were badly diseased up to the tarsal joint. Heavy cellular proliferation resulting in grayish crusts and knots nearly doubled the size of the bird's legs. (See accompanying plates.) So burdensome were the incrustations that the bird