Nets spread across a large field were standard but set with the bottom trammel at the same height as the grass.

SFBBO's operation consisted of three tables set up for banding and any volunteer could use any table. The birds were handled quickly as additional tables, or 'kits' as they called them, were brought into service when necessary. When someone returned from the field with a large number of birds everyone helped to process and release them.

They had many birds during my visit and I was overjoyed to have the opportunity to see their version of a Fox Sparrow, the Audubon's Warbler (that I was lucky enough to call a Yellow-rumped so I did not accidentally identify it as a Myrtle) and the Chestnut-backed Chickadee, among others.

One thing suddenly struck me as I was recording data for Vicki after a very successful net run. I said "Wait a minute! You didn't skull that bird that quickly and its head isn't wet." I guess she did not understand my confusion at first but she eventually showed me how they skulled the birds. Vicki tried to train me in the method but I did not have enough time to get it down. I am hoping one of the station members will submit an article to *NABB* explaining the process because, as far as I could tell, it was actually easier on the bird and the bander than the method in which I had been trained. I checked the NABC manual but it was not described there.

Both visits were enjoyable and I learned a lot. So much of it was details and other methods of handling data which I can not explain readily. I now know that it is beneficial to visit other stations when I have the opportunity and recommend other banders do the same.

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## First Winter Band Recovery of Cave Swallow from Mexico

For many years the Cave Swallow (*Petrochelidon fulva)* was one of the few species breeding north of Mexico for which the winter range was unknown (American Ornithologists' Union 1983). By the early 1990s, a few individuals started wintering in the United States, primarily in Texas and in northern Mexico (American Ornithologists' Union 1998). But a few years before that, a long-term banding project at Carlsbad Caverns National Park, NM, gave an early clue to the historic wintering range of the species.

The Cave Swallow banding project started in 1980 at Carlsbad Caverns National Park. There were several goals of this project, including developing a better understanding of the population dynamics of a species with a limited United States distribution. A second goal was to band enough birds to get a recovery on what was then an unknown wintering range. Since 1980, more than 17,500 Cave Swallows have been banded in southern New Mexico and west Texas, with almost 17,000 just at the entrance of a single cave, Carlsbad Cavern.

On 8 Jul 1988, volunteers met at the entrance to Carlsbad Cavern on what was the 188th banding trip to that site. Over a course of four hours, a total of 112 birds were handled (59 retraps and 53 new birds), one of which was banded with the number 2011-45585. This individual was an adult with a brood patch and was surely nesting at Carlsbad Cavern, where hundreds nest each year. All measurements taken (left wing, right wing, tail and weight) were within the normal range for this species at that time of the year.

Frequently individuals are captured several times over a few years, and those initially banded during the period 15 May-31 Jul are thought to be nesting at the banding site. While there are other caves in the Guadalupe Mountains where the species nests, at that time none were very close. Since banding operations take place in the late evening when birds spend more time close to the nesting site, any bird caqptured at that time was thought to be part of a nesting pair. Like many individuals, this bird was never recaptured at Carlsbad Cavern or at any of the other cave sites which we monitored irregularly. This individual may have continued to nest annually at Carlsbad Cavern but remained undetected for the years between the banding and recovery date. It was eventually recovered, however.

This ended up being the first recovery from Mexico and, as a result, the first recovery that gave us

some indication as to where the bulk of the population might winter. In the first week of January, 1992, H. L. Walther picked up a dead Cave Swallow on his front porch in San Patricio, Jalisco State, Mexico. Fortunately Walther, a duck hunter from Minnesota, knew about bird bands and also knew what to do when a band is found. Walther spent part of each winter in that part of Mexico. The bird he found was the individual banded at Carlsbad Cavern 42 mo earlier. The recovery location was about two blocks from the Pacific Ocean in a coastal town about 50 km north of Manzanillo, Colima State. The actual recovery site in the state of Jalisco is believed to be the first record for that state and for the entire west coast of Mexico. Since 1980, this is the only Cave Swallow band recovered away from the general banding area of this project.

Since the band recovery, Komar (2001) has reported them wintering at several sites in coastal El Salvador from 1992 on. Based on Komar's work and on the date and location of our band recovery, it seem seems likely that the wintering range of the *pelodoma* subspecies likely extends from the state of Jalisco area in Mexico south at least to El Salvador and probably to adjacent Honduras and even Nicaragua. Howell and Webb (1995) did not report this species from coastal Mexico.

During the nesting season in the United States, Cave Swallows are associated with caves, sinkholes, and bridges (West 1995); but it seems that in winter, Cave Swallows adopt an entirely different habitat choice. Komar (1997) first reported the species communally roosting in vegetation in El Salvador in 1992, and from 1995 through 2005 several hundred roosted similarly in sorghum (*Sorghum vulgare)* on the south edge of Carlsbad, Eddy County, NM, in August and early September.

Interestingly, this recovery mirrors a banding project from many years earlier, also at Carlsbad Caverns National Park. In the early 1950s, Brazilian Free-tailed Bats were banded in hope of discovering the winter range of that species. One bat banded in September 1952 was recovered in November of that same year at Cuevas de las Garrochas, Jalisco State (Villa-R 1955). The bat and swallow recovery sites are about 120 km apart, with the Cave Swallow recovery site–the more southern of the two–being 1500 km due south of the banding location.


## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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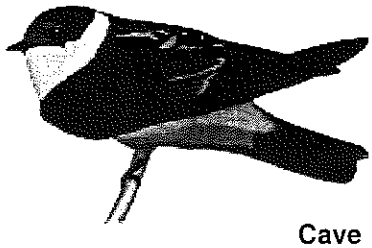

**Cave Swallow**
**by George West**