SPECIMEN OF CUBAN CAVE SWALLOW (*PETROCHELIDON FULVA FULVA*) FOUND ON BON SECOUR NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

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At 9 a.m. on 29 April 1987, Bon Secour National Wildlife Refuge Manager Jerome Carroll found the carcass of a Cuban Cave Swallow (*Petrochelidon fulva fulva*) near the refuge headquarters air conditioning unit. The headquarters is located 6.2 miles west on Ft. Morgan Rd., in Gulf Shores, AL. The Cave Swallow looks similar to the Cliff Swallow except for the deep chestnut forehead (the Cliff Swallow has a whitish forehead) and the evenly buff-colored throat (the Cliff Swallow has a dark russet throat sharply separated from a light breast). Realizing the uniqueness of his find, Mr. Carroll packed the swallow in dry ice and sent it to The Smithsonian in Washington, D.C., for species confirmation.

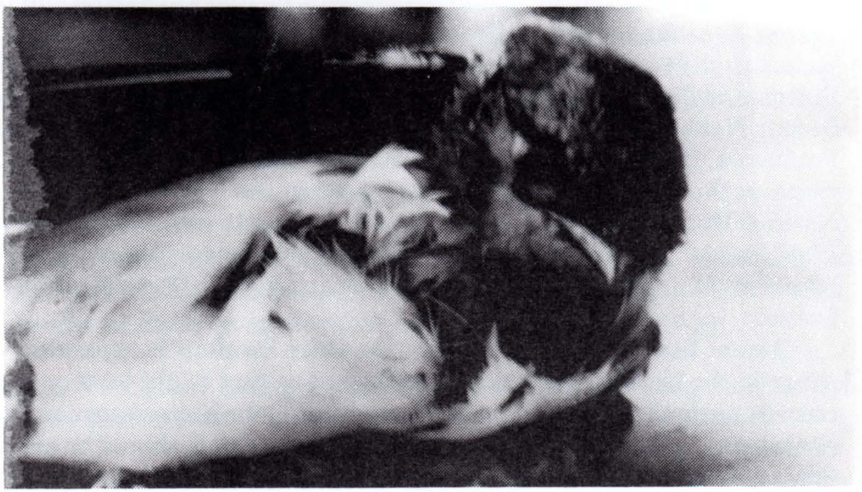

Figure 1. This specimen found near the headquarters building on Bon Secour NWF was identified as *Petrochelidon fulva fulva* by James Dean of the Smithsonian Institution. The specimen confirms the Cave Swallow as a new species for Alabama.

The Smithsonian's avian expert, James Dean, wrote back confirming the specimen as *Petrochelidon fulva fulva* based on the darkish coloration of the chestnut head and rump patch along with the length of the tail. The specimen was retained by the Smithsonian as a skeletal study.

This specimen and one collected in 1986 by Roger Tory Peterson on an island off the coast of the Mississippi may be the only ones collected from Alabama and Mississippi. These specimens support Cave Swallow sightings reported on the Alabama coast during April 1987 by seven birders in the area. The geographic range for the Cave Swallow is normally limited to Cuba, Jamaica, Puerto Rico and the Greater Antilles. It nests in limestone caves and is an occasional visitor to the Dry Tortugas and south Florida. *Erica B. Bass, Bon Secour National Wildlife Refuge, P.O. Box 1650, Gulf Shores, AL 36542.*

Editor's note: The Bon Secour specimen classified by James Dean of the Smithsonian Division of Birds was described in a letter to John Carroll as follows:

"I spent some time this morning along with one of my co-workers examining the specimen. Based on a comparison with specimens in our collection and literature references we believe the specimen to be of the nominate race *Petrochelidon fulva fulva*. The coloration of the chestnut head and rump patches match those of the *fulva* subspecies, and are much darker than the *pallidus* race of southwest Texas and Mexico. The length of the tail also fits nicely into the range of measurements published in several references. Our uncertainty about the subspecific identity arises from the wing measurement and the coloration of the abdomen. The wing length of the specimen you sent does not fit distinctly into one or the other of the subspecies. There is an overlap in the range of measurements for wing length of the two subspecies. It is in this range that the wing length of your specimen falls (though it is closer to the mean measurement for *fulva*).

"As for the abdominal coloration, most of our specimens have less white and more rufous chestnut color on the sides of the abdomen than the specimen you sent. This observation is really not very significant as it probably reflects the small number of birds collected in late April that were available for comparison.

"The geographic range for *Petrochelidon fulva fulva* as reported in most references is Cuba, Jamaica, Puerto Rico and the Greater Antilles. It is reported as an occasional to casual visitor to the Dry Tortugas and south Florida. There are apparently two records of the subspecies from Nova Scotia and a few unconfirmed accounts of its sighting in northwest Florida." *James Dean, Collection Management Staff, Division of Birds, Smithsonian Institution, National Museum of Natural History, Washington, D.C. 20560*