

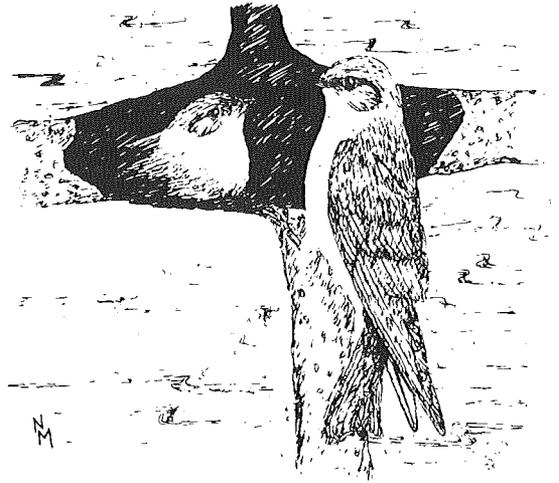
Northern Rough-winged Swallow

Stelgidopteryx serripennis

In the East the Northern Rough-winged Swallow breeds from Florida and the Gulf Coast to just north of the U.S.–Canadian border. Vermont, therefore, lies near the northern limit of its eastern range. In winter a few Rough-wingeds remain in Florida, but most migrate to Central America (AOU 1983). The species has been moving north-eastward in recent years (Bull 1974). Formerly a rare nester in Vermont, the Rough-winged Swallow has now been confirmed nesting as far north as the Canadian border.

Blake (GMAS records, F. G. Blake), who provided the first reference to the nesting of this species in Vermont, reported that a pair nested along the Connecticut River at Norwich in 1905 and 1906. A specimen was taken during the nesting season in Rutland County in 1906 (G. H. Ross 1906a). L. H. Ross (1914) in his review of birds of the Bennington area reported that from one to three pairs of Rough-wingeds were seen each year. Potter (1944) documented nesting in Vergennes, Hubbardton, and Wallingford, and believed that the species was extending its range in western Vermont. W. P. Smith (GMAS records) stated in 1946 that Rough-wingeds were extending their range north toward Wells River. Spear (1976) referred to the Rough-winged as “the least known and most uncommon of Vermont swallows,” although he lists the species as a “regular breeder.”

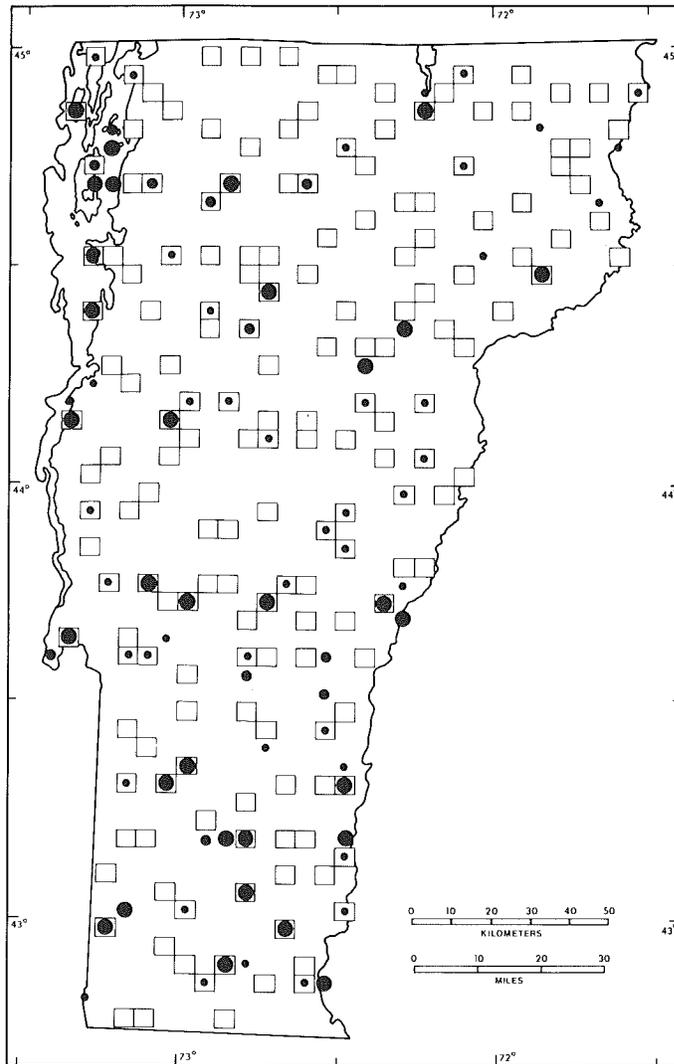
Northern Rough-winged Swallows can usually be located by checking potential nest sites along rivers with steep banks and around bridges and dams. The species has benefited by man’s activities and makes use of artificial structures for nesting. Not typically a colonial nester, it may nest singly or in loose colonial groups of up to a dozen pairs. Northern Rough-winged Swallows usually nest near water—under bridges, in culverts, pipes, and holes in retaining walls, and in burrows in steep banks. Rough-



winged are known to nest in burrows dug by other species (DeGraaf et al. 1980).

Recent Vermont nesting information includes reports of nest building on May 28 at Barton River; nests with eggs in burrows in the banks of the West River at South Londonderry, May 15 to June 20; and an adult carrying a fecal sac in Rutland County, June 24 to 25 (Atlas Project data). Clutch size is typically 6 to 7 eggs, and the incubation period is 15–16 days (Harrison 1978). There are four reports of fledglings out of the nest from June 30 to July 20; on July 20 in South Londonderry young were being fed while perched on a utility wire; they departed soon after. Observers discovered a nesting site at Ball Mountain Dam in Jamaica; one or two pairs were thought to be nesting in the brickwork of the dam (Atlas Project data).

The Northern Rough-winged Swallow is not as easy to confirm as other swallows, but most observers who did confirm it found the nest site and saw the adults entering the burrow. These swallows were confirmed in all seven physiographic regions, but were scarce in the Northeast Highlands section. In conjunction with this swallow’s tendency to spread north up the major river valleys, confirmations were concentrated in the Champlain Lowlands, Connecticut River valley, and Valley of Vermont. Several confirmations came from the southern Green Mountains.



No. of priority blocks in which recorded

TOTAL 58 (32%)

Possible breeding: 31 (53% of total)

Probable breeding: 5 (9% of total)

Confirmed breeding: 22 (38% of total)

Physiographic regions in which recorded

	no. of priority blocks	% of region's priority blocks	% of species' total priority blocks
Champlain Lowlands	13	42	22.5
Green Mountains	18	33	31.0
North Central	4	21	7.0
Northeast Highlands	2	13	3.5
East Central	7	37	12.0
Taconic Mountains	7	44	12.0
Eastern Foothills	7	29	12.0

The Northern Rough-winged Swallow arrives in Vermont in about the third week of April; there is an early date of April 12. When the young can fly well, Rough-wingeds begin their migration. They are generally gone from Vermont by the second week in September.

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