

RECOVERIES OF MOUNTAIN BLUEBIRDS SOUTH OF 49° LATITUDE, AND A RECENT TREE SWALLOW

DONALD J. STILES, 20 Lake Wapta Rise Southeast, Calgary, AB. T2J 2M9

This article outlines the known recoveries of Mountain Bluebirds banded in the four western provinces, and a Tree Swallow recovered since the Tree Swallow article in the December 1994 issue of *Blue Jay*.⁵ All these recoveries are listed in Table 1 and shown graphically in Figure 1.

Long Distance Bluebird Recoveries

A review of data supplied by the Banding Office of the Canadian Wildlife Service for Mountain Bluebirds revealed fourteen long distance recoveries to the south of 49° Lat. These are compiled from 188 recovery listings, nine from the period 1933 to 1941, two from 1949, and the remainder from 1969 to 1994. As this article deals with birds found on their wintering grounds, or on migration in the U.S.A., a number of long distance recoveries found within the prairie provinces will be written up at a later date.

The National Geographic Guide³ and the Third Edition of Peterson's Western Guide¹ show that the wintering grounds for Mountain Bluebirds travelling directly south from the prairie provinces would be to the south of 38° Latitude. This includes the states of Arizona, New Mexico and Texas. Another good source of information on the wintering grounds of the Mountain Bluebird is the *Atlas of Wintering North American Birds*.²

Peak areas of concentrations of Mountain Bluebirds on Christmas Bird Counts include: "open habitat in southeastern Colorado," and "other dense concentrations in the pinon-juniper forest in eastern New Mexico, the open oak-juniper woodland of the Davis Mountains in southwestern Texas, and the sparse creosote bush community of southwestern California."

In Table 1, the recoveries have been separated into those from the wintering grounds and those from migration. The dates for these "wintering ground" recoveries fall into the expected winter months of November to February. Similarly, the recoveries placed in the category "on migration" fall into the expected latitudes from 38° to 49°, and the expected months of March and April, and September and October.

As a sample of the Mountain Bluebird recoveries, details are given for three birds banded in Alberta in June 1986.

1. 971-53775 banded as a young by Preston Winter, a subpermittee of Cam Finlay, near Viking, Alberta 86/06/10, Lat-long: 53°00'-111°40'. Found dead near Grand Junction, Colorado on 86/10/15, Lat-long: 39°00'-108°20'.

2. 961-61248 banded as a young by Ray Woods, a subpermittee of Don Stiles, near Elkton, Alberta on

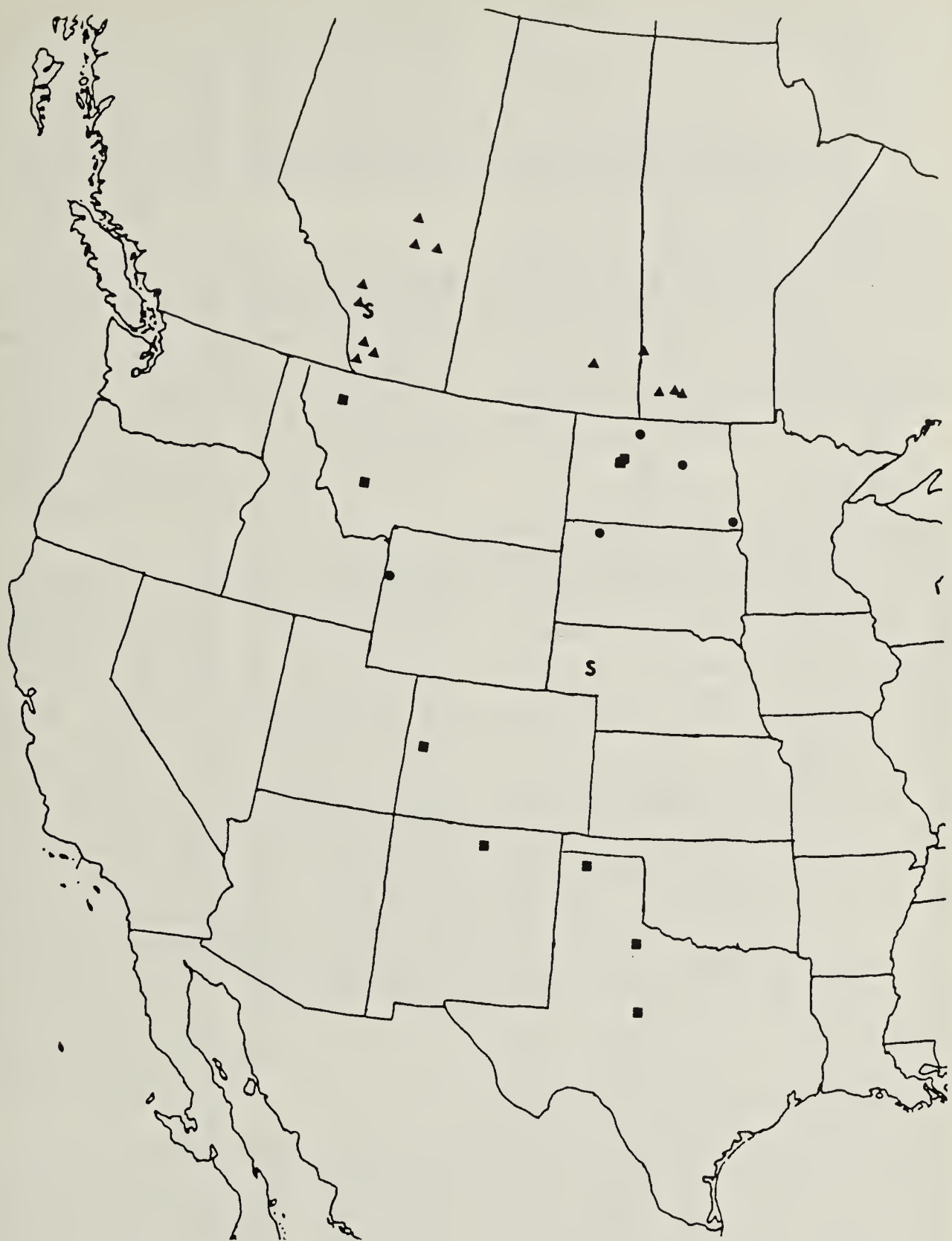


Figure 1. Fourteen Mountain Bluebirds: triangles - banding locations; squares - direct recoveries, the same year as banded; circles - indirect recoveries, in subsequent years. One Tree Swallow: S - banding location (AB) and recovery location (NE).

86/06/22, Lat-long: 51°30'-114°30'. Found dead in a building about 50 miles north of Santa Fe, New Mexico on 87/01/xx, Lat-long: 36°20'-105°40'.

3. 971-59130 banded as a young by Grace Norgard, a subpermittee of Duncan Mackintosh, in the Porcu-

pine Hills southwest of Claresholm, Alberta on 86/06/20, Lat-long: 49°50'-113°50'. Found dead near Chalk, Texas, about 100 miles west of Wichita Falls on 87/01/18, Lat-long: 33°50'-100°10'.

Nos. 2 and 3 found in January 1987 are in agreement with the field

Table 1. OUT-OF-PROVINCE RECOVERIES OF MOUNTAIN BLUEBIRDS BANDED IN THE PRAIRIE PROVINCES, 1939 AND 1969-1994 (AND ONE TREE SWALLOW BANDED IN 1995)

Bander	Where Banded				Where Recovered							
	Band No.	Age*	Lat./Long.	Loc.	Date	Lat./Long.	Loc.	Date**	Age	How***	Dist. (km)	Degrees
Mountain Bluebirds Recovered on Wintering Grounds (South of 38 Lat.) - November to February												
A.L. Wilk	381-08471	L	53 00'/112 40'	AB	39/06/09	32 00'/100 00'	TX	39/11/xx	0	98	2550	152
J.C. Finlay	741-83507	L	53 40'/112 50'	AB	71/06/26	36 10'/102 00'	TX	72/xx/xx	0	14	2120	152
D.J. Mackintosh	971-59130	L	49 50'/113 50'	AB	86/06/20	33 50'/100 10'	TX	87/01/18	0	0	2105	143
D.J. Stiles	961-61248	L	51 30'/114 30'	AB	86/06/22	36 20'/105 40'	NM	87/01/xx	0	21	1830	154
Mountain Bluebirds Recovered on Migration (38 to 49 Lat.) - March and April, September and October												
Brandon U.	780-57691	L	49 50'/99 40'	MB	70/07/08	46 10'/97 00'	ND	75/04/03	4	3	455	153
Brandon U.	800-04242	L	49 40'/100 20'	MB	71/06/03	48 30'/101 10'	ND	74/03/18	2	45	205	143
Brandon U.	800-19382	L	49 40'/99 20'	MB	72/07/01	47 40'/99 10'	ND	75/01/01 (?)	2	21	225	177
Brandon U.	800-18013	L	49 40'/99 20'	MB	72/06/04	45 40'/102 30'	SD	76/03/11	3	0	505	209
J.C. Finlay	961-49523	L	49 20'/114 00'	AB	84/06/10	46 00'/112 30'	MT	84/09/19	0	13	375	190
J.C. Finlay	961-49211	L	49 40'/113 20'	AB	84/06/11	43 30'/110 40'	WY	85/10/07	1	0	715	163
R.L. Scott	1231-11464	L	50 20'/103 30'	SK	85/07/17	47 50'/101 50'	ND	86/04/16	0	0	305	156
J.C. Finlay	971-53775	L	53 00'/111 40'	AB	86/06/10	39 00'/108 20'	CO	86/10/15	0	0	1580	169
D.J. Stiles	8031-51615	L	51 00'/114 30'	AB	90/06/23	48 10'/114 10'	MT	91/04/15	0	12	315	176
J.C. Finlay	8011-26536	L	50 50'/101 20'	MB	91/06/09	47 50'/101 50'	ND	92/04/21	0	0	335	186
Tree Swallow												
D.J. Stiles	2151-38482	L	50 40'/114 00'	AB	95/07/10	41 40'/102 20'	NE	95/09/22	0	0	1345	134

* Age: L - Local, unable to fly; ** Date: xx - unknown;

*** How Codes: 0 - found dead (6 Mountain Bluebirds, 1 Tree Swallow); 3 - caught due to injury (1); 12 - caught by cat (1); 13 - killed by flying into stationary object (1); 14 - killed by automobile (1); 21 - found in building (1 alive, 1 dead); 45 - found dead on highway (1); 98 - band only obtained (1)

guide maps indicating where Mountain Bluebirds spend the winter at the latitude of Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas. No. 1 found in Colorado in October 1986 was believed on its way to its wintering grounds in one of the above states.

This is a different migration pattern than that of Tree Swallows, which head southeast toward the Mississippi River system⁵ to be near water on their migration. Mountain Bluebird recoveries shown in Table 1 and Figure 1 indicate that these birds migrate over the Great Plains.

Considering the large number of birds banded it is surprising that only fourteen Mountain Bluebird bands have been recovered in the U.S.A. These include 18,059 banded by Cam Finlay from 1971 to 1994, 14,278 by Don Stiles from 1981 to 1994, 32,787 by Duncan Mackintosh from 1980 to 1994, and 6339 by Lorne Scott from 1969 to 1990 (includes subpermittees in all cases). Numerous Mountain Bluebirds have also been banded in Saskatchewan and elsewhere in Alberta by other banders who have not yet had a recovery reported.

Of the fourteen Mountain Bluebird recoveries listed in this article, all except one were found dead. The bluebird found alive, 800-19382, was recaptured in a building. (The date on this one, 75/01/01, looks incorrect. It has been assumed to be a spring migrant.) Cause of death is given for eight. (See Table 1 under "How Codes"); for the other six, the code just reads "found dead." All fourteen birds were banded as nestlings. Nine were recovered before their first birthday, one was one year old, two were two years old, one three years old and one four years old. Of the ten bluebirds recovered

on migration, seven were found on spring migration, and three on fall migration.

Long Distance Tree Swallow Recovery

On 10 July 1995, Stan Palmer banded 2151-38482 as a nestling in a nest box on his bluebird trail about 3 km south of Dewinton, AB (about 24 km south of Calgary, or 8 km north of Okotoks). Stan is a subpermittee of Don Stiles.

It was found dead on 22 September 1995 at Crescent Lake National Wildlife Reserve, Nebraska and reported by Bill Behrends, a wildlife officer at the reserve. Bill added that thousands of swallows had perished in a severe storm which had given continuous rain with strong winds over two days and night time temperatures down to 0°C for two days and -3°C on 22 September. Frost is normally later at this latitude, he indicated.

His maintenance man had swept about 100 dead swallows out of the horse trailer and many were found dead in other structures; some were seen dead on the ground. Most were Barn and Cliff Swallows but a few Tree Swallows were seen as well. 2151-38482 was found in a shop building. Four or five were found dead in a Barn Swallow nest on a porch light where they had gone to spend the night.

The Crescent Lake National Wildlife Refuge, situated half way between Ellsworth and Oshkosh in the sand hills of Nebraska, is mostly grassland with a high water table and many ponds. Bill indicated that they see many swallows on migration in both spring and fall.

This is the westernmost long-

distance recovery of Tree Swallows banded in the Calgary area. Two of these were recovered in 1992 from eastern south Dakota, and coastal Louisiana.⁵ The timing of the recovery on 22 September is also interesting. The bird was about half way between its nesting site and coastal Louisiana where swallows are seen in large numbers in late November or early December.⁴ They push further south in late December or January.⁴ This recovery compares in timing and latitude with one found in Missouri, a bird banded near Saskatoon, SK on 2 July 1987 and recovered 2 September 1987.⁵

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge the

assistance of Stuart Houston, who prepared the map and edited earlier drafts of this article.

1. PETERSON, ROGER TORY. 1990. A field guide to western birds (3rd ed.). Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston.
2. ROOT, TERRY. 1988. Atlas of wintering North American birds. University of Chicago Press, Chicago.
3. SCOTT, SHIRLEY L., Editor. 1983. Field guide to the birds of North America. National Geographic Society, Washington, D.C.
4. STEIN, R. 1993. Tree Swallow staging area. *Louisiana Ornithological Society News* 154:1-3.
5. STILES, D.J. AND M.I. HOUSTON. 1994. Distant travels of Tree Swallows of the prairie provinces 1968-1992. *Blue Jay* 52(4): 206-212.



Mountain Bluebird

G.W. Beyersbergen