

Bank Swallow

Ripariariparia

As is true for Rough-winged Swallows, most Bank Swallows excavate their nest burrows into the sides of steep banks adjacent to streams and within quarries. However, there are several differences between the breeding biology of Bank Swallows and Rough-winged Swallows. Bank Swallows normally nest in sizable colonies of 25–200+ pairs. Larger colonies are occasionally encountered with a maximum of 2000–3000 pairs nesting in Lucas County during 1933–1934 (Campbell 1940). This species seldom breeds as isolated pairs, although some colonies may only contain six or fewer pairs. These swallows are quick to take advantage of newly created banks and large colonies may develop during a span of one or two years. They tend to be ephemeral, however, and many colonies are occupied for only a few years before the swallows move elsewhere. Breeding Bank Swallows prefer to excavate burrows near the tops of banks where the soil is less compacted. They are much less flexible in their choice of nest sites, and rarely utilize drain pipes, sawdust piles, or similar locations frequently occupied by Rough-winged Swallows (Peck and James 1987). Bank Swallows are as likely to nest in upland quarries as along streams. Most riparian colonies are located along large rivers, and this species is seldom found along small creeks.

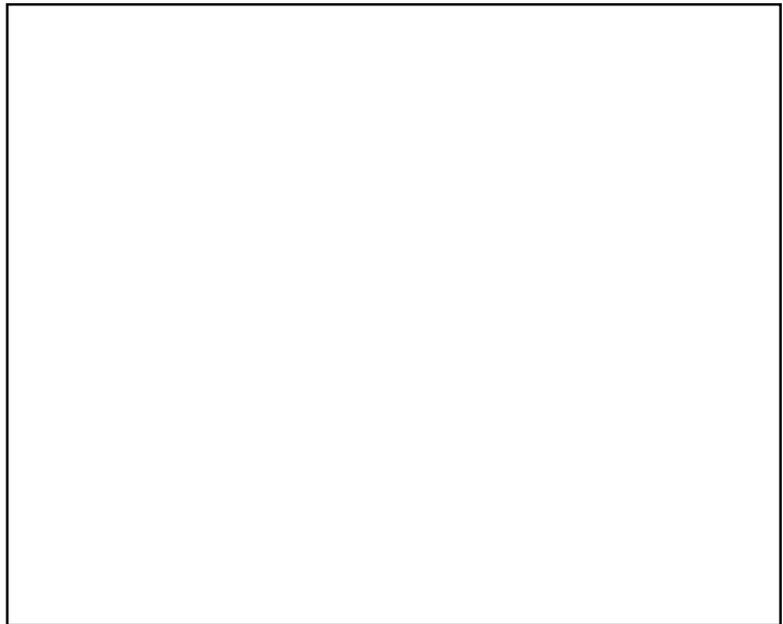
Given their preference for nesting in colonies, Bank Swallows have always been locally distributed summer residents in Ohio. Jones (1903) considered them to be most numerous along Lake Erie. The first detailed description of their statewide range was provided by Hicks (1935) who cited breeding records from 31 counties and noted they were most numerous in the northern third of Ohio. The widely scattered records from central and southern Ohio were from Licking, Franklin, Logan, Mercer, Hamilton, Holmes, Coshocton, Guernsey, Muskingum, Hocking, Adams, Scioto, Lawrence, and Pike counties (Hicks 1935, 1937). Their population trends in subsequent decades are poorly understood. The discovery of new colonies in the southern half of the state may partially compensate for declines in the northern counties, although their overall numbers may be declining (Peterjohn 1989a). Breeding Bird Surveys have also indicated declines throughout central and eastern North America (Robbins, C. S., et al. 1986).

The Atlas Project data indicate Bank Swallows remain most widespread in northern Ohio. They were recorded in 35.7% of the priority blocks in the Glaciated Plateau region where sightings were concentrated in the northeastern counties south through Medina, Summit, Portage, and Columbiana. These swallows were nearly equally represented in the Lake Plain region (33.7% of the blocks) with most records in Lucas, Wood, and Henry counties. The number of reports declined to 21.7% of the priority blocks in the Illinoian Till Plain region. These swallows were scarcest in the Unglaciated Plateau and Till Plain region with records from 10.9 and 16.2% of the priority blocks respectively. For the State as a whole, Bank Swallows were recorded from a total of 159 priority blocks (20.8% of the statewide total) in 69 counties. Breeding swallows were absent from large portions of

the unglaciated Allegheny Plateau, particularly the counties bordering the Ohio River. They also proved to be very scarce in the western tier of counties bordering Indiana.

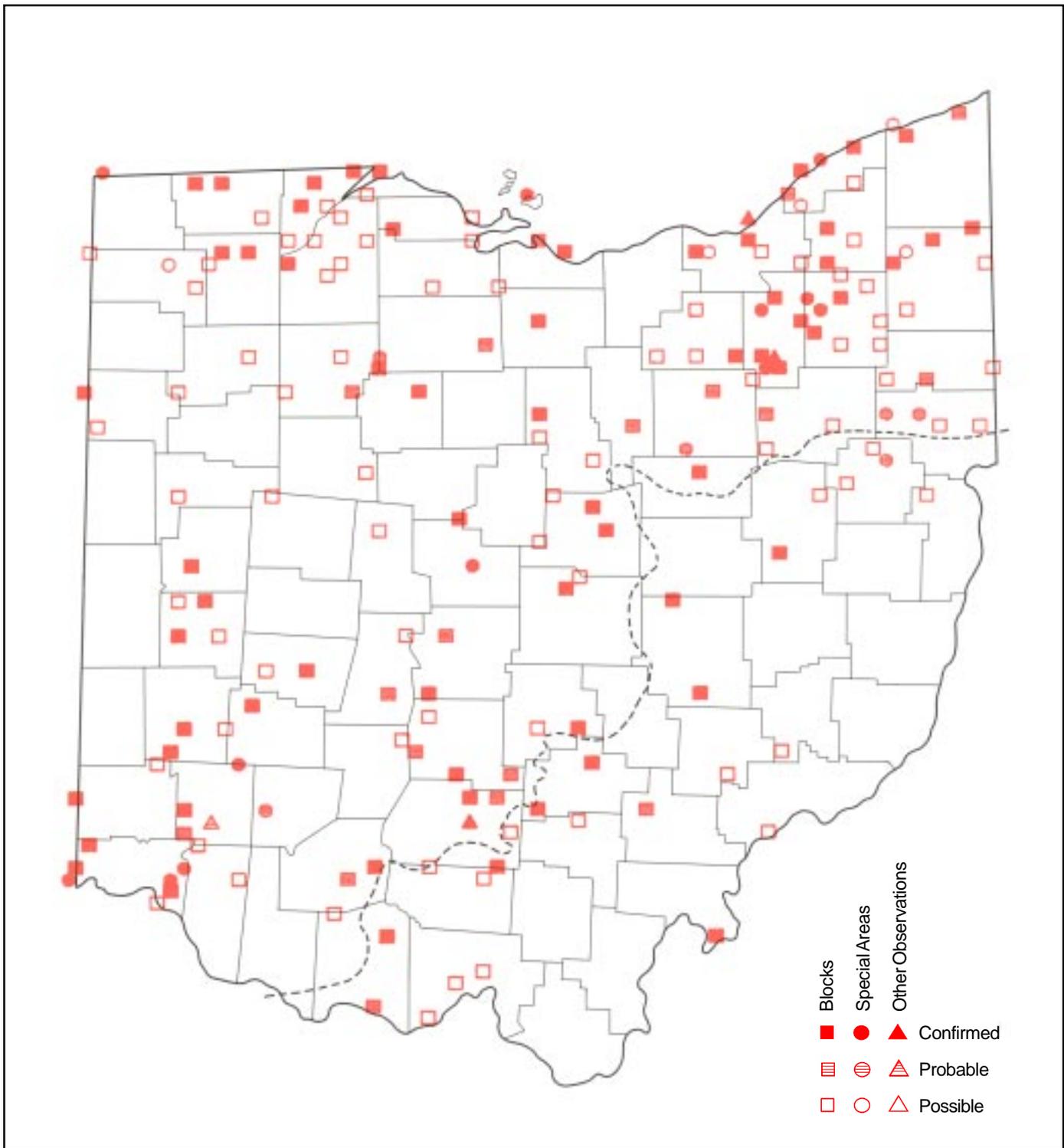
The relative abundance of Bank Swallows on Ohio Breeding Bird Surveys indicates they are most numerous in the Lake Plain region. Only small numbers appear elsewhere in the state. However, these surveys may not accurately census the populations of this locally distributed colonial-nester, which is probably most numerous in the northeastern counties (Peterjohn 1989a).

Approximately one-half of the Atlas Project records pertained to possible breeders. These records were of swallows observed flying over priority blocks, but their nesting colonies were not discovered and may not have been in these blocks. Records of foraging Bank Swallows were limited to the period between June 1 and July 10 to preclude migrants. Most of the remaining records were confirmed breeders, primarily adults attending active nests at colonies (49 blocks).



Picture to be added

Within Ohio, nest construction has been reported as early as April 19 (Williams 1950), although these activities are most prevalent between mid-May and mid-June. The few published egg dates are during June. However, some clutches may be laid during May, since nests with young have been reported by June 1 (Campbell 1968). These young would have fledged during the second half of June, although most fledglings are noted during July. Renesting attempts are responsible for clutches during the first half of July and recently fledged young as late as August 12 (Peterjohn 1989a).



Analysis of Block Data by Physiographic Region

Physiographic Region	Total Blocks Surveyed	Blocks with Data	% with Data	Regional % for Ohio	Ave. # Individ per BBS Route (1982–1987)
Lake Plain	95	32	33.7	20.1	3.1
Till Plain	271	44	16.2	27.7	<0.1
Ill. Till Plain	46	10	21.7	6.3	0.4
Glaciated Plateau	140	50	35.7	31.5	0.8
Unglaciated Plateau	212	23	10.9	14.5	–

Summary of Breeding Status

No. of Blocks in Which Species Recorded		
Total	159	20.8%
Confirmed	63	39.6%
Probable	18	11.3%
Possible	78	49.1%