

## Cave Swallow

Unanimously Accepted 7-0

### Committee Member Comments:

CM1: The photographs show all pertinent field marks for Cave Swallow. In addition, the species is prone to vagrancy in the northeast portion of the country during the fall. A great addition to the State List.

CM2: This is an excellent record of a species I have been looking for in the state for some time now. Given the conditions, the photographs are quite good. The timing and weather pattern fit a known and well-established pattern of vagrancy to the East that is not completely understood. The photographs show an obvious *Petrochelidon* sp. but sorting out the identity can be tricky. Juvenile Cliff Swallow is the big confounder here. Aging is a big key. We can see plumage characteristics leaning toward that of an adult which moves away from a Cliff Swallow ID. Furthermore, the facial and cheek coloration supports Cave Swallow identification. Other plumage characteristics lead to a Mexican ssp. which is the expected one given current vagrancy patterns. Great find!

CM3: Photos eliminate any other species. A fantastic record for the state!

CM4: The Cave Swallow is a vagrant in the Northeastern U.S. in late fall after other swallows have departed (as per the eBird website.) Ms. Kearn's sighting is intriguing, and given that this bird was observed live on Dec 2, 2019 during a snowstorm, the timing coincides perfectly for the seasonal vagrancy pattern of a Cave Swallow. This bird could be considered the pioneer of what is to come in the near future for West Virginia in a climate changing world. Please reference this article which makes for good discussion about future bird records to come: <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/vagrant-birds-may-portend-species-distribution-inclimate-changed-world/>. There is some uncertainty inherent in the identification of a Cave Swallow versus a Cliff Swallow. The variability of the plumage (including molting plumage) of the populations of Cave and Cliff Swallow are not reliably distinguishable in the field as per Sibley. Because we only have 5 photos, and all are taken from the same angle, we don't gain much advantage in identification. The photos were taken through a window in a snowstorm, and there is snow on some of the bird. We don't have the luxury of hearing the voice of this swallow to confirm its species by sound. While I have 21 sightings of Cave Swallow in my eBird profile, 15 from Cuba, 3 from Puerto Rico, and 3 from Texas, Cave Swallow identification that occurs outside its summer or winter range can be especially confusing due to the similarity of a Cliff Swallow. However, I believe the bird she saw was a Cave Swallow, based on the visibility of the rufous rump and head pattern shown in her photos.

CM5: The record meets the standard for inclusion on the state list. The observer gave a basic description of the visual observation and compared with experience with local swallows. The report included photographs which included the most notable features for ID of the chestnut rump, forehead, and cheeks, and the pale chestnut throat. These photographs were also shared with other birders with experience for confirmation prior to submission to the committee.

CM6: I have no experience with this species. But after staring and staring at known photos, I can see no reason that this isn't. Nice!

CM7: The photos are critical to the identification of this bird that is clearly a swallow. The only three potential swallows based on the overall coloration is Barn Swallow, Cliff Swallow and Cave Swallow, but none of them should be in WV in December. The relatively warm fall and winter, however, makes such rarities more likely. The bird is not a Barn Swallow due to the rufous/cinnamon rump patch and pale nape stripe, leaving Cliff Swallow and Cave Swallow. Cliff Swallows have a creamy forehead and the rump patch is typically cinnamon in color. Cave Swallows have a rufous forehead and rump patch. The rump patch on this bird is clearly rufous in color, indicating a Cave Swallow. However, Cliff Swallows can have rump patches that are darker than the typical pale cinnamon and can appear rufous as well. The forehead patch that is a dark cinnamon/rufous color is more indicative of a Cave Swallow since Cliff Swallows do not have such dark foreheads. The dark cinnamon/rufous rump patch and forehead are the key identifying marks that collectively identify the bird as a Cave Swallow.