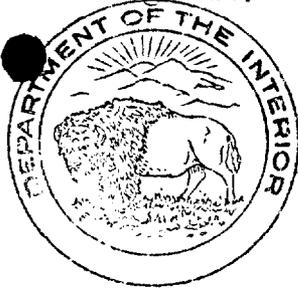


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# DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

## INFORMATION SERVICE

### FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

For Advance Release TO THE SUNDAY PAPERS OF NOVEMBER 12, 1944.

The solution of a centuries-old riddle of bird migration--the location of the winter home of the chimney swift--was announced today by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service with the report that 13 bands taken from birds of this species have been returned from Peru through the American embassy at Lima.

Frederick C. Lincoln, in charge of the Service's studies of bird migration, described the finding as "one of the most important ornithological discoveries in at least two decades," explaining that the chimney swift was the only North American bird whose wintering grounds had not previously been charted.

The return of the bands from swifts taken in Peru was the first such recovery outside of North America, although nearly 375,000 swifts have been banded during the past ten years over a wide area from southern Canada to the Gulf coast. Most of the bird banding stations are manned by volunteers operating under a permit from the Fish and Wildlife Service and cooperating with that agency in a study of bird migration.

Of the chimney swifts reported from Peru, where they were shot by Indians in the River Yanayaco area, 8 had been banded in Tennessee and one each in Illinois, Connecticut, Alabama, Georgia, and Ontario. Dates of banding ranged from 1936 to 1940.

Chimney swifts are found over much of North America east of the Rocky Mountains during the summer months. In the fall they gather in the southern states in enormous flocks--thousands may spend the night in a single chimney. Suddenly they disappear, not to be seen again until the following spring.

The mystery surrounding the location of the swift's winter home was so great that even eminent naturalists of the past generation fell back on weird Medieval theories, such as the one that the birds buried themselves in the mud of swamps and hibernated until spring.

While the solution of the mystery of the swifts means that at least part of the winter range of every North American bird is now known, there remains one bird whose nest and eggs have never been discovered, according to Mr. Lincoln. This is the bristle-thighed curlew, which is believed to nest somewhere in Alaska and crosses thousands of miles of the Pacific to winter in the islands of the South Pacific.

Supplementing the recovery of banded chimney swifts in Peru is a recently published report that thousands of swifts resembling the North American species had been seen hovering over a large, abandoned chimney in the Amazon Valley in Brazil. Although no specimens were obtained for verification, "the whole incident is so typical of chimney swifts that there seems little reason to doubt the identification, particularly in view of the banding data now at hand," Mr. Lincoln said.

Considerably smaller than a sparrow, long-winged and short-tailed, the sooty black chimney swift is believed to be faster on the wing than any other small bird of eastern North America. Almost its entire waking life is spent on the wing, zig-zagging back and forth through the air in search of its insect food. Probably it seldom if ever comes to rest on the ground or on the limb of a tree.

As their name implies, chimney swifts nest and sleep by preference in chimneys -- a modern adaptation of the hollow-tree homes of their ancestors, still used by many swifts. Audubon once entered such a hollow tree at night to observe the swifts; he estimated nine thousand sleeping birds above him.

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