

The migratory status of White-fronted Swift *Cypseloides storeri*

Phil Chantler

Howell *et al.*³ reported the sighting of a presumed White-fronted Swift *Cypseloides storeri*. They note that “the type-specimen, collected at night, may have been a disorientated migrant and/or juvenile, since resident swifts tend to have traditional roost sites (pers. obs.)”³. I am unconvinced that the situation in which the type was collected is any more indicative of migrant as opposed to resident status, especially considering the following, long-established, details relating to the genus.

Collins² noted that many Spot-fronted Swifts *C. cherrei* (10 alone, between late February and June 1948) had been collected at Rancho Grande, north Venezuela, “fluttering against lighted windows on foggy nights” between 19h00–22h00 in all months except September and October. Spot-fronted Swift is resident at Rancho Grande (and indeed throughout its range).

Furthermore, and perhaps of even greater interest in this case, Beebe¹ collected two White-chinned Swifts *C. cryptus* in similar conditions at Rancho Grande in April 1946. He speculated that “a migration of greater or lesser scope would be indicated by the nocturnal flight, fairly fat condition and absence of any other recorded during our stay”, but subsequent research into this species has not revealed any suggestion that this is a migratory species (M. Marin pers. comm.). Collins² speculated that “the *Cypseloides* swifts... appear to continue foraging later than other swifts and thus may encounter greater problems finding their roosts under adverse weather conditions”.

Collins² also noted that Medway⁶ had observed that Black-nest Swiftlets *Collacalia maxima* returned to roosting sites later than sympatric swiftlets and had speculated that this was a form of resource-partitioning. Collins mused “possibly the same interpretations may be applied to the Spot-fronted Swift *C. cherrei* and other *Cypseloides* swifts, although they lack the echo-locational ca-

pacities of most of the cave-swiftlets”. These thoughts are made even more interesting by Marin & Stiles’ reports^{4,5} that they heard White-chinned *C. cryptus* and Spot-fronted Swifts *C. cherrei* emitting “continuous streams of harsh twittering-clicking notes... such notes might be a form of rudimentary echolocation”. They also state that some “cypseloidines arrive in their roosting or nesting sites after dark”.

I do not present the above to claim that *C. storeri* is a resident, but certainly it must be seen that the unfortunate bird found clinging to a towel on a tent late on a foggy night was just as likely to have been a disorientated resident bird as a disorientated migrant.

References

1. Beebe, W. (1947) Avian migration at Rancho Grande in north-central Venezuela. *Zoologica* 32: 164–167.
2. Collins, C. T. (1980) The biology of the Spot-fronted Swift in Venezuela. *Amer. Birds* 34: 852–855.
3. Howell, S. N. G., Snetsinger, P. B. & Wilson, R. G. (1997) A sight record of the White-fronted Swift *Cypseloides storeri* in Michoacán, Mexico. *Cotinga* 7: 23–26.
4. Marin A., M. & Stiles, F. G. (1992) On the biology of five species of swifts (Apodidae, Cypseloidinae) in Costa Rica. *Proc. Western Found. Vert. Zool.* 4: 286–351.
5. Marin A., M. & Stiles, F. G. (1993) Notes on the biology of the Spot-fronted Swift. *Condor* 95: 479–483.
6. Medway, Lord (1962) The swiftlets (*Collacalia*) of Niah Cave, Sarawak. 2: Ecology and regulation of breeding. *Ibis* 104: 228–245.

Phil Chantler

The Cottage, Knotts Lane, St Margaret's-at-Cliffe, near Dover, Kent CT15 6BH, UK.