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**ALPINE SWIFT (*TACHYMARPTIS MELBA*) PHOTOGRAPHED ON ST. LUCIA,
LESSER ANTILLES — THIRD RECORD FOR THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE**

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On the afternoon of 19 August 1992, I was standing near the summit of the Moule a Chique headland of precipitous cliffs at 223 m elevation, the southern-most extension of St. Lucia. At 17:13 h, an unknown bird rapidly approached at eye level from seaward (SSE). I soon determined that the bird was a swift (Apodidae), but not a species I had seen before.

The following description is taken from my field notes that were made at the time of the observation. The swift was larger than a Black Swift (*Cypseloides niger*), which is a summer resident on St. Lucia (Bond 1985, pers. obs.), and was similar in size to the White-collared Swift (*Streptoprocne zonaris*). The head and upperparts were uniform light brown, the throat was whitish, the band across the breast was light brown, the lower breast and abdomen were white, the under tail coverts and forked tail were brown, as were the under wing coverts and wing. Its flight profile was distinctive, with the long bent wing giving the bird a "boomerang" shape. Its powered flight was fast, but interrupted by long glides, with its wings bent back at the wrist and held stiffly below the horizontal. The forked tail was obvious even when the tail was fanned. A field sketch was made in addition to the written description and the swift was photographed (VIREO b35/1/003 and b35/1/004). The bird was observed continuously from 17:13 to 17:48 h as it made regular circuits of the Moule a Chique headland and at times preened on the wing. Range varied from about 6 m on close passes to about 100 m on the apogee of the circuit. The weather was clear with no haze or cloud cover and wind was from the southeast at about 5 knots. As the swift made circuits around me, viewing conditions varied from poor, when the bird was to the west, through fair to excellent, when the swift was east of me.

The first documented record of the Alpine Swift for the

Western Hemisphere was made by Captain Maurice Hutt in Barbados. Hutt (in litt.) recalled that "The bird was first seen about 300 meters inland at Gibb's on the west (leeward) coast of the island on September 20, 1955. The bird was seen by a Mr. Webster for several days and was collected on September 27th. The specimen (ANSP #169868, sex ?) was examined and identified by Hutt, who made a skin and sent it to [James] Bond at the Academy of Natural Science at Philadelphia." The second record was as Desecheo Island, off the west coast of Puerto Rico, on 20 July 1987 (Meier et al. 1989).

Both the Barbados and the St. Lucia birds appear to have been associated with the passage of a tropical depression across the Atlantic Ocean. The Barbados bird was first seen two days before Hurricane Janet passed to the south of the island. Interestingly, the specimen from Barbados is labelled as the North African race (*tuneti*), based on its distinctly paler dorsal coloration compared to the nominate race (*melba*) (Robert Ridgely, pers. comm. to Allan Keith). At 05:00 h on 18 August 1992, tropical storm (later Hurricane) Andrew was about 1100 km (700 miles) E of St. Lucia and passed about 900 km (560 miles) ENE of the island at 17:00 h the same day. The Alpine Swift was first seen at 17:13 h the next day.

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