

Barn Swallow

Hirundo rustica

General Information:

-The Barn Swallow is an insect eating machine. Since early colonial times this bird has been a welcome presence on farms because it eats many crop-destroying insects. Usually nesting inside of barns or other buildings, it is the only North American swallow with buffy to cinnamon under-parts and under-wing linings and a white-spotted deeply forked tail.

Song:

-Utters a repetitive clipped *chi-dit, chi-dit* or *wit-wit*.

Behavior:

-Gregarious; often feeds close to ground or water. Eats a wide variety of flying insects, and follows farm machinery, even riding lawnmowers, to feed on stirred-up insects. Courtship flights may include pairs dropping and catching feathers in midair; upon landing pairs may engage in mutual preening. Individuals show strong site fidelity, and colonies may exist over long periods on the same site, with the same individuals sometimes building nests on the same site used the previous year.

Breeding:

-Monogamous and in small colonies. During courtship, the male chases the female over acres and acres of land.

Nesting:

-Incubation of 13-17 days by both sexes, but the female does more. The 2 broods per year of altricial young are fed by both sexes and stay in the nest for 18-23 days.

Population:

-Abundant and widespread in open country, agricultural lands, and savanna, especially near the water.

Conservation:

-A neo-tropical migrant.

Shoreline Restoration Issues:

- If you would like to create an environment friendly to the Barn Swallow here are the two basic things that you have to do. Firstly, plant some emergent aquatic vegetation. Secondly, do not knock down their muddy nests off of your house until the fall. For additional vegetation, I would go with a Butterfly Garden in the majority of the buffer zone. This will be beautiful, and will give the Barn Swallow more to eat.

