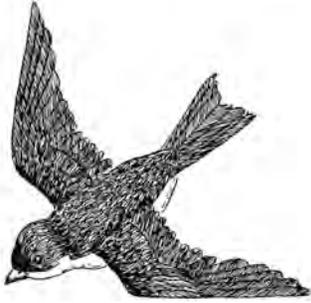


TREE SWALLOW

Tachycineta bicolor



Tree swallows are the only swallows to be seen all year in the Sacramento region. A few winter here; others come to join them early in the spring. They are about sparrow-length but slimmer. The male is steel blue on top, white underneath.

Tree swallows like wooded areas near streams. They can be seen skimming close to the water scooping up insects. Usually a hole in a tree trunk is chosen for a nest and lined with grass, leaves and feathers.

The violet green swallow, a bird with similar colors but with white around the sides of the rump, is found here in warm weather.

CLIFF SWALLOW

Petrochelidon pyrrhonota



Cliff swallows, famous for their annual return to San Juan Capistrano, likewise return to the Sacramento region within a few days of the same date each year. Wherever a bridge or culvert houses a colony of these swallows, the same kind of homecoming takes place each spring.

Cliff swallows are identified by their buff foreheads, orange rumps, and square tails. They fly with long sweeping glides and steep climbs, catching flying insects on the wing. The bulb-shaped nests, hung under bridges, highway overpasses and eaves of buildings, are built entirely of mud. Flocks of cliff swallows can be seen around puddles gathering mud in their bills. When disturbed by an intruder or when flying over feeding grounds, the birds utter a squeaky, guttural sound.

BARN SWALLOW

Hirundo rustica



Here is a bird with a real “swallow tail” outfit. In fact, it is our only swallow with a deeply forked tail. The long pointed wings and the cinnamon-brown breast help to identify the barn swallow. As they zoom around, they usually fly close to the ground and in straight lines. When resting, often on a wire or fence post, they have a bright squeaky warble.

Though associated with barns and meadows, barn swallows are often found in open wooded country and even in towns. The nest is a bowl-shaped pocket of mud and straw, lined with feathers and attached to the sides of a cave or timbers of buildings. The food, as with all swallows, consists of flying insects. Winters are spent in South America.

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