

## CLIFF SWALLOWS VS. BARN SWALLOWS FACTS

There are two types of swallows that can be considered a pest in the United States, the Cliff Swallow and the Barn Swallow. The birds and their nests are quite different from each other, but the mess they leave behind is very similar. Both types of swallows build their mud nests almost exclusively on human-made structures such as under eaves of homes, under bridges and docks, in barns and other areas that provide shelter and freedom from predators. Regardless of which type of swallow is a pest on your property, there are ways to humanely get rid of them.

### Barn Swallow



### Cliff Swallow



## NESTING



**Barn swallow** nests are a cup shape with an interior that contains an inner cup lined with grass, hair and feathers. They almost always build nests on eaves, bridges, docks and other man made structures that have a ledge to support the nest, a vertical wall to which it can be attached and a roof. Barn swallows nest in single pairs.



**Cliff swallow** nests are gourd shaped and also contain the inner lining of grass, hair and feathers. Their nests are build on vertical walls, natural or man-made, frequently with some sort of shelter or overhang. Freeways, bridges, barns and other large buildings are used regularly by the cliff swallow to build its nest. Cliff swallows nest in colonies that may contain a dozen to over 500 nesting pairs.

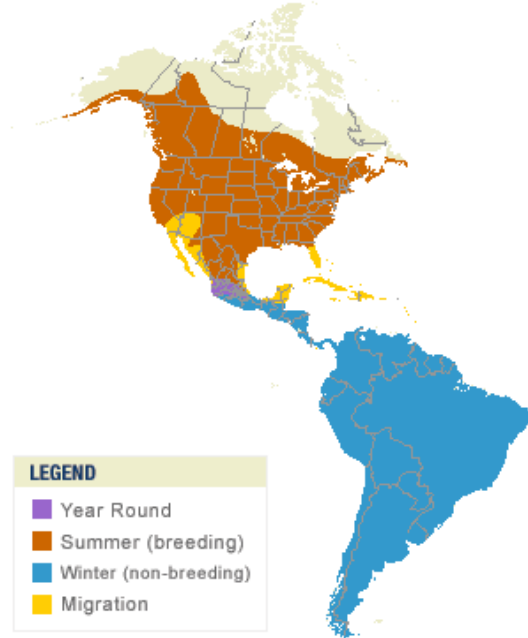


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## MIGRATION

**Barn Swallow**  
*Hirundo rustica*



**Cliff Swallow**  
*Petrochelidon pyrrhonota*



Map by Cornell Lab of Ornithology  
Range data by NatureServe

**Barn swallows** are also long-distance migrant birds, flying from North American breeding grounds to wintering areas in Central and South America. Southbound fall migration may begin by late June in Florida or early July in Massachusetts. They return as early as late January in Southern California to mid-May at Alaskan breeding sites.

Swallows are usually the first to begin the southern migration in mid August to early September. They gather in large groups, sometimes up to 2,000 birds, on telephone wires and other perches before departing.

**Cliff swallows** are long-distance migrant birds. They winter in southern South American and travel in flocks by day to the north. Cliff swallows are the famous birds that return to San Juan Capistrano, California every spring; traditionally the return is celebrated on March 19th, although the birds actually return to the general area in late February.

The main reason that both types of swallows migrate seasonally is the lack of insects to eat during winter in the north. Avoiding cold temperature is actually a less important reason for leaving. Swallows migrate during the day, catching flying insects along the way. They will normally not move into areas unless flying insect are available for food, which generally occurs in warmer weather of 60°F.



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## REPRODUCTION

- Time from start of nest building to departure of young is 44 to 58 days. During this time you can not disturb the nests in anyway or you could incur a hefty fine. Swallows are a protected bird through the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918.
- Nest building is done by both male and female birds and begins around April.
- Both sexes care for the young, which will begin flying at 20 to 25 days of age.
- Barn and cliff swallows can raise two clutches per year. Re-nesting will occur if nest or eggs are destroyed.

## BEHAVIOR

Barn Swallows feed almost exclusively in flight, flying lower than many other swallows and often nearly hugging the ground or water surface. They catch flies and other prey in midair about fields, marshes, lakes and coastal waters. Males defend a small territory around the nest site and aggressively chase away other males, even grabbing them with their feet and tumbling to the ground. Individuals or groups of Barn Swallows mob predators such as hawks, gulls, or grackles that approach nests.

Cliff Swallows are the most colonial swallow in the world, regularly forming colonies of 200-1,000 nests, with a maximum of 3,700 nests in one Nebraska site. They preen, feed, drink, and bathe in groups, and they continue sticking together in large flocks during migration and on their wintering grounds.



*Daughter of Bird B Gone Marketing Specialist Terri Anne Meyer, celebrates Swallow Day at San Juan Capistrano Mission.*

### DID YOU KNOW?

Swallows are federally protected. Any permit to lethally control these species would need to be issued from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and would only be issued in very extreme cases.



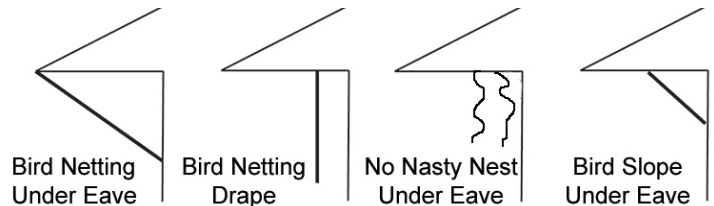
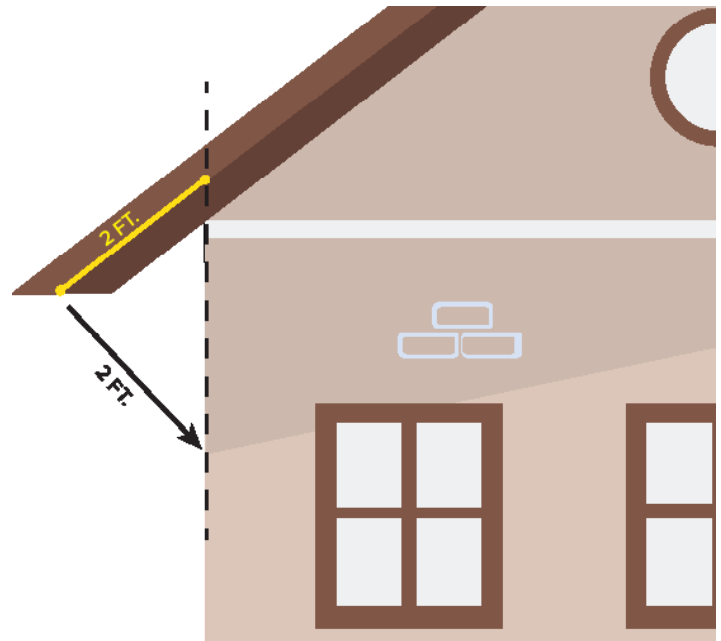
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# HOW TO KEEP SWALLOWS AWAY

Exclusion is the best method of deterring pest swallows. You must make it impossible for the birds to build their nests. There are several methods of exclusion that can be used.

- **Bird Netting:** A [plastic bird netting](#) with a 3/4" mesh can be hung from the outer edge of the eave of the home down to the side of the wall creating a 45 degree angle. This will keep the swallows from getting into the favored sheltered space under the eaves of homes and buildings to build their nests. **Note:** Install the netting before the swallows arrive. It may be left up all year or taken down after the nesting season.
- **Slippery Slope Panels:** The [Bird Slope](#) product available from Bird B Gone, creates a smooth surface under the eave of your home so that the swallows are not able to "stick" their nesting material to it. These products are generally made of a PVC plastic that is attached under the eave with adhesive. Creating a slick surface on the nesting walls will discourage the birds and they will look elsewhere to find a good nesting spot.
- **No Nasty Nest:** is a new [swallow bird deterrent](#) product on the market that uses a fine clear wire attached to a clear Plexiglas base that is ready to adhere to the eaves of your home or business. The swallows will not fly through this "distraction" and therefore will not build their nest in areas protected by swallow guard.



The best advice to keep swallows off of your home or commercial building is to do something before the swallows arrive. Put up netting, bird spikes, slippery panels or other means of deterring nest building before the swallows begin to build. Once the birds arrive and start building their nests, it is nearly impossible to get rid of them. Some will try to hose down the nests as they are being built to no avail; which is also illegal. The swallows are tenacious birds and will just keep building and building if the spot is ideal for them. You must also be aware of the laws that protect these birds; you do not want to be fined!

## CAUTION

Do not use a sticky gel to deter Swallows. The gel should only be use for ledges where birds land, not walls.



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