



Bank Swallow

(Riparia riparia)

STATUS

SARA
Alberta

THREATENED
SENSITIVE

British Columbia
Saskatchewan

YELLOW
NO STATUS

PRIMARY HABITAT

Riparian

TERRITORY SIZE

~200 ha

NEST TYPE

Burrow

NEST REUSE

Frequent

STAND LEVEL

Inspect crossings for nests and sandy stream banks for colonies.

LANDSCAPE LEVEL

Colonies more likely in areas with open water, meadows, and sandy/silty/loamy soils.

These fast-flying acrobats hunt for insects mid-air over open areas, and nest in burrows they dig in the sandy sides of stream banks (and sand piles, if available).

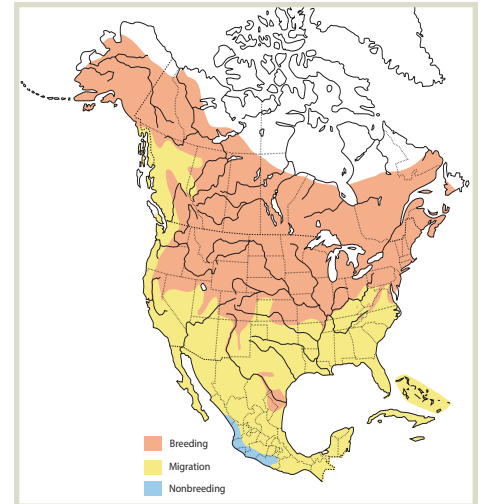
BREEDING WINDOW



HABITAT ECOLOGY

- The Bank Swallow is a fast-flying bird that breeds in colonies of 10 to 2,000 nests.¹
- They excavate nesting burrows in sandy, eroded riparian banks, large sand piles and road cuts.
 - Features with vertical/nearly vertical faces and firm substrate (i.e., can be tunnelled without collapsing) are most suitable for excavation. See Stand-level Recommendations.
- Bank Swallows forage in open areas, including above riparian (and sometimes upland) woodlands. They typically avoid dense forests and are expected to forage over recent burns and harvest blocks.
- In forested landscapes, Bank Swallows are mostly likely to occur in riparian areas where sandy soils occur (e.g., glacial outwash), which may be indicated by the presence of pine. They forage in nearby open habitats, however the presence of sandy, eroded banks for nesting is the most important factor in determining their presence.

RANGE MAP



RESPONSE TO FOREST MANAGEMENT

- Nesting Bank Swallows are vulnerable to mortality from riparian banks collapsing, flooding, or being otherwise damaged (e.g., by road-building).
- Erosion control measures used during road construction can cause nesting habitat loss or direct mortality when materials (e.g., rock walls) are placed in front of nest sites.
- Insecticide use is a concern due to effects on food supply, which may affect the Bank Swallow’s reproductive success or survival.

STAND-LEVEL RECOMMENDATIONS

- Planned stream crossings should be inspected for nest entrances on stream banks prior to road construction. Where large colonies (>10 pairs) are located, a 50-m buffer should be established within which high-intensity activities (road-building, landings, stream crossings) should be avoided.
- Monitoring should be frequent in the spring (May-June) as swallows may establish a colony over several days.⁹
- Riparian buffers should be maintained, and streams not requiring buffers should be checked for eroded, sandy banks which could be potentially used by nesting Bank Swallows. Where these features are found, voluntary buffers are recommended to avoid damaging current or future nesting sites.
- Bank Swallows may excavate nests in sand piles or road cuts, risking mortality if disturbance is planned during the breeding season. The following steps are recommended for operators to manage this risk:
 - Evaluate suitability for excavation: If you insert a 4–5” pipe and dig out the sand inside, does the cavity collapse when the pipe is removed? If no, Bank Swallows may excavate burrows on vertical faces of this feature.
 - If vertical faces are present (e.g., on a sand pile), collapse them using equipment during the breeding season.
 - If the feature is firm enough to be excavated, and vertical faces cannot be collapsed, it should be tightly covered with tarps if