



# Barn Swallow

*(Hirundo rustica)*

**STATUS**

SARA  
Alberta

THREATENED  
SENSITIVE

British Columbia  
Saskatchewan

BLUE  
NO STATUS

**PRIMARY HABITAT**

Structure/Crossing

**TERRITORY SIZE**

0.01 ha

**NEST TYPE**

Buildings, banks, culverts, bridges

**NEST REUSE**

Frequent

**STAND LEVEL**

Inspect bridges and buildings for nests; prevention using textiles (not netting).

**LANDSCAPE LEVEL**

Awareness important near meadows, waterbodies and other open areas.

**BREEDING WINDOW**



The Barn Swallow is a common bird of agricultural areas where it predominately nests in colonies in open barns. In more forested regions the Barn Swallow nests in smaller colonies (sometimes single nests) on bridges, inside culverts, and on other structures within or near forestry operations.<sup>1</sup>

## HABITAT ECOLOGY

- Barn Swallow breeding habitat usually contains three important features.<sup>2</sup>
  - Open areas for foraging (e.g., meadow)
  - Nearby source of mud for use in nest-building.<sup>1</sup>
  - Nest site is usually in or on a building (e.g., rafters, eaves, ledges, etc.), bridge, or culvert. Natural sites such as cliff faces and caves are also used but less frequently than human-made sites.<sup>1</sup>
- These birds mainly use agricultural areas for foraging, but may also use wetlands, lakes, and sometimes shrubby riparian areas.<sup>3</sup> Large cutover areas and wet meadows may provide adequate foraging sites assuming available nesting sites are nearby.<sup>1,4</sup>

## RESPONSE TO FOREST MANAGEMENT

- Threats to the Barn Swallow include direct prey reduction associated with insecticide use, indirect prey reduction associated with herbicide-caused vegetation changes, and loss of nesting sites due to building modification or intentional nest removal by people. While these threats are most severe within agricultural areas, they have **implications in recent forest clearings where they may build nests on outbuildings, water crossings, or equipment.**<sup>5,6</sup>

## STAND-LEVEL RECOMMENDATIONS

- Operators should be trained to recognize Barn Swallow nests (active and inactive). Bridges, outbuildings, and large (~1 m) culverts are attractive nest sites, and operators should note and record nests they observe on these structures.
- Prevention: Old nests reflect sites which may attract future nesting pairs. If these sites will be disturbed during the breeding season (May 1 to Aug 31), operators can prevent nest-building by blocking sites (e.g., eaves) using geotextiles, tarping, or canvas.<sup>7</sup>
- Do not use mist nets or other thin netting, which may entangle swallows.<sup>8</sup>
- Covering of empty nests and/or potential nest sites should be completed before April 1.<sup>9</sup>
- Nesting may be encouraged on structures that will not be disturbed during the breeding season, including by installing ledges or platforms that Barn Swallows and other species may nest on.<sup>10</sup>
- Avoidance: Operators should stay at least 1.5 m away from active nests (~May 1 to Aug. 31)<sup>9</sup> and remain particularly watchful when young fledge (leave the nest but cannot fly).

## RANGE MAP

