

Beneficial Practice Guide for Bank Swallow and Northern Rough-winged Swallow



Bank Swallow perched – note the distinct dark breast band



Northern Rough-winged Swallow perched – note the lack of dark breast band and a browner underside



Breeding grounds (burrows) for Bank and Northern Rough-winged Swallows

Timing of migration and breeding in southern Ontario:		
Event	Bank Swallow	Northern Rough-winged Swallow
Spring arrival	Late April to May	Late April
Fall departure	August to September	July to September
Nesting dates	Early May to mid-July	Mid-May to mid-June
Nest cycle (average number of days):		
Nest building	2-3 weeks	17-22 days
Incubation	13-16 days	16-17 days
Fledging (when young leave nest)	17-21	17-21
Parental care – post fledging	1 week	1 week
Post breeding roosts	July to August	August
Migration to wintering grounds	September to October	September to November



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Habitat Requirements:

- **Nesting:** Bank Swallows nest in colonies. They build their nests by burrowing into vertical banks of sand or fine silt alongside rivers, streams, lakes, and other water bodies, as well as sand and gravel pits. Although the Northern Rough-winged Swallow may sometimes excavate its own burrow, it most often nests in burrows built by the Bank Swallow. It can also nest in cavities or cracks formed in vertical surfaces, such as gutters, walls, culverts, and natural crevices. Close and easy access to water is also very important.
- **Feeding:** Both the Bank Swallow and Northern Rough-winged Swallow feed exclusively on flying insects, and forage in open habitat such as pastures with livestock, hayfields, ponds, lakeshores, and wetlands.

Beneficial Practices:

- **Maintain nesting sites:** Bank Swallows prefer to burrow in soils that are soft and easy to excavate, often close to a body of open water. Help maintain suitable vertical nesting faces on your property (e.g., avoid dumping material on lakeshores for erosion control)
- **Provide sources of food:** Adult swallows must find enough food to raise their families. Access to insect-rich habitats such as pastures with livestock, hayfields, ponds, and wetlands are ideal habitats to encourage successful reproduction. Avoid using pesticides near watercourses and make sure to buffer watercourses from field runoff that may contain pesticides.
- **Avoid nest disturbance:** Leave nesting habitat undisturbed during the breeding season. Prevent children or pets from climbing on vertical faces used by Bank Swallow colonies.
- **Predation:** Digging mammals such as foxes, skunks, and raccoons pose a threat to nests, as they can dig into the nests from above. If you have a colony nesting on your property, along a lakeshore for example, consider putting fencing in a way to both make mammal access difficult while alerting humans to avoid the area. If you have pets, keep them away from nest sites.

For more information about Bank Swallows and Northern Rough-winged Swallows, visit:

1. Visit www.naturecanada.ca or Contact info@naturecanada.ca or call 1 613 562 3447
2. <https://www.birdscanada.org/volunteer/ai/bans/index.jsp?targetpg=index>
3. https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Bank_Swallow/overview (All About Birds - Bank Swallow)
4. https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Northern_Rough-winged_Swallow (All About Birds - Northern Rough-winged Swallow)
5. <https://www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/avoiding-harm-migratory-birds/beneficial-management-practices.html> (Beneficial Management Practices - Bank Swallows)
6. <http://catsandbirds.ca/>



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