

Countryside Guide to Helping Swallows, Bats, and Other Birds



Farmers and other rural landowners play a critical role in supporting the habitats of birds and bats in Ontario. Explore this info-graphic to learn about some of the beloved species in your neighborhood and what you can do to help them. Each of these declining species relies on a diet of flying insects and depends on human structures for breeding habitat.

With support from:



Chimney Swift



Cliff Swallow

1 Old stone and brick chimneys are important habitat for threatened Chimney Swifts. They can be left uncapped and unused (with damper closed) during breeding and migration (April – September).

2 Leaving access points such as barn/shed doors and loft windows open during breeding season helps provide safe entry and exit for threatened Barn Swallows to their nesting sites.

3 Mud is an important nesting material for species like Cliff Swallow, Eastern Phoebe, and Barn Swallow. You can help them build their nests by creating a nearby mud source, particularly during unusually hot or dry springs.

4 Providing other materials like hay, moss, grass, animal hair, discarded feathers, eggshells (source of calcium) can help birds build their nests and get a much needed energy boost!



Purple Martin



Eastern Phoebe

5 The maintenance of healthy wetland, fallow field, uncut hay, shrubs and understorey plants provide bats and birds with a nearby water source and supply insects for them to eat and feed their young.

6 Tree Swallow nest box and Purple Martin condos provide a safe space for these species to raise their young. Ensure that they are fitted with pole guards and proper entrance cavity sizes to prevent predation and competitor species from taking over.

7 Install nesting shelves or cups up high where you'd like to encourage swallows or phoebes to nest – generally, below overhangs or inside barns/sheds that have open access.

8 Plant insect-friendly native plants to help attract food sources for these insectivorous species: nanps.org



Little Brown Myotis



Tree Swallow

9 Use alternatives to pesticides, – herbicides, insecticides and other harsh chemicals that interfere with songbird migration and reduce insect prey populations.

10 Prevent access of cats and other predators to nests. For example, avoid stacking hay underneath active nests or install cones on pillars to stop raccoons and squirrels from reaching them. Visit catsandbirds.ca for more information on how to keep cats safe and save bird lives.

11 Ensure that any structures with active nests have adequate ventilation particularly those with metal roofs in order to prevent overheating or dehydration of nestling.

12 Support local nature efforts, or help your neighbors with any of these tips on how to be a good steward!



Bank Swallow



Barn Swallow

13 Collisions with windows are a leading cause of bird deaths. Reduce the risk by making high-risk windows visible to birds by applying dots/markings at 5 X 10 cm intervals, or external blinds, and also ensuring that bird feeders are < 75 cm, or > 10 m from picture windows.

14 Report any illegal development or draining of protected wetlands and other habitats to the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources (1-877-847-7667)

15 If you find an injured bird or bat: ensure that the animal is safe from people and pets, do not feed it, and immediately contact your local wildlife rehabilitator for further instructions.

Thank You– for your help! Together we can make a difference and ensure the survival of these threatened species.