

Cliff Swallow

Petrochelidon pyrrhonota

The gregarious Cliff Swallow nests in large colonies on buildings, cliffs, and under bridges. The gourd-shaped mud nests can number up to several hundred or thousand in a single location.

Keys to Identification

Adult Description

- Small, long-winged stocky songbird.
- Small bill.
- Wings long and pointed.
- Throat dark.
- Tail square.
- Rump pale.

Immature Description

Juvenile looks similar to adult, but has brown, not blue-black, on the crown and back, and variable dark or pale throat and forehead.

Cool Facts

- When a Cliff Swallow has had a hard time finding food, it will watch its neighbors in the nesting colony and follow one to food when it leaves. Although sharing of information about food at the colony seems unintentional, when a swallow finds food away from the colony during poor weather conditions it may give a specific call that alerts other Cliff Swallows that food is available. By alerting other swallows to a large insect swarm an individual may ensure that the swarm is tracked and that it can follow the swarm effectively.

Measurements

Both Sexes

- Length - 5.1 inches
- Wingspan - 11 - 11.8 inches
- Weight - 0.7 - 1.2 ounces

