

# Bank Swallow

*Riparia riparia*

## STATUS

Threatened 

Not Listed 

29

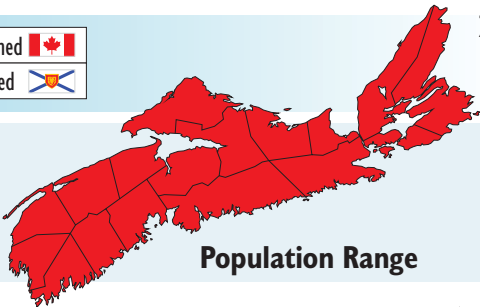


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## Species Description

The Bank Swallow is a small (12 cm long) songbird with long pointed wings and a forked tail. Its upperparts are greyish brown and its underparts are white. A brown upper breast band runs across its chest. Males and females are similar in appearance. It is a colonial species observed in groups and its song is a continuous buzzy chatter.

Occurs throughout Nova Scotia. Winters mainly in South America. Has declined by 98% over the last 40 years in Canada.



Population Range

## Habitat

In the Maritimes, Bank Swallow are found in areas that contain vertical banks such as riverbanks, and bluffs by lakes and the ocean. They also less-frequently select artificial sites like sand and gravel pits, and wood piles. Nests are burrows with tunnel entrances. As they prey on flying insects, nesting sites are often selected in close proximity to open areas such as grasslands, meadows, pastures, wetlands, rivers, lakes, oceans, and croplands.



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Generally observed from May to September in colonial groups near waterside banks. Fairly common along the Northumberland Coast.

## Interesting Points

- The smallest swallow species found in North and South America.
- Can form colonies of up to a couple thousand pairs.
- Burrows are often abandoned, either during the tunnelling process or if they become unstable.
- Burrows made by Bank Swallows are sometimes used by other species including the Belted Kingfisher and American Kestrel.



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## Similar Species

The Bank Swallow can be distinguished from other swallows due to its smaller size and brown breast band. No other swallow in Nova Scotia nests in excavated burrows. The Chimney Swift (page 39) is a similar size but has darker underparts and stiff, curved wings.

### Tree Swallow:

Juveniles and females have brownish backs, but only a faint partial breast band.



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Female

### Cliff Swallow:

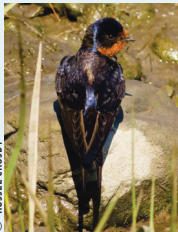
White forehead, light rump, white belly and more squared tail.



© HANS OLOFSSON

### Bank Swallow

(page 51): Deeply forked tail; reddish-brown forehead and throat; larger.



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## Threats to Survival

- Habitat loss (erosion and flood control practices, aggregate management, loss of pastureland).
- Climate change (changes in timing of insect emergence, coastal erosion, severe weather shifts).
- Declines of aerial insects (widespread use of pesticides, habitat loss and acidification).
- Road mortality (vehicle collisions).
- Nest predation and parasites.

## How You Can Help

Report sightings of this species to eBird. Do not disturb birds or nests. Keep coastal, lake, and river banks natural and allow vegetation to act as erosion controls rather than fortifying with rock or retaining walls. This action will benefit many other wildlife species. Choose pesticide-free foods and maintain chemical-free properties. If one is found dead on the road, move it off to reduce further road mortality as Bank Swallows tend to congregate around their dead.



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Bank Swallow research

## Contacts, Information & Sighting Reports

**Contact:** Environment Canada (506) 364-5044, [www.ec.gc.ca](http://www.ec.gc.ca)

**Info:** [www.sararegistry.gc.ca](http://www.sararegistry.gc.ca), [www.allaboutbirds.org](http://www.allaboutbirds.org)

**Sighting Reports:** eBird.org, 1-866-727-3447, [www.speciesatrisk.ca/sightings](http://www.speciesatrisk.ca/sightings)