

cliff swallow *Petrochelidon pyrrhonota*

Kingdom: Animalia

Division/Phylum: Chordata

Class: Aves

Order: Passeriformes

Family: Hirundinidae

ILLINOIS STATUS common, native

FEATURES

An adult cliff swallow is five to six inches in length. Both the male and female are similar in appearance. The area near the base of the tail has buff-colored feathers. The tail is dark and squared. The belly feathers are a dirty, white color while the throat feathers are rust-colored. The head has metallic, dark-blue feathers. There is a cream bar on the face near the base of the bill.

BEHAVIORS

The cliff swallow is a common migrant and rare summer resident in Illinois. Its winter range is from Panama south to the tip of South America. The cliff swallow lives in open country near water, around cliffs and near lakes. It eats mostly insects. The call is "zayrp" or "chur" or "keerd." This swallow is colonial. Spring migrants begin arriving in Illinois in April. Some cliff swallows nest in Illinois, but most go farther north. Nesting occurs in May and June. Nests are placed on unpainted barns, bridges and other structures. Nests are built in colonies. The juglike nest is made of mud. Three to six white eggs with dark markings are placed in the nest. Fall migration begins in July. Migration occurs during the day.

HABITATS

Aquatic Habitats

lakes, ponds and reservoirs; rivers and streams

Woodland Habitats

none

Prairie and Edge Habitats

none

© Illinois Department of Natural Resources. 2017. Biodiversity of Illinois.