

Swallow CORE Newsletter - Spring 2013



PROJECT BACKGROUND

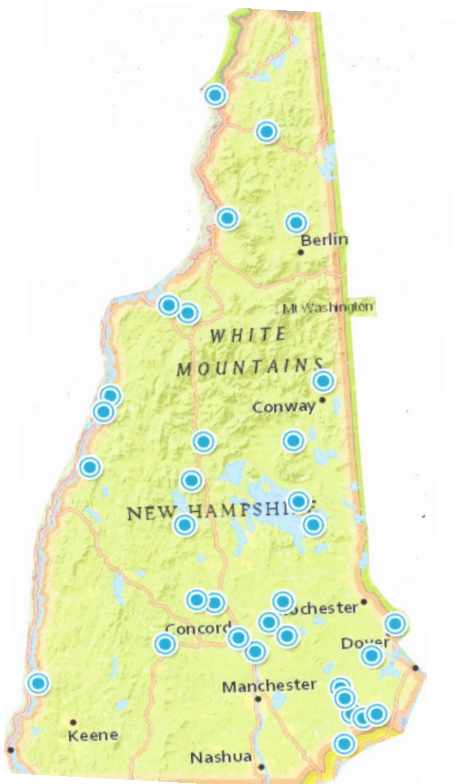
The NH Swallow Colony Registry (Swallow CORE) is a statewide citizen science initiative. We have just completed the second swallow breeding season (summer 2012), during which volunteers observed and collected data on swallow nesting sites across New Hampshire. As a reminder, four species of swallow are included in this project: Bank Swallow, Barn Swallow, Cliff Swallow, and Purple Martin.



Bank Swallow adult (photo by Vanessa Jones).



Barn Swallows (photo by Evelyn Nathan).



Swallow colony statewide distribution of monitored sites.

UPDATE

We currently have some 30 volunteers helping with the project. Many thanks to those who sent in forms or shared their eBird reports with Swallow CORE. The project depends on this valuable input. Some volunteers also shared photos and anecdotal accounts of their summer adventures with the birds. Photos are an excellent way to share our collective knowledge about the birds' lives.

The 30 volunteers have monitored nearly 50 active colonies. These colonies have yielded information about the birds' activities over last summer (2012). The state map at left shows the distribution of monitored colony sites, except for Purple Martins. The other three species of swallow are represented as follows (% of total number of colonies monitored): Barn Swallow 51%, Bank Swallow 22%, Cliff Swallow 27%.



THE FEAR OF FORMS – PROJECT PAPERWORK

Based on the feedback we received from the volunteers, it is probably fair to say that there exists a general reticence when it comes to filling out forms. Many of you seem to think there are lots of forms to fill out and they may be perceived as “too much work”, and quite possibly as “unnecessary” so we thought we’d try to clear up some of the misconceptions. There are, in fact, only two forms that we ask volunteers to complete!

Form #1 (Figure 1): The first one of these, the “**Site Registration & First Observation Form**”, only needs to be completed once for a given swallow colony. We use this form to get the geographical description of the colony location and the type of building or nesting structure. Most of the information on this form comprises names and addresses of the site and the observer, and spaces to check off the pertinent information.

One area that may cause problems is the “Latitude” and “Longitude”. If you can’t find these coordinates, just provide a good description of where the colony is located. We use the coordinates to find the site on a Google Earth map and a good description or a photo copy of a map with an “x” marks the spot works just as well. We can also get the coordinates from the physical address of the site, which should always be provided.



Cliff Swallow nest (top) under the portico at Fort Constitution (below) in New Castle (photos by Siobhan Basile).



Figure 1.

EXAMPLE

Swallow CORE 2012

Site Registration & First Observation Form

Site Name: Silver Hills Drive (Silver Hill Park) Year: 2012
(Use a descriptive site name that helps locate the site for future observers.)

Town: Pembroke Latitude: 43-215434 Longitude: -71-4746
(For lat/long, use either 43-275° or 43° 22' 30" or attach a map with the site marked.)

Site Location details (e.g., address, directions, description, etc. - the more specific the better):
Silver Hill Business Park - a construction site with recently opened sand banks.

Species: place an 'X' next to all the species at this site

Purple Martin Bank Swallow N. Rough-winged Swallow
 Cliff Swallow Barn Swallow No Swallows

Colony substrate: choose one by marking with an 'X' and provide additional details if needed

Sand or gravel pit River Bank Purple Martin house
 Natural cliff Bridge

Other exposed bluff (please give details) excavated sand banks

House, barn, or other structure (please specify type) _____

Reporter Information (the person filling out the form):

Name: Swallow CORE (Rebecca Suomala, Yvonne BERAN)
 Address: NH Audubon, 84 Silk Farm Road Concord, NH 03301
 e-mail: SwallowCore@nhaudubon.org phone: 603-224-3909

Please Check:

I plan to make future observations at this site This is a one-time observation
 I would like to enter future observations in eBird Yes No

The First Observation (Use the Site Monitoring Form for subsequent observations.)

Date	Species	Number of birds seen	Number of Nests ¹	Number of occupied nests ¹	Stage of Nesting ² (See below)	Other Notes
6/11/12	Bank Swallow	some 21 adults flying	227	about 60	not known	There are 3 banks, about 1/4 of the holes appear occupied
Additional Comments						

¹ In cases where you cannot make an actual count of nests, write N/A in this and the “occupied nests” column, and write the estimated number of adults in the “Other Notes” column. ² Stage of nesting: Off-season, Building, Incubation, Nesting, Fledged, Departed (see volunteer packet for definitions.)

Return this form to: Swallow CORE, c/o Rebecca Suomala, NH Audubon, 84 Silk Farm Rd., Concord, NH 03301. or submit this form via e-mail to: SwallowCore@nhaudubon.org. E-mail us for a Word version of this form.



THE FEAR OF FORMS – PROJECT PAPERWORK (CONTINUED)

Form #2 (Figure 2): The second form is the “**Site Monitoring Form**”. This form is the one we very much hope to receive from everyone each year – one form for each location you check. If you visit a colony just once, you’ll have one entry on the form, if you visit more than once that’s even better.

As you know, the project’s goal is to determine the swallow population status and breeding success across the state of New Hampshire, to see if the bird numbers are regionally stable, or declining.

The paperwork we ask you to fill out is an essential tool for gathering information to be able to answer these questions. The forms are designed to gather the same kind of information from geographically, and situationally disparate parts of the state. Swallow observations supplied to us only as anecdotal accounts generate many questions that we send back to you, which can be time consuming.

In this increasingly electronic age, there will be volunteers who prefer to complete the forms on their own computer and e-mail them as attachments. That’s fine! Some folks will still rather just use **eBird** which can work with a little effort (see below) For those of you, who are happy with a paper copy and a pen, that’s great also. Just keep the information coming our way, please, ... for the birds!

Why can't I just enter my observations in eBird?

You can! It’s fine to enter your swallow data in **eBird**. If you do please share your checklist with SwallowCORE. We will do the rest. The problem we found was that eBird is not set up to record all the data that Swallow CORE needs to track the colonies. Remember that we still need all the information on the colony such as the type of building, the number of nests, and the stage of nesting. We will still need to fill out a Site Registration Form for new colonies and may need to contact you for more information. If you use eBird, try to include all the information on the Site Monitoring Form.

Figure 2. EXAMPLE Swallow CORE 2012

Site Monitoring Form Year: 2012

Site Name: Silver Hills Drive

Please check one: (If multiple species are present in a colony, please use a separate form for EACH species.)

Purple Martin N Rough-winged Swallow Bank Swallow Cliff Swallow

Barn Swallow No Swallows

Town: Pembroke Observer Name: Swallow CORE

Date	Number of birds seen	Number of nests ¹	Number of occupied nests ¹	Stage of nesting ²	Other notes
7/7/12	18	227	65	Nestlings	Lots of activity at holes
7/31/12	24	228	10	Mostly Fledged	
8/12/12	6	228	2	Fledged	Little activity at banks
8/20/12	0	228	0	Departed	No activity, no adults seen

¹ In cases where you cannot make an actual count of nests, write N/A in the *nests* and *occupied nests* columns, and the estimated number of adults in the “Other Notes” column. ² Stage of nesting: Off-Season, Nest building, Incubation, Nestlings, Fledged, Departed (see “What to Record”, page x).

Please Return this form to: Swallow CORE, c/o Rebecca Suomala, NH Audubon, 84 Silk Farm Rd., Concord, NH 03301, or submit this form via e-mail. You can request a copy in Word from bsuomala@nhaudubon.org.

Did you enter your observations in NH eBird and “share” them with SwallowCore@nhaudubon.org? Yes No

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Barn Swallow (photo by Dave Menke/USFWS).

YOUR STORIES

Evelyn Nathan from Kingston told us of an experience on July 18, 2012:

At Gouldreault Farm, about 6:00 in the morning, she observed a maximum of about 22 birds on the wire, and on the adjoining barn roof. Then, all of a sudden, a hawk, probably a Cooper's or Sharp-shinned, flew through the greenhouses and out into the cornfield. The entire Barn Swallow colony (including quite probably some Tree Swallows), went on the offensive. At that point, there seemed to be 50+ birds aloft surrounding the hawk, seeing it off the farm!

Peg Ackerson from Lyme told us of this event that she saw on July 7, 2012:

The photo (on right) shows a pile of Barn Swallow chicks from her colony. There were two nests in the woodshed, and one at the entrance of the barn. The two nests in the woodshed had fledged. The nest in the barn was a few days behind.

Much to her surprise, she found several of the woodshed fledglings piled into the barn nest. What we see in the photo are four nestlings in the barn, joined by three fledglings from the woodshed!



Barn Swallow chicks (photo by Peg Ackerson).

THANK YOU!

Swallow CORE gratefully acknowledges the Blake-Nuttall Fund for grant support.

CLIFF SWALLOW FACT SHEET NOW AVAILABLE

The Swallow CORE web site now has a **Fact Sheet** on protecting **Cliff Swallows**. It's designed to help inform people who have nesting Cliff Swallows and encourage them to allow their nesting. It can also be used as a poster near a nest site to educate passers-by.

[http://www.nhbirdrecords.org/bird-conservation/library/Cliff Swallow nest poster.PDF](http://www.nhbirdrecords.org/bird-conservation/library/Cliff%20Swallow%20nest%20poster.PDF)

Contact us:

Swallow CORE
Rebecca Suomala, Coordinator
Yvonne Beran, Volunteer Project Assistant
NH Audubon, 84 Silk Farm Rd., Concord NH 03301
swallowcore@nhaudubon.org



"Quick, mom, let's get out of here! I think I saw a pussycat!" (Photo by Mary Ann Wesoly.)



Photo by Siobhan Basile

Swallow CORE — Supported by Grants and Donations

Use this form for donations and to request information.

I would like to volunteer

I would like to support Swallow CORE with a contribution of:

\$50 \$100 \$500 \$1000 Other _____

Name _____ **Phone** _____

Address _____ **Email** _____

City _____ **State** _____ **Zip** _____

Payment is by: Check enclosed. Make check payable to NH Audubon. MasterCard Visa

Signature _____

Card # _____ **Expiration Date** _____

Return this form with payment to: New Hampshire Audubon, Swallow CORE, 84 Silk Farm Road, Concord, NH 03301.