

# Tree Swallow

# Tree Swallow

## Appearance

Small, streamlined songbird with a tiny bill, long pointed wings, and a short, squared or slightly-notched tail.  
On a perched bird, the wings project just past the tail.  
Sexually dimorphic, meaning the male and female look different.



Male Tree Swallow

Blue-green above, white below, with blackish flight feathers.  
Black mask around the eye. White throat.



Female Tree Swallow

Brownish above with hints of blue-green, although some females can be nearly as blue-green as males.  
Black mask around the eye. White throat.

# Tree Swallow

## Appearance

Small, streamlined songbird with a tiny bill, long pointed wings, and a short, squared or slightly-notched tail. Black mask around the eye. Sexually dimorphic, meaning the male and female look different.



Immature Tree Swallow

Grayish brown above, white below. White throat.  
There are clear demarcations of light and dark areas on the face.



Immature Tree Swallow

Below, they are clear white with a brownish wash across the breast forming a faint band, palest in the center. They can sometimes have a diffused dark collar which might cause them to be mistaken for a Bank Swallow.

# Tree Swallow Sounds

From The Cornell Lab of Ornithology <https://www.birds.cornell.edu/home/>

## SONGS

Tree Swallow songs are high-pitched and liquid, composed of three sounds—a chirp, a whine, and a gurgle—which they mix and match in a variety of patterns. Both males and females sing.

## CALLS

Mates call to each other with the same chirps and gurgles that also appear in their songs. In addition, Tree Swallows give aggressive chatters, shrieking alarm calls, harsh distress calls, and amorous ticking sounds.

Listen to the songs and calls at:

[https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Tree\\_Swallow/sounds](https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Tree_Swallow/sounds)

# Tree Swallow

## Diet

Tree swallows forage over fields or water for berries and insects.



Tree Swallows foraging over fields.



Matching the small size of their beaks, Tree Swallows feed on small, aerial insects they catch in their mouths during acrobatic flight.

# Tree Swallow

## Diet

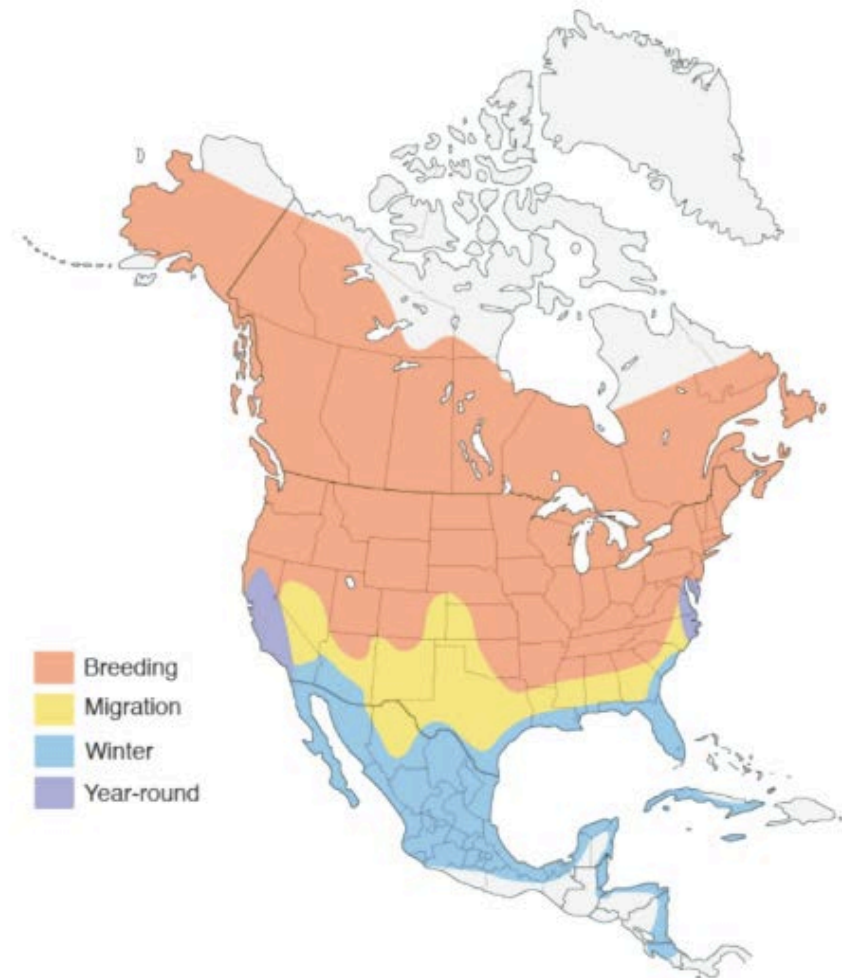
Tree swallows forage over fields or water for berries and insects.



Tree Swallow carrying an insect in its beak.

# Tree Swallow Range

Tree Swallows are seen in DuPage County from March through October.



# Tree Swallow Habitat

Tree Swallows breed in fields, marshes, shorelines, wooded swamps, and beaver ponds throughout northern North America, preferring to live near bodies of water that produce multitudes of flying insects for food.



Tree Swallows gathering near a large lake.



Tree Swallows flying above water, likely attracted to flying insects.



# Tree Swallow Behavior

Tree swallows nest singly in birdhouses or tree cavities in open fields or over water.



Tree Swallow building nest in a nest box.



Tree Swallows nesting in a tree cavity.

# Tree Swallow

## Behavior

Tree Swallows tend to glide more than any other swallow species. They move and turn so quickly, it's difficult to follow them with binoculars.

Their wings reach back to the tip of their tail, providing strength, endurance, and agility in flight.

They search and devour insects without landing for a break.

They drink and bathe by gently skimming the water's surface, creating a "skipping" pattern that resembles a rock skipping across water.

"It is almost as if they live to fly, rather than, as most birds, fly to live."  
~ Robert R. Cohen, *Sialia*, 1984





## Tree Swallow Literature/Prose

How lucky the air  
To feel the graceful embrace  
Of the swallow's wing.

*Tree Swallow*

From *Zen Birds*, by Vanessa Sorensen



# Tree Swallow Feeders

Tree Swallows are not feeder birds; they will not visit a feeder.



However, if you live very-near wide open fields, rivers, or a lake – which provide places for Tree Swallows to forage – you might be able to attract them to your yard by putting up a nest box. Make sure you put it up well before breeding season.

Attach a guard to keep predators from raiding eggs and young.

# Tree Swallow Names

## Common name

### Tree Swallow

The Tree Swallow's common name describes one of its favorite nesting places: natural tree cavities and abandoned woodpecker holes.

*Swallow* is a word of contested etymology.



## Scientific name

### *Tachycineta bicolor*

*Tachycineta bicolor* describes the Tree Swallow's fast flight and its blue and white plumage.

*Tachycineta* Greek, *tachys*, "fast," and *kineter*, "moving."

*bicolor* bi, "two," and *color*, "color."

