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.

Photos: Jackie Tilles (left), Kurt Bauschardt (right)
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.

Im mature 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.

Photos: Alan Vernon (left), © Andrew Aldrich / Macaulay Library (right)
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
Tree Swallow Diet

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

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.

Photo: Mike Hamilton DuPage Birding Club, 2020
Tree Swallow
Range
Tree Swallows are seen in DuPage County from March through October.

Map: The Cornell Lab of Ornithology
https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Tree_Swallow/maps-range
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 Swallow
Behavior

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

Photos: V. J. Anderson (left), John Matthews (right) DuPage Birding Club, 2020
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
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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common name</th>
<th>Scientific name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tree Swallow</td>
<td><em>Tachycineta bicolor</em></td>
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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.

*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.”