



CHIMNEY SWIFT

ONLY SANTA GETS PHOTOS...



BARN SWALLOW NESTLINGS (WITH FACES ONLY A MOTHER COULD LOVE)

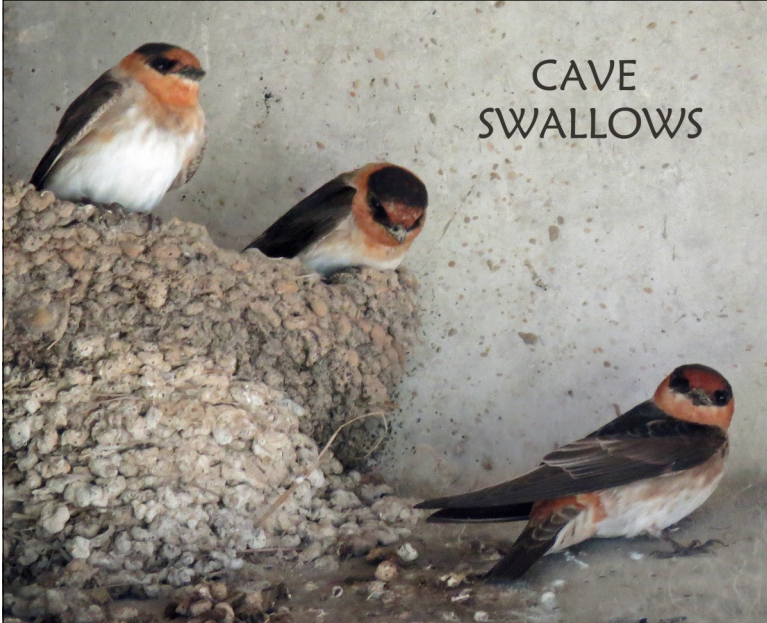


CLIFF SWALLOWS

TWO WHO ARE STARTING TO BUILD THEIR ADOBE NESTS, AND ANOTHER TAKING A BREAK IN A HALF COMPLETED NEST



BARN SWALLOWS FEMALES HAVE AN OFF-WHITE BREAST AND BELLY, WHILE MALES ARE COLORED A RICH ORANGE



CAVE SWALLOWS



PURPLE MARTIN FEMALE, WITH A MALE PERCHED ON THE COVER



BAYOU CITY BIRDING

ZINE #7

THE AERIALISTS

This zine features birds that spend hours in flight, catching and swallowing winged insects as they go. Look for them up in the sky and at the places where they build their nests. Birds are shown in order of size, with the largest ones first.



COMMON NIGHTHAWK

DETAILS, DETAILS...

With the aerialists zooming around at fifteen to forty miles an hour, it can be really hard to tell one bird from another. First, focus on the shape of the bird's wings—finding the point where the front edge bends at the “wrist.” Next, look at back edge of the tail and decide whether it is forked, notched, curved or squared off. Then compare what you see to the sketches.

Also consider the height at which the bird is flying. The Barn, Cliff and Cave Swallows usually fly within fifty feet of the ground, while the other aerialists fly higher. Note that the Cliff and Cave Swallows have orange rumps, while the rumps of Barn Swallows are blue.

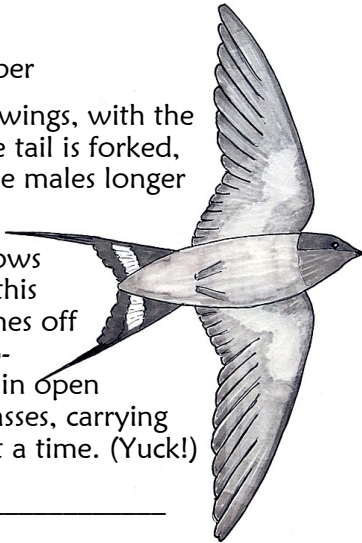
Download more of the Bayou City Birding Zines at WhiteOakBayou.org

BARN SWALLOW

WHEN: March to November

LOOK FOR: Medium-size wings, with the wrist close to the head. The tail is forked, with the outer “tines” of the males longer than those of the females.

FIELD NOTES: Barn Swallows are the most agile birds of this group, often swooping inches off the ground. They build cup-shaped nests made of mud in open buildings and under overpasses, carrying up one mouthful of mud at a time. (Yuck!)



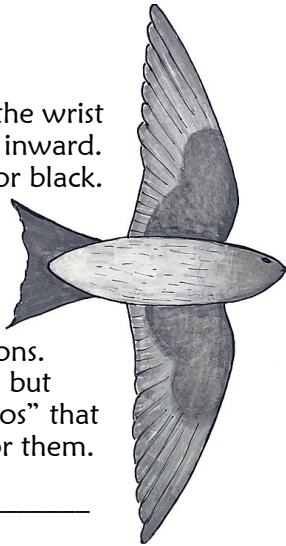
1st SEEN ON _____ AT _____

PURPLE MARTIN

WHEN: February to October

LOOK FOR: Broad wings, with the wrist close to the head. The tail curves inward. Male martins look bluish-purple or black. Females have dark wings/back/tail and a light breast/belly.

FIELD NOTES: Martins are very social, feeding together and then perching for chatty “gossip” sessions. Martins can nest in holes in trees, but prefer to build nests in the “condos” that martin-loving people maintain for them.



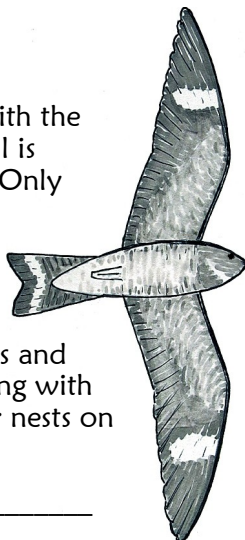
1st SEEN ON _____ AT _____

COMMON NIGHTHAWK

WHEN: May to October

LOOK FOR: Long narrow wings, with the wrist far from the head. The long tail is notched. Wings have a white band. Only the males have the white tail band.

FIELD NOTES: Nighthawks are easy to find at sunset—watch for them high above parking lots and lit-up ball fields. They have short legs and usually lay lengthwise on limbs, hiding with their camo feathers. They place their nests on the ground and on flat roofs.



1st SEEN ON _____ AT _____

CHIMNEY SWIFT

WHEN: April to October

LOOK FOR: Long, thin wings that curve back with almost no sign of a wrist, and a stubby tail. Nicknamed the “flying cigar.”

FIELD NOTES: Swifts spend the whole day in the air, pausing only to feed their nestlings. Their legs/feet are tiny and they cannot walk or take off from the ground. Swifts build nests inside chimneys and other dark structures, using sticky saliva to glue twigs together. At night, they roost in chimneys, clinging to vertical surfaces.



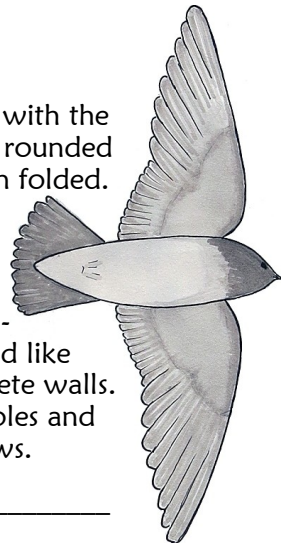
1st SEEN ON _____ AT _____

CLIFF SWALLOW

WHEN: April to October

LOOK FOR: Medium-size wings, with the wrist close to the head. The tail is rounded when flared and squared off when folded.

FIELD NOTES: Cliffs Swallows hang out with Barn Swallows, and can usually be found flying around bayous. They make gourd-shaped nests under overpasses, and like most swallows, can cling to concrete walls. Their nests have small entrance holes and are often stolen by House Sparrows.



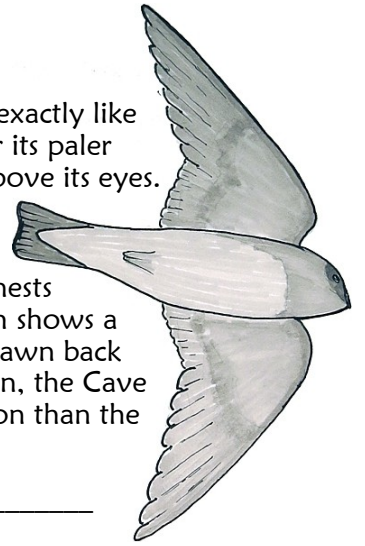
1st SEEN ON _____ AT _____

CAVE SWALLOW

WHEN: March to October

LOOK FOR: A bird almost exactly like the Cliff Swallow, except for its paler neck and the orange slash above its eyes.

FIELD NOTES: Like the Barn Swallows, the Cave Swallows build cup-shaped nests under overpasses. The sketch shows a bird in a glide with wings drawn back and tail closed in. In Houston, the Cave Swallow is much less common than the Barn and Cliff Swallows.



1st SEEN ON _____ AT _____

LEARN MORE...

The aerialists could also be named the “adaptors,” since each has found a way to deal with the loss of habitat by learning to build their nests in new places. This skill has allowed several of the aerialists to expand their range. Can't find a barn, cliff, or cave in Houston? Then underpasses will do quite nicely, thank you! Purple Martins go with the you-do-it-for-me approach, charming people into giving them their own condos. Chimney Swifts are declining however, because many new houses don't have the chimneys the swifts need. Learn how to help by googling “Swifts Over Houston.”

Note that the aerialists chatter a lot while flying, which may help them avoid collisions. Learn to recognize their chatter by using recordings at AllAboutBirds.org and/or the iKnowBirdSong or Chirp! Bird Song apps.