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Kale, H. W., II, B. Pranty, B. M. Stith, and C. W. Biggs. 1992. The atlas of the breeding birds of Florida. Final Report. Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission, Tallahassee, Florida.

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Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*

The Barn Swallow, with its long, deeply forked tail, is the most widely distributed swallow in the world. The North American population breeds from southern Alaska and Canada to Mexico. The birds winter from Panama to South America.

Barn Swallows are found throughout Florida during migration. They are a local and increasingly common breeder across north Florida and breed in smaller numbers southward to south Florida (Stevenson and Anderson 1994).

Habitat. Barn Swallows inhabit open country, especially near water, where suitable nesting sites are available. Their diet consists primarily of small flying insects taken on the wing. Berries and seeds are occasionally eaten.

The Barn Swallow commonly nests in small colonies. Historically it nested in caves and rock crevices, but nesting is now almost exclusively on human-made structures. Throughout most of its range the Barn Swallow nests most commonly inside or under the eaves of buildings, but most colonies in Florida are located in culverts or under bridges over water. Stevenson (1978a) reports that this is the case throughout the Deep South. He suggests that nesting over water offers protection from the high temperatures encountered inside buildings during the summer.



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An open cup nest is built of a mixture of mud and straw and is lined with feathers. A clutch consists of 4 or 5 white eggs, spotted with shades of brown. Both parents incubate the eggs, which hatch in about 15 days. The young fledge in 18 to 23 days.

Seasonal Occurrence. The Barn Swallow is a common to abundant migrant throughout the state. Although it has been recorded in every month of the year, it is most common from April to late May and August to October.

Two broods are usually produced each year. Extreme breeding dates given for Florida, 31 May to 11 July, may understate the breeding season (Stevenson and Anderson 1994).

Status. The Barn Swallow is a relatively recent addition to the state's list of breeding birds. It first colonized the state by moving eastward along the Gulf coast from Alabama. It nested for the first time in the state in Escambia County in 1946 (Weston 1947). A second invasion occurred as the northern breeding population moved southward from Georgia, beginning in the 1970s.

The Barn Swallow has continued to spread throughout the state and has now nested as far south as Key West. It appears to be well established in the western Panhandle but is uncommon in the peninsula, where colonies are widely scattered. Many of the "possible" and "probable" breeding records on the Atlas map undoubtedly refer to late spring or early fall migrants and should not be considered to represent breeding birds.

Barn Swallow

