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## Northern Rough-winged Swallow *Stelgidopteryx serripennis*

The Northern Rough-winged Swallow breeds widely in North America, from southeastern Alaska and southern Canada through the United States and into Central America. Rough-winged Swallows winter along the Gulf coast from Florida to Texas and south through Mexico to Panama. The birds are quite local and irregular in Florida, found near water during migration and around suitable breeding sites in early summer (Stevenson and Anderson 1994).

**Habitat.** Rough-winged Swallows are birds of open country and are usually found near water.

Their diet consists exclusively of flying insects, mostly flies, ants, and beetles.

Generally the Northern Rough-winged Swallow is a solitary nester, but it also can be found in small colonies. The breeding pair usually excavates a burrow 1.2 to 1.5 m (4 to 5 ft) long in a sand bank or cliff. The nest is composed of grass, rootlets, and similar materials. In some coastal areas it burrows into sand dunes. Rough-winged Swallows also nest in abandoned Kingfisher burrows and human-made structures, such as culverts and drainpipes. Robertson and Woolfenden (1992) report that nests in south Florida are usually located in artificial sites, and this may have influenced the southward extension of the bird's breeding range.



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Rough-winged Swallows are single-brooded (Ricklefs 1972). A clutch usually consists of 5 to 7 glossy white eggs (Stevenson and Anderson 1994). Incubation, by the female alone, lasts 11 days. The young fledge after 20 or 25 days (Dingle 1942, Lunk 1962).

**Seasonal Occurrence.** The Northern Rough-Winged Swallow has a prolonged migration period, from March to May and then again from June to January.

**Status.** In Florida Howell (1932) reported that it was "an uncommon migrant and local breeder in the northern and central parts." Sprunt (1954) reported that it was not known to breed "south of the Tampa Bay area" and suggests this was due to a lack of suitable nesting sites. It has extended its breeding range southward during the past half-century as far south as southern Dade County. It is now considered a rare to uncommon breeder throughout the state (Robertson and Woolfenden 1992). Atlas fieldworkers found it considerably more frequent in the western Panhandle than in the rest of the state, where it is locally distributed.

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