

BARN SWALLOW

HIRUNDO RUSTICA

Your ally against flying insects

Main benefits for agriculture

Barn swallows feed on insects that may be considered crop pests, such as flies, mosquitoes, beetles (weevils, Colorado potato beetles), moths (European corn borers, noctuid moths) and parasitic wasps.

A single barn swallow can consume up to 60 mosquitoes per hour, for a total of **850 to 1,000 insects per day**. That means a population of 50 swallows could consume roughly 42,500 to 50,000 insects per day, greatly reducing agricultural pest populations.

Swallow droppings are rich in nutrients, particularly nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium, and can be used as a **natural fertilizer**.



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Habitats

- Grasslands and pastureland
- Man-made structures (barns, garages, culverts, houses)
- Wetlands and riparian environments

Did you know?

Barn swallows can live for up to eight years and are very loyal to their nesting sites. **By providing safe nesting sites for swallows, a farmer can benefit from their insectivorous diet over several years.**

What you can do to help the barn swallow

Preserving habitat

To encourage nesting, **keep or restore wooden farm buildings**. In addition, leave an opening of at least 20 cm and avoid storing machinery and materials within 2 m of nests.

Install structures to facilitate nest building. For instance, you could install perches or platforms at different heights under a sloping roof.

Create or enhance **ponds** to encourage an abundance of insects and provide mud for nest building.

Maintain pastures and graze livestock more often to **attract the insects** barn swallows feed on.

Maintain diverse riparian buffers to encourage the presence of insects.

Reducing mortality

Do not destroy existing nests, and if a nest is present in a building, make sure an entry and exit point is left open during the nesting period.

Reduce pesticide use by using integrated pest management methods and promoting soil health, to ensure a source of food.

If possible, avoid storing machinery, tools, and materials within 2 m of nests to **prevent cats or other potential predators from getting to them**.

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