

White-throated Swift

Aeronautes saxatalis

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Conservation Status

Included in Section 7 Notice: No

Designated as Identified Wildlife: No

Federally Designated (COSEWIC): No

Species identified in Kamloops, Lillooet or Merritt SFMP: **Yes (Lillooet)**

Description

- A small swift approximately the size of the more common swallows in British Columbia (Length: 16cm, Wingspan: 40cm).
- Slender cylindrical body with very long pointed wings that are swept back.
- White throat, upper breast and midline.
- White patches on flanks.
- Distinctive white markings on throat, wings and sides of rump are found on both sexes.



Photo: Greg Lavaty



Photo: Monte M. Taylor

Forest Districts

Cascades

Kamloops

Okanagan Shuswap

BEC Zones

- BG
- ICH (less common)
- IDF (less common)
- PP

Vocalization

Common call is a long and descending “ki ki ki ki kir kir kiir kiir kirsh kirsh krrsh” - clear and high at the beginning and ending with more of a rasping quality. [Click here](#) to be linked to a website featuring a recording of its vocalization.

Elevation

Not available.

Important Habitat Features

- Nearly always associated with hot, dry climates and with river valleys where precipitous cliffs provide crevices for nest sites.
- Foraging: over grasslands, meadows, and other open areas adjacent to nesting cliffs. Seldom seen far from their associated cliffs.
- Colonies are found mainly in the Bunchgrass or Ponderosa Pine biogeoclimatic zones. A few colonies are in the Interior Douglas-fir Biogeoclimatic Zone, and in the lower Columbia Valley, colonies are located in the Interior Cedar-Hemlock Biogeoclimatic Zone.

Additional Information

- In British Columbia, the White-throated Swift occurs north from the US border as far as Salmon Arm, Kamloops, Clearwater, and, on the Fraser River, to Doc English Bluff, southeast of Williams Lake. It occurs as far west as Farwell Canyon (Chilcotin River), Pavilion, Spences Bridge, and Princeton. East of the Okanagan Valley it occurs only in isolated pockets. Its centre of abundance is in the southern Okanagan Valley north to Summerland and Naramata. Within this range, the river valleys in which White-throated Swifts have been found include the Okanagan, Thompson (Kamloops to the Fraser River), Clearwater, Fraser (Pavilion to Williams Lake), lower Chilcotin, Big Creek, Similkameen (west to Princeton) and Columbia (Arrow Lake to Castlegar, and north of Columbia Lake).
- Colonies of this swift are often seen flying in circling flocks high overhead near cliffs, canyons and other vertical faces such as tall buildings. This species can fly at incredibly fast speeds as they pursue insects in the air or in mating courtships.

Management Recommendations

Consult with a Registered Professional Biologist prior to implementing the following management recommendations because certain situations may require custom solutions based on specific site characteristics.

- Budget permitting, develop a habitat model to help identify high value habitat found within your areas of interest. The complexity of the model, and therefore its accuracy, will be dependent on budgetary constraints.
- Identify locations where this species is known to occur: if available, obtain occurrence

data from the Conservation Data Centre (<http://srmwww.gov.bc.ca/cdc/>) and if necessary conduct surveys to confirm presence or absence of this species.

In areas where this species is located:

- Establish a no harvest buffer zone around active nest sites. The size of this buffer zone will depend on the proximity of harvesting to the nest sites and the amount of forest cover.
- Forestry activities (including harvest, salvage, hauling, and road construction) may only occur between August 15 and April 1 in areas adjacent to the buffer zone.
- Do not blast, remove rock or talus, or construct roads where active nests are located.
- Outside of the no harvest zone, avoid disturbance to active nest sites during the breeding season (April 1 to August 15). In general, avoid harvesting, salvage, blasting (within 100m), road construction, helicopter activity (within 500m) or other prolonged disturbance.
- Do not construct roads through grasslands, meadows, and other open areas adjacent to active nest sites.
- Do not use pesticides.

References

B.C. Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks. 1999. *Aeronautes saxatalis* in Rare Birds of British Columbia.

B.C. Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection. 2004. Prairie Falcon in Accounts and Measures for Managing Identified Wildlife – Accounts V. 2004. B.C. Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection, Victoria, B.C. 9pp.

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Summers, K. 1995. Status of the White-throated Swift in British Columbia. B.C. Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks, Wildl. Branch. Working rep. WR-68. 24pp.