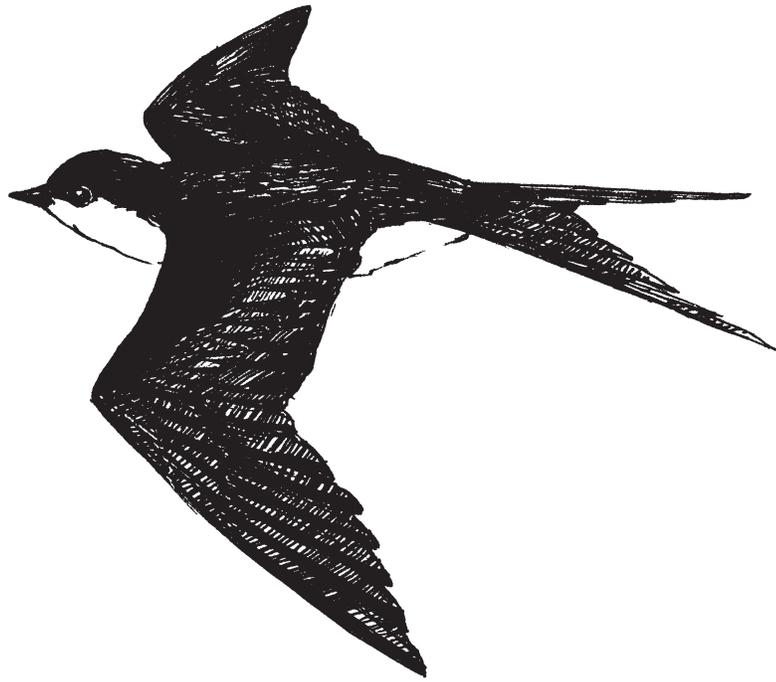




## Endemic Birds of The Bahamas



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Artwork by John Thompson

### BAHAMA SWALLOW

#### SCIENTIFIC NAME

*Tachycineta cyaneoviridis*

#### COMMON NAMES

Bahama Swallow, Swallow

#### DESCRIPTION

Swallows resemble Swifts: they have slender bodies with long pointed wings. The Bahama Swallow is about six inches in length. It has greenish upperparts (brown on immatures) and pure white underparts. A distinguishing feature that sets it apart from other Swallows is its deeply forked tail. Flocks perch in long rows on branches and wires.

#### DIET

The Bahama Swallow is an insectivore or insect eater. They can be seen darting through the air to catch small flying insects.

#### REPRODUCTION

The Bahama Swallow breeds exclusively in the northern Bahamas. The breeding season is from mid-March through June. They usually build nests in cavities of live Caribbean pine trees - usually sites that were abandoned by woodpeckers. Bahama Swallows also readily nest in artificial cavities such as nest boxes, electrical conduit boxes, pipes and rooftop ventilation units. The female lays about 3 white eggs and incubation last from 15-17 days. Both parents feed the young birds. The chicks fledge or leave the nest after 22-25 days.

## **HABITAT**

The Bahama Swallow inhabits the pine forest of our islands in the northern Bahamas.

These islands, collectively known as the "pine islands" are Grand Bahama, Andros, New Providence and Abaco. Bahama Swallows are distinctly uncommon on New Providence. They can also be seen on other islands during winter migration.

## **STATUS**

The Bahama Swallow is currently listed as near-threatened (Collar et. al. 1992). It is an endemic bird which means that it is only found in The Bahamas and nowhere else in the world. Its survival is solely in the hands of the Bahamain people.

Population estimates vary. One estimate places the population of Swallows at 4,800 birds and another estimate using a different method placing the population at 20,000 birds.

To kill, harm or capture this bird is prohibited under the Wild Birds (Protection) Act. Significant pine forest habitat is protected in national parks which are managed by the Bahamas National Trust. These locations are the Rand Nature Centre (Grand Bahama) and Abaco National Park (Abaco). Park bye-laws prohibit the killing, harm or capture of any wildlife within park boundaries.

## **THREATS**

The greatest threat to Bahama Swallows is **habitat destruction**. When the habitat is destroyed, food sources are destroyed as well. Loss of habitat can be attributed to a number of factors.

**Logging:** The most likely cause of major habitat loss in The Bahamas is logging, especially since much secondary forest is now becoming mature after the last spate of harvesting.

**Housing Development:** Major habitat loss is incurred as a result of housing development.

**Natural disasters:** Natural disasters such as hurricanes pose another threat to Bahama swallows since they can demolish large portions of the forest on individual islands and the bird's habitat there could be effectively destroyed.