

Tree Swallow (*Tachycineta bicolor*)

Tree Swallows typically arrive along the lakeshore in early April. They are cavity nesters and the swallow boxes found throughout Colonel Sam Smith Park are in great demand. They especially like open areas near water that provide a good supply of flying insects. Unusual among swallows, they will also eat berries. This adaptation allows them to survive a cold spell when other insect eaters may not.

Males arrive first on territory. Females build feather-lined nests for their 4-7 eggs, and, following incubation by the female alone, both parents feed a diet of insects to their nestlings. Southward migration begins as early as July.

As with all North American aerial forgers, their numbers (although still relatively high) have dropped dramatically in recent years due to loss of habitat and the ever-increasing use of pesticides.

Swallows have long been a favourite motif for sailors as they symbolize both a safe return home and the lifting of the soul up to heaven in instances of drowning.