

Bank Swallow ID Quick Reference



Bank Swallows

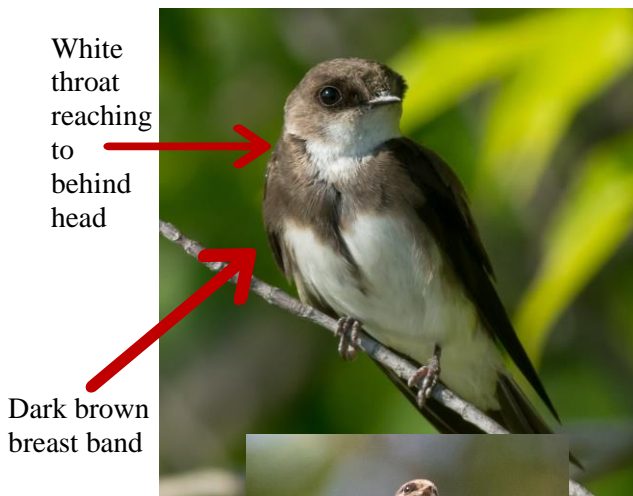


Photo 1

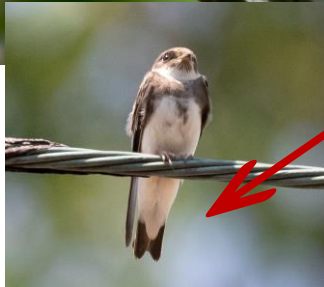


Photo 2

Appearance:

Bank swallows are the smallest of the swallows, and are most commonly mistaken for northern rough-winged swallows.

Characteristics:

- around the size of a sparrow
- dark brown in color, with a white belly
- white chin extending around the sides of the head
- *dark brown breast band*
- slightly notched tail

Colonies:

Bank swallow colonies can consist of a few, up to hundreds or even thousands of burrows.

- dug in nearly vertical, eroding dirt surfaces with little or no vegetation
- burrows generally arranged horizontally along favorable strata, in an organized layout
- often located along stream and lake banks and coastal bluffs
- can also be found in gravel and sand pits, along roadcuts, and in coastal dunes



Photo 3

Burrows:

- usually oval in shape, about 3 inches wide and 2 inches tall
- size and shape can vary due to erosion or predators



Photo 4

Photo 1: Photowind / Shutterstock.com

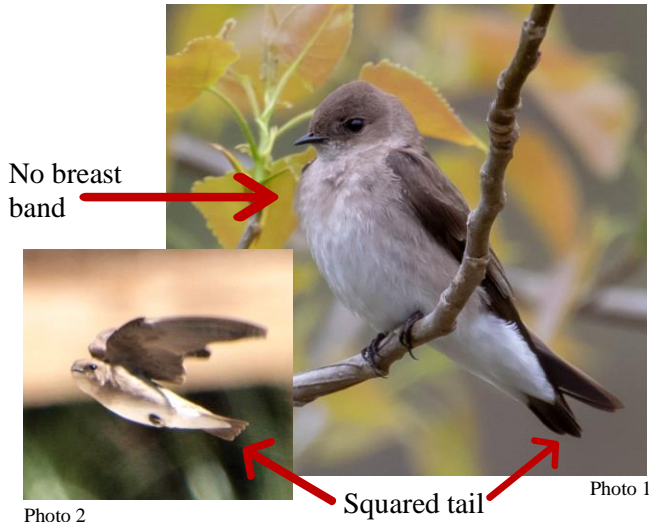
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Photo 3: "Bank swallows" by [USFWS Pacific Southwest Region](#) / Public Domain.

Photo 4: Paul Reeves Photography / Shutterstock.com

Similar Species

Northern Rough-winged Swallows



Appearance:

- slightly larger than bank swallows
- dark brown head and back
- dirty white-colored underside, chin, and throat
- no breast band
- square tail



Photo 3

Burrows:

- use burrows dug by other species including bank swallows, and will often nest on the edge of bank swallow colonies
- occur singly, or in small groups with burrows arranged haphazardly
- vary in shape and size

Tree Swallows (juveniles)

Appearance:

- brown with white-ish underside, can have weak breast band and patches of iridescent blue-green adult feathers
- slightly larger than bank swallows
- small white crescent on either side of rump
- white throat does not wrap around sides of head; sharply contrasting throat and head coloration



Photo 4



Photo 5

Additional Resources

Materials on Project Website:

Identification and Survey Techniques PowerPoint

Useful Websites:

https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Bank_Swallow/
<https://www.audubon.org/field-guide/bird/bank-swallow>

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