

Setting barn swallows up for success

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Barn Swallow populations have declined steeply across Canada, due in part to reductions in available insect prey and loss of habitat. The Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada assessed the Barn Swallow as Threatened in 2011. The Mersey Tobeatic Research Institute (MTRI) has been recruiting volunteers from Kespukwitk and other parts of Nova Scotia since 2022 to help monitor nesting productivity. Over 65 active and dedicated volunteer Barn Swallow observers have submitted data to the Mersey Tobeatic Research Institute, Birds Canada and the Atlantic Canada Conservation Data Centre (ACCDC) in the past 2 years. Volunteer monitors were asked to observe and record nesting productivity during June and again in late July. Volunteers observed and counted the approximate number of young fledglings during each nesting period. Volunteer data sheets were made available to all volunteer participants. Best Management Practices (BMPs) were shared on social media posts, and we engaged with volunteers with personal on-site visits and public outreach. Volunteers who created better nesting habitat by adding shelves and nest cups in 2022 reported a slight increase in nest numbers in 2023. Citizen scientists' ongoing participation provides valuable information on Barn Swallows in Kespukwitk, Southwest Nova Scotia, and helps scientists make better informed conservation management decisions. MTRI continues to recruit dedicated volunteers.

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