

RE-USE OF AMERICAN ROBIN NEST BY VIOLET-GREEN SWALLOW FOR NESTING

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The Violet-green Swallow (*Tachycineta thalassina*), a secondary cavity-nesting species, utilizes natural cavities such as rock crevices, snags, and holes in living trees. It is also a familiar nester in human-made structures with cavities and holes including posts and poles, brick and stone walls, chimneys, nest boxes, and crevices and crannies in buildings from sheds and log cabins to modern houses (Campbell et al. 1997). Given the species' notable adaptability, one might expect to find mention in the literature of the Violet-green Swallow using the nest of another non-swallow species (Brown et al. 1992). However, I have not found this to be the case. Therefore, it is of some interest that I found a pair of Violet-green Swallows feeding three chicks in the old nest of an American Robin (*Turdus migratorius*).

The robin's nest, typically of grasses and plant stems and reinforced with mud and lined with fine grasses, was about three metres from the ground atop a brick pillar supporting the roof of a house one and a half stories tall (Figure 1). The nest was visible from a large window in the living room of the home of Dan and Diane Katz in Vernon, British Columbia and was in good condition and may have been constructed the year before during the 2006 breeding season.



Figure 1. Adult male Violet-green Swallow feeding its two begging nestlings in an old American Robin nest in Vernon, BC. 22 June 2007 (Chris Siddle). BC Photo 3630.

I discovered Violet-green Swallows using the robin's nest on 18 June 2007. The swallows had added some grasses and a few feathers. Four days later, on 22 June I noticed that the female of the swallow pair had disappeared and that the male was feeding three nestlings alone. On 25 June I became worried that the rapidly growing chicks might tumble from the relatively shallow cup of the nest. Their eyes were open by this time and they were developing their first bi-coloured plumage. At 0600 hrs 26 June I discovered that one of the chicks had fallen from the nest and lay dead on the sidewalk below. The male alone was able to raise the remaining two chicks which fledged on 29 June (Diane Katz pers. comm.).

Literature Cited

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