

## Endangered Species and Spaces

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### 4.1 White-throated Swift: *Aeronautes saxatilis* (Woodhouse)

**Order: Apodiformes**  
**Family: Apodidae**

#### Status

Global Rank: G5  
Provincial Rank: S3S4

Provincial Listing: [Blue list](#)



#### Distinguishing Features

A large western swift with long wings, and decidedly forked tail (without spine-like projections). Upper parts brownish-black or sooty-brown, white line over eye.

Sides blackish with white patches on either side of the rump, the throat, breast and median part of the abdomen. Total length 15 - 18 cm. (Godfrey, 1986)

#### Distribution

Columbia Basin: Local distribution throughout the s. part of the Columbia Basin.

British Columbia: White-throated Swifts are moderately widespread, being locally distributed as far north as Williams Lake, the Chilcotin River, and Clearwater, and as far east as the East Kootenays (Summers 1995).

Global: Breeds from south central British Columbia and southern Alberta south in the mountains to Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras. Winters from central California, central Arizona, and southwest New Mexico southward to limits of breeding range, (Godfrey 1986).

#### Habitat

White-throated Swifts are usually observed in their aerial habitat near towering cliffs and canyons in the dry interior. They breed in small colonies on steep cliffs among rocky bluffs or in canyons.

#### Threats

Nesting habitat is generally not very threatened by human activities. However, there is possible abandonment of nesting sites in response to mine blasting and housing development. There is also the potential for disturbance from rock-climbing and hang-gliding, although the impacts of

these activities are unknown at this time. Insect control programs and land development that destroys insect-producing habitats have the potential to effect local populations by reducing available forage (Cannings et al. In prep.).

## Biology

In British Columbia nesting occurs at 300 - 800 m elevation, and colonies consist of 2 - 40 birds (average is 8). The nest is a shallow-cupped saucer of feathers, grass and other plant material, glued together with the bird's saliva. Nests are glued into cracks, crevices, and small, protected ledges on precipitous rocky cliffs at sites that are inaccessible to almost all terrestrial predators. Once breeding is established, they return traditionally to the same nest site year after year (Cannings et al. In prep.). Little is known about breeding ecology because of the inaccessibility of nest sites. Clutch size is typically 4 or 5 eggs, but the incubation and fledging periods are unknown. Adults have been observed exhibiting incubation behaviour as early as May 16, and feeding young between June 9 and August 16 (Cannings et al. In prep.).

Birds

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