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Information request - Do you know the locations of bank swallow habitats?

Dear AWA Members,

On June 16th, Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) released a proposed Recovery Strategy for bank swallow (*Riparia riparia*) populations in Canada which is open for public consultation until September 14th, 2021.

Bank swallow populations in Canada have experienced a 98% decline over the last 40 years and were classified as threatened on Schedule 1 by Canada's *Species at Risk Act* (SARA) in November 2017. Under SARA, the competent federal ministers are responsible for preparing recovery strategies for any species listed as extirpated, endangered, or threatened. The bank swallow Recovery Strategy seeks to satisfy this jurisdictional obligation by ECCC and the Government of Canada.

A crucial part of any Recovery Strategy is identifying critical habitat – the habitat necessary for the survival and recovery of a species. SARA requires that recovery strategies include identification of any listed species' critical

habitat, to the extent possible, as well as examples of activities that are likely to result in its destruction.

This proposed Recovery Strategy has identified 15 critical habitat units across Alberta on both federal and non-federal lands; however, the document explicitly states that the critical habitat identified in the strategy is insufficient to meet the population objectives – meaning that more critical habitat needs to be identified to give these birds a chance at recovery.

As part of AWA's efforts to comment on this proposed strategy, we are hoping to provide ECCC with a list of additional bank swallow habitats that should be identified within the recovery strategy and considered for protection. We are asking our members for any information on riparian areas across the province where bank swallow individuals and/or nesting colonies have been observed to frequent recently or in the past. This would be an important step in ensuring that more critical habitat might be protected as part of these recovery activities.

ECCC has stated that from 2022 to 2027, they will be conducting a series of studies to identify additional critical habitat to ensure that sufficient habitat is listed to support the population recovery objectives of the Recovery Strategy. We hope that, if AWA is able to suggest additional habitats, we might help to speed up this identification process and ensure critical habitat is protected sooner rather than later to the benefit of this imperiled species.

Any information on potential bank swallow habitats can be sent to AWA's conservation specialist Phillip Meintzer at pmeintzer@abwild.ca.

For more information on the proposed recovery strategy and the ongoing public consultation period, please refer to the SARA website at the following link: <https://species-registry.canada.ca/index-en.html#/consultations/1586>. Table D-9 (on page 96) of the Recovery Strategy lists all currently identified bank swallow habitats in Alberta, with maps included on pages 117 – 118.



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