



FACTSHEET

# Welcome Swallow



FACTSHEET

# Welcome Swallow

**Common Name:** Welcome Swallow

**Scientific Name:** *Hirundo neoxena*

**Noongar Name:** Moorningwilboor

**Conservation Status:** Listed as Least Concern under ICUN (2014). All Rottnest Island's fauna is protected under the *Rottnest Island Authority Act 1987*.

**Habitat:** Woodland wetlands, heath, settlement area, coastal habitat.

**Body length:** 15-16 cm

**Weight:** 10-20 g

**Gestation period:** 14-16 days

**Number of young:** 1-4 (2-4 eggs)

**Description:**

The Welcome Swallow has blue-black upper surfaces, a chestnut forehead, throat and upper-chest, and pale grey under surfaces. It has dark brown eyes, a black bill and brown legs.

This species is well known for its distinctive forked tail. The tail feathers each have a white spot near the end. Watch out for them skimming around in the air feeding on insects.

**Diet:**

Flies, midges, aerial insects.

**In the Wild:**

Welcome swallows are a small passerine bird, otherwise known as a perching bird. This is due to having three toes pointing forward and one backwards.

Widespread throughout Australia, swallows on Rottnest used to nest around the Island's edges in the caves in the limestone cliffs. When settlers arrived, the swallows also used the structures the settlers built for nest sites.

These birds now nest in all the Settlement areas as well as in the old cliff sites. Their nests are made of mud and plant material and you can see these cup-shaped structures under the eaves of most of the buildings.

Swallows have a diet of small insects which they commonly catch mid-flight. The calling of a welcome swallow is a combination of soft warbling tones and twittering with an abrupt whistle to sound alarm.

Welcome Swallows breed from July to January, however can breed any time of the year given the right conditions. After 14 days, the wing feathers on young swallows are large enough for flight.

### Threats:

- Pest birds
- Uncontrolled fire

### DID YOU KNOW?

Welcome swallows were given their name by sailors. Swallows were one of their first 'welcomes' to land as the sight of a swallow meant that land was not far away.