

Swallow Nest Box Project

Violet-green and Tree swallow populations are declining across Alaska. Local birders have noted this drop in Homer. Birds that eat insects may need more to eat with the dramatic reductions in insect populations and changes in the climate.



In existence now for 40 years, the Center for Alaskan Coastal Studies (CACs)' staff is excited to expand habitat conservation and programs through the generous donation of the Inspiration Ridge Preserve (IRP) in Homer, AK. In 2022, we envisioned the Swallow Nest Box Project. This program will expand our ability to provide effective experience-based field science instruction to Alaskan youth, residents, and visitors.

Additionally, the scientific data collected from the Swallow Nest Box Project will help inform us about the decline in the area's Violet-green and Tree swallow populations.

In April 2022, we constructed and placed 33 new swallow boxes around Inspiration Ridge Preserve at specially chosen and mapped locations. In the summer of 2022, IRP Naturalists worked on a simple swallow box occupancy monitoring project.

In the summer of 2023, we plan to host a University of Michigan graduate student team whose project will include developing protocols for monitoring the swallow boxes. They will also create a baseline inventory of insects and invertebrates available to support nesting birds on IRP.

Their work will help CACS establish a Swallow Box Nest Monitoring Academy in 2024 aimed at Middle School and High School students. The goals of this new program include teaching students:

- a methodology of swallow box monitoring using established scientific protocols;
- the scientific methods of data gathering, recording, and interpreting information; and
- USFW-approved methods of bird banding swallow chicks and adults.

When funding permits, plans also include adding a nest box that can accommodate a camera to monitor chick development in the nest box and broadcast it to the public.

Our mission is to foster responsible interactions with our natural surroundings and generate knowledge of Kachemak Bay's unique marine and coastal ecosystems through science-based environmental education and stewardship.

To successfully meet our mission and provide services to the community and beyond Alaska, we rely heavily on the contributions of individuals and businesses for support. Your generosity will make a difference within our community by allowing us to continue our work. We invite you to participate in the exciting events and programs we offer each year!

