

40 Years



**New Jersey
Meadowlands
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NJMC NEWS RELEASE

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TREE SWALLOWS RETURN TO THE MEADOWLANDS

And some can't wait to check out their new digs

LYNDHURST, N.J. – The New Jersey Meadowlands Commission (NJMC) began its annual nesting box program for tree swallows this week, and the birds are grabbing up the new homes as soon as they are placed along the edge of the wetlands. In some instances, swallows have flown into the nesting boxes while the boxes were still on the boat, awaiting placement.

“The tree-swallow nesting boxes are an amazing success story,” said Robert Ceberio, Executive Director of the NJMC. “The Meadowlands region is prime real estate for these birds, and we can’t seem to put up the boxes fast enough.”

Tree swallows are a popular bird for many people, not just for their iridescent-blue beauty and graceful speed, but also because they love to eat insects. It has been estimated that a family of tree swallows can eat hundreds upon hundreds of midges, mosquitoes and other insects in a day.

With the help of local scout troops, families and other groups, the NJMC has erected some 250 nesting boxes in marshes throughout the 30.4-square-mile Meadowlands District. Boxes can be seen around DeKorte Park in Lyndhurst, in the Kearny Marsh, and along the Saw Mill Creek Marsh in Secaucus.

Last year, NJMC naturalists used GPS devices to map nest box locations to help keep track of tree-swallow activity. They found that more than 60 percent of the boxes were occupied by nesting pairs, with 610 eggs laid and 485 nestlings successfully fledged last summer

The birds have begun arriving in the district in large numbers in the past week after wintering in Florida and points south. They will start their families next month, then migrate south again in midsummer. Each nesting pair has a clutch of two to eight eggs.

The nest-box program began nearly 20 years ago when a Meadowlands Commission naturalist put up a few nesting boxes for the six-inch-long birds. Swallows have slowly been losing places to nest as the region gets developed.

The program has grown into a major grassroots effort. For the past six years, the NJMC has conducted workshops that have enabled families, school children, and civic groups to build the nesting houses from kits – and then donate them to the tree swallows.

The Meadowlands and its more than 8,000 acres of urban wetlands are prime habitat for tree swallows and scores of other birds. The District provides a year-round or seasonal home for more than 270 avian species, many of them threatened and endangered.

Like the tree swallow, many of these imperiled birds breed in the Meadowlands. Their presence underscores the area's importance, both as a magnet for birds and as an indispensable habitat for other wildlife whose populations have been dwindling.

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Contact the NJMC's Jim Wright at the numbers or email above for high-res images or to accompany NJMC naturalists when they put up more nest boxes.