



*inspiring people to protect
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For Immediate Release

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City of Orinda and Golden Gate Audubon Team up to Protect Swallows

If you had just travelled 3,000 miles to start a family, you'd be hoping for a secure home and a warm welcome.

And that's exactly what the Cliff Swallows of Wilder Park have gotten – thanks to new cooperation between the City of Orinda and Golden Gate Audubon Society.

Orinda park officials and the 98-year-old conservation group teamed up this summer on behalf of about two dozen pairs of Cliff Swallows that build nests in the eaves of the Wilder Park sports field restrooms.

Golden Gate Audubon members Erica Rutherford and John Colbert -- who started monitoring the Wilder swallow colony last year -- created educational flyers and signs to teach Orinda families about the birds. Park officials cordoned off the area directly under the nests, posted the signs, and also published an article about the swallows in their email newsletter to local residents.

“The City of Orinda has been a great partner,” said Golden Gate Audubon Executive Director Cindy Margulis. “They understand that this is a prime opportunity to teach people about the beneficial wildlife that lives in this community.”

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Cliff Swallows are migratory sparrow-sized birds with streamlined bodies developed for fast acrobatic flight. They're easy to spot swooping through the air over the Wilder Park sports fields,.

They winter in Central and South America and return to California to breed, sometimes raising two broods over several months between late March and September.

Local residents can help the swallows by not disturbing or removing their nests. (It's actually illegal to interfere with these birds under the federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act.) Swallows are natural recyclers, and will re-use the same nest year after year if it's in good shape. Each nest is made up of 1,000 to 1,400 mud pellets – every pellet the result of a single trip to and from the nest!

As swallows dart about at high speed feasting on mosquitoes and other annoying insects, they provide a natural pest-control service for free! So another vital way to support these birds' survival is to avoid using chemical pesticides – which not only kill the insects, but poison the swallows and the entire food web.

Another way to help is to keep pet cats indoors, especially during nesting season for swallows and other native birds.

“If you're lucky enough to have swallows nesting on your house, enjoy observing them!” Margulis said. “Watching swallows build their nests and raise their own families next to yours offers a marvelous nature lesson without leaving home. These flashing, darting, high-speed birds are mesmerizing, adding even more grace to lovely Orinda.”

For more information on Orinda's Cliff Swallows, see http://goldengateaudubon.org/wp-content/uploads/Orinda_Swallows.pdf

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