

# THE WILD SIDE by Dave Gibson

## TREE SWALLOWS

If you venture west from Rollinsville on your way to Rollins Pass or the Moffat Tunnel this summer, you may notice tree swallows occupying the bird boxes in and near Tolland. The boxes attached to fence posts are also used to a lesser extent by mountain bluebirds. Open fields with an abundance of flying insects to feed upon, nearby South Boulder Creek, and miles of barbed wire from which to perch provide ideal habitat for the swallows. About five inches long with forked tail and long slender wings, their snowy undersides are topped in a becoming iridescent steely blue-black. To amuse themselves, male tree swallows have been seen in flight



dropping large feathers used in nest building and recapturing them in midair! Adept fliers, while feeding, they glide in circles followed by rapid wing beats to regain altitude. Usually hunting below forty feet high, most prey is taken while flying. With insatiable hatchlings consuming more than the adults

this time of year, beetles, grasshoppers, dragonflies, horseflies, moths, wasps, ants, and mosquitoes are all fair game. Among the more aggressive types of swallows, during the breeding season, tree swallows will defend their domestic interests with vigor against other birds, animals, and humans alike!

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*Dave Gibson is a photographer & writer focusing on the natural world around us.  
His imagery and previous articles can be found on his web site at [www.davegibsonimages.com](http://www.davegibsonimages.com)*