

SPECIES FEATURE

WAROU

Welcome Swallow

Hirundo tahitica neoxena

While reported sightings of welcome swallows extend back to the 1920's, they didn't become established in New Zealand until the 1950's and 60's. Like silvereyes, welcome swallows are self-introduced from Australia (possibly blown here by storms), and thus are classified as native and protected. They are now widespread across New Zealand. Entirely insectivorous, they tend to be found near water where they swoop and dart to catch insects both above and occasionally just below the surface. Their graceful and high precision manoeuvres are possible thanks to their triangular wings and forked tails.

The welcome swallow is a pretty little bird with a glossy dark blue back, white belly and chestnut face and bib. The beak is short, but wide. Males and females look alike. Breeding season extends from August to February. Courtship behaviour includes chasing, tail-fanning, and the rubbing together of beaks. Pairs build their nests onto the sides and under-surfaces of both natural and manmade surfaces. Nests are comprised of mud with grass and other vegetation added for strength and lined with feathers, wool and other fibres. Only the female broods the eggs and chicks, but both parents feed the chicks. During the breeding season a pair may produce 3 clutches, each consisting of between 2-7 pink eggs with brown speckles.

Swallows often flock in winter. While they have no specific migratory route, they may travel to find reliable food supplies.

Warou are a common sight around the Sanctuary Visitor Centre.



Photo credit: Caiden_b on iNaturalist



Photo credit: Oscar Thomas on iNaturalist



Warou (welcome swallow) chicks in Sanctuary
Photo credit: Alistair Jerritt

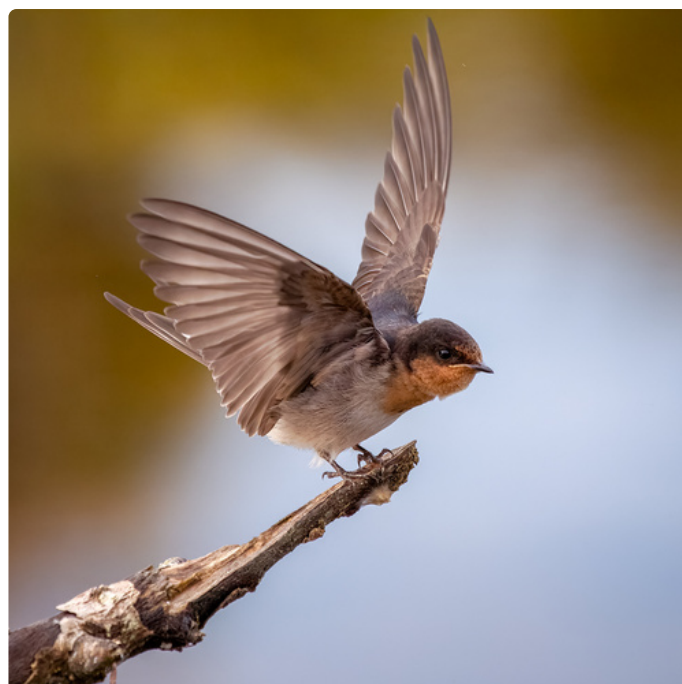


Photo credit: Toya Heatley

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