

UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH OPPORTUNITY



SOCIAL BEHAVIOR AND DISEASE ECOLOGY OF CLIFF SWALLOWS



Summer field assistants are needed for a long term study of social behavior and disease ecology in cliff swallows (*Petrochelidon pyrrhonota*), sparrow-sized birds that build mud nests on the sides of rocky cliffs and canyons. The project focuses on the costs and benefits of coloniality and the evolutionary consequences of group living and has included work on predator avoidance behavior, ectoparasitism, individual reproductive success, intraspecific brood parasitism, social facilitation of foraging, colony choice decisions, demography, and effects of an arbovirus associated with these birds and their parasites. The study site is in western Nebraska (about 200 miles northeast of Denver) near the University of Nebraska's Cedar Point Biological Station. This summer the major emphasis will be capture, banding, and recapture of thousands of cliff swallows at colonies of different sizes, enabling us to follow the histories of many known individuals. We will also be collecting blood and insect samples to test for the presence of Buggy Creek virus.

The 2009 field season will extend from approximately 15 May to 25 July. For this period I am recruiting assistants who are seriously interested in learning how to conduct field research in behavioral ecology. Particularly for students considering graduate school in biology, this is a superlative opportunity to experience field research. For students who are presently juniors, this is also a chance to conduct summer research that can lead to a senior project. Room and board at the Cedar Point Biological Station is provided, and undergraduates at all levels may be eligible for an NSF Research Experiences for Undergraduates fellowship. For more details contact:



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