

# Ornithological Observations

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Ornithological Observations accepts papers containing faunistic information about birds. This includes descriptions of distribution, behaviour, breeding, foraging, food, movement, measurements, habitat and plumage. It will also consider for publication a variety of other interesting or relevant ornithological material: reports of projects and conferences, annotated checklists for a site or region, specialist bibliographies, and any other interesting or relevant material.

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## **AERIAL FEEDING BY GREATER STRIPED SWALLOWS *HIRUNDO CUCULLATA* IN A SMALL ENCLOSED GARDEN**

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## AERIAL FEEDING BY GREATER STRIPED SWALLOWS *HIRUNDO CUCULLATA* IN A SMALL ENCLOSED GARDEN

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On 19 April 2014, Greater Striped Swallows *Hirundo cucullata* were seen feeding on aerial insects within a small residential garden in Annlin, Gauteng, South Africa (Fig 1). The garden was enclosed by a 1.75 m high solid wall and the open space measured 7x7 m.

An estimated 15-20 swallows fed for approximately 20 minutes. Birds darted in and out of the garden, or tightly circled within the walls (Fig 2). The swarm of small prey insects was confined to this area. No feeding was seen in other gardens in the residential complex. A single male Mountain Wheatear *Oenanthe monticola* was ground feeding on the same insects during part of the event.

The basic elements of this event, i.e. aerial group feeding on a concentrated prey, are not novel (Turner 2004). However, feeding in such a confined space appears to be previously unreported. The species accounts of small aerial insectivores i.e. swallows/martins/saw-wings and swifts in Hockey *et al.* (2005) do not report

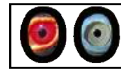


**Fig 1** - Elevated view of the enclosed garden. Twelve Greater Striped Swallows *Hirundo cucullata* are circled in black. © SM Miller

any similar feeding behaviour. An appeal posted on the Ornithological Observations Facebook page and the SA Birdnet email list server yielded no similar observations.

A short video clip of this event is available at the following link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nkb4GvbAWuc>



**Fig 2** - Close up of a Greater Striped Swallow *Hirundo cucullata* feeding within the garden. © SM Miller

### References

**Hockey PAR, Dean WRJ, Ryan PG. (eds) 2005.** Robert's Birds of Southern Africa, 7<sup>th</sup> Edition. The trustees of the John Voelcker Bird Book Fund, Cape Town.

**Turner, AK. 2004.** Family Hirundinidae (Swallows and Martins). In: del Hoyo J, Elliot A, Christie DA. eds. 2004. Handbook of the birds of the World. Vol 9: Cotingas to Pipits and Wagtails. Lynx Edicions Barcelona.

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