

# **“Swifting”:**

## **Up high and under waterfalls.**

### **Year 7, 7.12 – 8.24.2019**

by Amy Seaman



MONTANA  
AUDUBON

The 2019 “Swifting” season has come and gone, and unlike the seasons before, in 2019 we expanded our focus to exploring regions outside of Glacier National Park alongside of our efforts to monitor known nesting sites in Glacier National Park. This effort was made possible with the hard work of three technicians this year – Jack Toriello, Danny Stark, and our Big Sky Watershed Corp member Caroline Provost. Jack Toriello and I focused our work in Glacier, and report a bit on that here! With continued support from Lisa Bate,

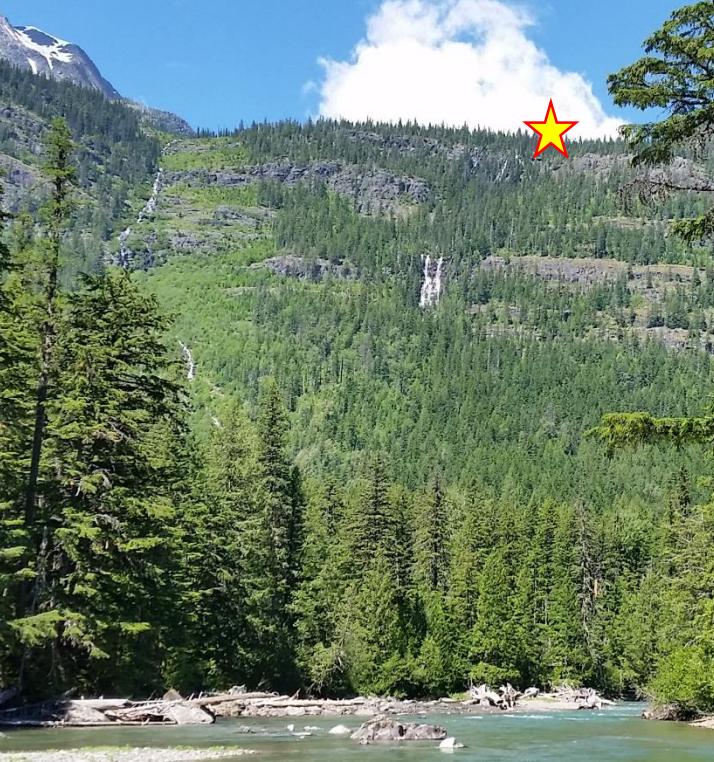


(Top) Gunsight Basin Falls #3 and #4 (in the foreground) are perhaps esthetically my favorite in the park. (Above) Technician Jack Toriello and myself at Gunsight Pass. Photos by Amy Seaman and a friend.

Glacier National Park's (GNP) non-game biologist and The Glacier National Park Conservancy, we visited 11 occupied waterfalls twice during the season, surveyed and found colonies at four new waterfall locations, and monitored five waterfalls that had observations in previous years. In total we spent seven weeks on the trail of the Black Swift, finally managing to capture a few pictures of the speed demons in flight. Unfortunately we surveyed three waterfall locations where birds were seen in the past without being able to relocate nesting activity in 2019. Two of the season highlights include a survey at the rarely visited Upper Mount Vaught Falls and training Canadian biologists. The effort to reach Upper Vaught was not without the complications of rain, hail, and cliff-band navigation. But finally reaching the site, first discovered to have Black Swifts in 1964, felt like stepping into scientific history, and finding the site still occupied brought a smile to my face. With only an hour to observe the site before weather again made us retreat, we felt lucky to have the effort pay off. As for the Canadians, surveys are just starting in Waterton Park this year and we were chosen to help train their biologists and lead them through the survey process. I took them to my favorite falls, Gunsight #3 and #4 and taught them everything I have learned the past seven years. And it paid off! On day of their survey effort they located

(Below) A glimpse of a Black Swift circling above Feather Woman Falls before entering a nesting niche during an evening survey. Photo by Amy Seaman.





Waterton's first nest! This year, Montana Audubon's work brought the number of nesting falls in Montana to about 50, give or take a few that seem to have changed. We learn a little more about this species one glimpse at a time and wish to thank the Glacier National Park Conservancy, The LEAW Foundation, The Cadeau Foundation, The Sargent Endowment, and individual donors for supporting this important work!

(Above) Falls at Mt.Vaught are accessed by crossing McDonald Creek and navigating a half-dozen cliff bands. The lower falls (center of photo) are much more easy to access than the Upper Falls (starred location). Black Swifts were seen at both locations this summer. (Below) Our slim view of Upper Mt.Vaught falls from the evening observation location. Photos by Jack Toriello and Amy Seaman.

