

**“Swiftling”:  
Up high and under waterfalls.  
Year 7, 7.12 – 8.24.2019  
by Amy Seaman**



The 2019 “Swiftling” 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 within. This effort was carried out via the hard work of three technicians - Jack Toriello, Danny Stark, our Big Sky Watershed Corps member Caroline Provost, and myself. Jack Toriello and I focused on monitoring 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 aesthetically 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, we monitored 11 occupied waterfalls twice during the season and surveyed at four new waterfall locations that turned up new colonies. 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 surveying the rarely visited Upper Mount Vaught Falls and training GNP and 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 1962, felt like stepping into scientific history, and finding the site still occupied was a testament to the specie's high site fidelity. 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 Canadian biologists, surveys are just starting in Waterton Park this year and we were looked to for help training their biologists 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 one of their survey effort they located Waterton's first nest! 6 GNP technicians trained for and supported the

(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.





project as well. This year, Montana Audubon's work brought the number of nesting falls in Montana to 52, a milestone, though not all are occupied. We learn a little more about this species one glimpse at a time and owe thanks to the GNP Conservancy, LEAW Foundation, Cadeau Foundation, The Sargent Endowment, and individual donors for supporting this important scientific research!

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

