

# First Hybridization Attempt Between A Violet-Green Swallow and Tree Swallow

by Lee G. Johnson and  
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**O**n 4 June 1994, Lee Johnson discovered a female Violet-green Swallow (*Tachycineta thalassina*) at his home in rural Shirland, Winnebago County, Illinois, 13 miles northwest of Rockford and 90 miles northwest of Chicago. Many observers saw the bird, and verification was obtained through photographs and a videotape.

Two prior Illinois records exist. One was a male collected 4 May 1897 in Chicago's Calumet region (Bohlen 1989), which was not accepted by the Illinois Ornithological Records Committee because the specimen is no longer extant (R.E. Goetz in litt. to L.C. Binford). The other is a sight record 19 July 1991 at Wilmette in Cook County (Walters



*Female Violet-green Swallow  
perching near her nest box, 15 June  
1994. Photo by David B. Johnson.*

**No other instance of  
hybridization  
between Violet-green  
Swallow and Tree  
Swallow is known.**

1992), pending review by IORC. Elsewhere east of the Great Plains, the species is accidental in Minnesota, Missouri, Nova Scotia, New Hampshire, and Florida (Brown et al. 1992; DeSante and Pyle 1986).

Even more remarkable than this extralimital occurrence is the fact that the Shirland Violet-green Swallow attempted to hybridize with a male Tree Swallow (*T. bicolor*). No other instance of attempted hybridization between these two species is known (Phillips 1986). The only previous attempt by a Violet-green Swallow to mate with another swallow species is a record of a female copulating with a male Barn Swallow (*Hirundo rustica*) (Gullion 1947).

In the present case, the Tree Swal-



*Male Tree Swallow (left) and its mate, a female Violet-green Swallow, 5 June 1994. Photo by Joe B. Milosevich.*