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**City of Sebastopol**

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The City of Sebastopol and Sebastopol Public Works Department deeply regret the destruction of a nesting cliff swallow colony by a City employee on City property on May 2, 2019.

The employee was not directed to remove the nests, but the incident was a result of our failure to properly train Public Works staff or to adhere to our own [Laguna Preserve Biological Management Plan](#).

Had we followed our own protocols, our Public Works employee would have known that, although it is permissible, even advisable, to remove these nests in the winter, it is devastating to do so in the spring when birds are nesting and raising their young.

What we're doing to make sure that our mistake is never repeated:

- Working with [Native Songbird Care & Conservation in Sebastopol](#) to develop and distribute training materials to our staff who may encounter nesting birds;
- Holding annual training sessions for Public Works staff. We've been in contact with the Laguna de Santa Rosa Foundation who has referred us to a qualified biologist who is specifically familiar with the Laguna and habitat surveys. Scheduling for an emergency training session is currently underway;
- Adding swallow-protection to the Public Works calendar of annual maintenance reminders during breeding season (February 15 through September 15);
- Posting markers at the known nesting sites, with notification of the birds' protected status.

As terrible as this incident was, we are hoping that the ensuing attention will help bring awareness to the importance of protecting cliff swallows and other birds who either reside or migrate through Sebastopol. To that end, we are:

- Sharing educational information from Native Songbird Care & Conservation on our website;
- Creating an annual campaign during nesting season on our social media platforms to inform the public of the need to protect birds, especially during nesting season.

The City of Sebastopol is committed to protecting the environment and ecosystem of our community and pledges to improve its efforts going forward.

Sincerely,

Larry McLaughlin, City Manager  
Dante Del Prete, Superintendent of Public Works