

Questions surround swallow nests at Hard Rock



What appears to be swallow nests at Lake Tahoe Hard Rock. Photo/Elias Klaich

By Kathryn Reed

Swallow nests at Hard Rock Lake Tahoe were there one day and essentially gone the next, according to South Shore residents who documented it with photos.

This could be a big deal because federal law protects swallows.

“If there are eggs or young in those nests, it is illegal to bring down a nest,” Chris Nicolai, regional migratory bird biologist for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Reno, told *Lake Tahoe News*. “Right now there is no way to get a permit of removal (of birds) or nests unless for human safety. Depredation permits for swallows would be pretty tough.”

In Nevada, it’s possible to get a permit to take down an inactive nest. This differs from California law where even inactive nests are protected.

“No one is aware of any swallow nests being removed,” Jen Eastwood, spokeswoman for Hard Rock Lake Tahoe, told *Lake*

Tahoe News.

However, a group of friends who had been golfing at Edgewood Tahoe saw what they say is the destruction of swallow nests. This spring they first saw about 80 swallows from the sixth hole.

"I watched the swallows then fly to the exterior of the Hard Rock Hotel and build their nests," Ed Bellow told *Lake Tahoe News*. Two weeks later "I saw two Hard Rock Hotel employees using a power washer to wash down the swallow nests in the area of Hard Rock's valet parking. Keep in mind they were not old nests from last year, as the Hard Rock Hotel repainted to a different color this year. At the time we were there, the swallows were rebuilding those nests that were removed."

While Bellow is a law enforcement officer in California, he does not have jurisdiction in Nevada. He reported the incident to California officials.

Elias Klaich took pictures of what he and Bellow saw.

"I saw them rebuilding nests. I saw (nest) debris on the ground and I saw debris on the side of the building that was freshly painted," Klaich told *Lake Tahoe News*. "Maybe (the Hard Rock) told the contractor to tell their people to do it so they didn't have to be directly involved."

Swallows fall under the federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

"The law basically is to protect declining populations mostly due to hunting," Nicolai said. "The interpretation is expanding and expanding, so no taking (of these animals) is authorized without a permit."