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AERIAL FEEDING BY GREATER STRIPED SWALLOWS *Hirundo cucullata* IN A SMALL ENCLOSED GARDEN

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On 19 April 2014, Greater Striped Swallows *Hirundo cucullata* were seen feeding on aerial insects within a small residential garden in Annlin, Gauteng, South Africa (Fig 1). The garden was enclosed by a 1.75 m high solid wall and the open space measured 7x7 m.

An estimated 15-20 swallows fed for approximately 20 minutes. Birds darted in and out of the garden, or tightly circled within the walls (Fig 2). The swarm of small prey insects was confined to this area. No feeding was seen in other gardens in the residential complex. A single male Mountain Wheatear *Oenanthe monticola* was ground feeding on the same insects during part of the event.

The basic elements of this event, i.e. aerial group feeding on a concentrated prey, are not novel (Turner 2004). However, feeding in such a confined space appears to be previously unreported. The species accounts of small aerial insectivores i.e. swallows/martins/saw-wings and swifts in Hockey *et al.* (2005) do not report any similar feeding behaviour. An appeal posted on the Ornithological Observations Facebook page and the SA Birdnet email list server yielded no similar observations.

A short video clip of this event is available at the following link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nkb4GvbAWuc
Fig 2 - Close up of a Greater Striped Swallow *Hirundo cucullata* feeding within the garden. © SM Miller

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References
