



Story of the Swallow

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The Swallow Embroidery Kit is a co-developed craft kit featuring simple embroidery techniques and naturally dyed wool on wool fabric. The swallow pattern reflects the multi-cultural and nature-inspired dimensions of craft revitalisation. Inspired by the Mexican golondrina bird, the motif highlights symbolism, meaning, and universality, inviting crafters to stitch freely.

The swallow (*Hirundo rustica*) is the most famous migratory bird in the world for its graceful flights that announce the arrival of spring. It is the most widely distributed bird on the planet, a globally popular bird known for its ability to fly long distances during migration (Navarijo Ornelas, 2014, p. 46). In Mexican culture, the swallow is a beloved symbol; it is associated with comebacks and loyalty, as well as the promise of returning home in a spiritual sense. The swallow represents protection and good

luck among Mexican people: finding a nest in your own home symbolises a blessing to the family (Figure 1). Its arrival marks the beginning of spring and new beginnings.

Conversely, its departure symbolises nostalgia and melancholy. In the context of art and craft, the swallow is highly represented in Mexican Talavera ceramics from Puebla (Figure 2). As an additional fact, there is a cave known as The Swallow's Cave (*Sótano de las Golondrinas*) known for being the world's largest-known cave where swallows and other migratory birds reside. The cave is situated in my hometown, making the selection of this particular bird a meaningful choice, given my personal connection to it.

The design development process began with an initial brainstorming of concepts, followed by the sketching of swallow forms (Figure 3). I created a series of bird silhouettes using a graphic design program and experimented with colour palettes to interpret the swallow's natural colouring (Figure 5). Various swallow species are characterised by iridescent black and purple-blue tones on the wings,

◀◀ **FIGURE 1.** Golondrina bird nesting at Cervantes's home in Mexico. Photograph: Fabiola Hernández Cervantes, 2017.

▼ **FIGURE 2.** Swallow-inspired Mexican ceramic tile motif from Puebla, Mexico. Drawing: Fabiola Hernández Cervantes, 2026.

◀ **FIGURE 3.** Swallow vector, printed pattern with stencil, first and second testing of stitches and colors. Photographs: Fabiola Hernández Cervantes, 2025–2026.



▲ **FIGURE 6.** Final embroidery prototype and yarn palette. Photograph: Fabiola Hernández Cervantes, 2026.

► **FIGURE 4.** Naturally dyed yarn selection from Aurinkokehrä. Photograph: Fabiola Hernández Cervantes, 2026.



FIGURE 5. Evolution of color design. Drawings: Hernández Cervantes, 2025–2026.



contrasted with bright orange hues on the throat and chest.

As the embroidery fabric is predominantly black, I initially tested a palette of light purple and light brown. However, the team wished to design the kits using only local, naturally dyed yarn provided by the Auringonkehrä company (Figure 4); from the colour palette, I selected a range of three blue shades and dark yellow to contrast the black fabric. The selection of blue for the wings is also related to the meaning of the colour: blue symbolises peace and positivity, and I wanted the bird pattern to provide a feeling of harmony when stitched, whilst dark blue resembles the traditional *Talavera* ceramics from Mexico.

The testing of different thicknesses of wool yarn, stitches, fabrics, and needles was conducted over a few months in the group: the chosen stitch was based on my initial idea to mimic drawing traces.

The straight stitch and satin stitch were selected to fill the shape, and the stem stitch was selected to create a silhouette border round the bird. The selection of the stitches was also considered to allow craft beginners to craft an easy, freehand stitching look (Figure 6).

Working on the swallow pattern reminded me of my roots and heritage. The collaborative process reflects the merging of heritage concepts and symbolism, the revitalisation of heritage craft knowledge, nature connection, and contemporary design in the co-development of new products using local wool.

References

Navarijo Ornelas, M. L. (2014). *Las aves nacionales: El valor del uso de la imagen*. Instituto de Biología. <http://www.ibiologia.unam.mx/barra/publicaciones/Escudos.pdf>