

ALBINO BARN SWALLOWS

Mr. Robert Selkirk owns and operates a poultry store in the community of Selkirk, New York which is south of Albany. On July third, 1963 the young Barn Swallows in a nest which the adults had built under the eaves on the porch of the poultry store were almost at fledging age and appeared for the first time at the edge of their nest where Mr. Selkirk could see them. To his surprise three of the young were complete albinos with white plumage and pink eyes while the two other nestings appeared normally plumaged as did the adults.

Mr. Selkirk called me at the New York State Museum and, as I was unable to get to Selkirk, promised to keep me informed of events at the nest. A photographer from the Knickerbocker News of Albany tried to take pictures for his paper on the fifth but succeeded in filming only one of the albinos. Three of the young were able to leave the nest immediately and the remaining fledglings left after the picture was taken; one of the albino fledglings was out of sight in the nest when the shutter was snapped. The picture appeared on page 10A of the Albany Knickerbocker News, Saturday, July 13, 1963. The birds all flew to places where Mr. Arnold LeFevre, the photographer, was unable to take further pictures.

At my request Mr. Selkirk watched the albinos which remained in the area. Every time he saw them on wing it seemed to him that many of the normally plumaged Barn Swallows were diving at the albinos almost to the point of contact. This reaction was continued when the albinos perched anywhere in the open. It has been observed that adult swallows will often perform this maneuver with their young particularly when the young are perching. It has been surmised that this is an action designed to make the young fly better and more often. The adults also will feed the young on wing. Since the "buzzing" technique by parent birds is not as continuous an action as it was in the case with the albinos, it may be that all the Barn Swallows in the area were reacting to the albinos as though they were alien species joining the wrong flock. "Buzzing" in this sense is derived from the jargon of Air Force pilots and so used means flying extremely close to objects on the ground or in the air, sometimes to the danger point. As swallows often fly in mixed swallow-species groups, without buzzing reactions noticeable to any great degree, the reaction to the albinos was closer to that which would occur if a Phoebe tried to join the swallows.

Very few other cases of albinism among swallows has been noted in literature and nowhere can I find reference to more than a single individual at one time. If the buzzing action by other members of the same species is definitely unfriendly it would mean the full albinos at least would find it difficult, if not impossible, to breed as they would be rejected by their own species. They might breed successfully with other albinos of their own species but the chances of this occurring naturally are fantastic. Indeed the reactions of other Barn Swallows to the albino siblings would probably greatly lessen their chances of surviving their first winter and migration seasons.

E. M. Reilly, Jr., Old Chatham

Nesting of the Philadelphia Vireo in the Adirondacks: There are very few documented records of the Philadelphia Vireo (*Vireo philadelphicus*) as a breeding bird in New York State, although reports of sighting of the species in summer may be found in the literature. Hence the following brief notes are of some importance.

On June 27, 1962 we hiked into Marcy Dam, two miles south of Heart Lake, near Lake Placid. This is a small lake with some open areas around it and some second growth. Near Leanto #5 our attention was immediately attracted to a different vireo song, and on finding the bird we identified it as a Philadelphia Vireo, light line over the eye, no wing bars, very yellowish underneath, song higher, slower and sweeter than the Red-eye. We saw the bird frequently during the next three days, and it sang incessantly. It spent most of its time in a white birch in front of the leanto.

On June 18, 1963 we returned to the Marcy Dam area and on the 19th found a Philadelphia Vireo building a nest in one of a clump of maples across the creek and perhaps 200 feet from our leanto. The nest was about 18 feet from the ground and the framework was just started. It looked like white birch bark. We were unable to determine if both birds shared in the nest-building, but we did see both birds at the same time in a clump of willows gathering willow down. The male was not singing as incessantly as in the previous year, and also he did not appear to be as yellow underneath as the 1962 bird, but of course we do not know whether it was the same individual. On June 20 we could see that much progress had been made on the nest.

The nest was well hidden, and would not have been detected had it not been for the rapid, direct flights to the spot. The birds seem nervous, and the male responded to 'spishing', by descending to within a few feet of us.

It is hoped that future visits to the area will result in additional observations.

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HIGHLIGHTS OF THE SUMMER SEASON JUNE 1 - AUGUST 15

DAVID B. PEAKALL

The breeding season seems to be the most difficult to summarize, perhaps because the data is usually less precise. There is little in the reports to alter the depressing picture of the breeding of the birds of prey. A recent conference in England indicates that the problem in Europe is just as acute and again it is considered that pesticides are the primary factor. The conference is reported in Bird Notes 30:205. If there is a concentration of pesticide residues in food chains then another group of birds that might be expected to be effected are the marsh birds. The report from region eight indicates a reduction of this sort but, apart from a scarcity of Pied-billed Grebes in region two and rails around New York City, the effect does not seem to be wide spread. A most valuable index would be a state wide index of Great Blue Heron colonies and it is hoped by this writer that someone will undertake this survey.

One species in which great interest has been shown in recent years is the Bluebird. Eaton, some fifty years ago, considered it a 'common summer resident in all parts of the state'. In recent years it could only be called a rare summer resident. The picture this summer is mixed, poor breeding success was noted at Cortland, some other areas showed a slight increase which fits with the increase on the wintering ground last winter (James, Audubon Field Notes 17:302).

However, the success of the Bluebird in areas where houses are provided for it (cf Kingbird 13:24) suggests that the shortage of suitable nesting holes may be a limiting factor. The changing agricultural scene with less wooden fences, less old trees and regular spraying of orchards have all contributed to the long-term decline of this attractive species. Superimposed on this the bad weather on the wintering grounds from 1957-58 to 1961-62 (James, A.F.N. 16:308) brought the species to a very low level.

There were five reports of singing male Clay-colored Sparrows this summer. Two of these were in the Adirondacks, and singles near Ithaca, Pulaski