

## 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 nestlings 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

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**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.