

I was about to leave for a dinner engagement, so I said I was very sorry I could not meet him and drive him to Katama. I gave him the names of several other birders, but he was unable to contact any of them. Then he came back to my nephew. "Do you know where Katama is?" "Yes, at Edgartown South Beach". "Could you drive me there?" "Happy to," was the reply. "How long will it take? I have to be back in Providence tonight." "I think we can make it."

The man introduced himself a Glen D. Eller of Elizabethton, Tennessee, who wanted to add a new bird to his life list. He evidently envisioned Marthas Vineyard as a small sandy island somewhat like Penikese, where he could hike from one end to another in a short time.

They drove fast, going through a part of the picturesque town of Edgartown and on out to the plains parallel to the island's south shore, where they cruised around for a short time. Sure enough, they spotted a short-eared owl. Mr. Eller was ecstatic, and searching farther they came upon two more which showed themselves off from all sides to satisfy any bird watcher.

The drive back to the ferry was even faster, and my nephew, who had been on many gull-banding trips, practically pushed Mr. Eller over the gangplank as it was about to be hauled in. This was the last boat that day over to "The Outer World".

--200 Chatterton Pkwy., White Plains, N.Y. 10606

OYSTER SHELLS ATTRACT BARN SWALLOWS

By John P. Merrill

In early May 1971, I noticed Barn Swallows (*Hirundo rustica*) coming to a board on the ground in back of my trailer and picking up small pieces of plaster of Paris. I put up a mist net and caught and banded my first four (4) birds on June 15, 1971.

From 1971 - 74 this same net site produced one hundred (100) un-banded Barn Swallows as follows:

TABLE I: Barn Swallow (*Hirundo rustica*) Handlings

	1971	1972	1973	1974
First capture	15 June	14 May	30 May	19 May
Banding				
Adult males	11	12	7	11
Adult females	20	7	7	9
Adults (unkown)	2	4	1	3
Immatures	2	1	0	3
Totals	35	24	15	3
Returns		2	0	8

By May of 1972 most of the plaster of Paris was gone so I tried putting small fragments of oyster shells, the kind that are used for hens, in the same place, catching my first two birds on the 14th. I then continued to put out oyster shell fragments in 1973 and 1974.

These swallows were observed eating the shells and also carrying some away. So this fall (1974) I took three nests from a barn nearby and took them apart to see if they used any shells in the construction of their nests. I found only one piece of shell and it apparently had been dropped in the nest. I could find no shells built into any of the nests that I examined.

The only other bird seen at the shells was a female Cowbird (*Molothrus ater ater*) which was apparently also eating them.

I would be glad to hear if this is a common practice of Barn Swallows as I can find no similar records in my literature.

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A TALE OF TWO FINCHES

By Robert P. Yunick

Occasionally the recovery of one's banded birds produces some astounding surprises. Two recent recoveries involving a Purple Finch (*Carpodacus purpureus*) and an Evening Grosbeak (*Hesperiphona vespertina*) offered an unusual bit of coincidence that prompts me to relate this tale of two finches.

I banded the Purple Finch, 73-32762, in my yard on April 19, 1968 during a spell of mild weather that brought north into our area the return of the first spring migrants of this species. The following year, I banded the Evening Grosbeak, 70-103504, on May 1 in my yard. It was part of an exceptionally heavy return flight that was not only marked by its magnitude of numbers, but also by the lateness with which the birds were returning to their breeding grounds to the north. At their respective times of banding there was little else that distinguished these birds as individuals. They shared the identity of both being returning winter finches which appeared at a common point along their journey, but otherwise there was no particular reason to associate one with the other.

Thus, it was with considerable surprise that I received simultaneous recovery cards on these two finches and learned that both had been re-trapped on January 25, 1970 in Newport, Tenn. by Mrs. O. H. Williams. Thinking that this was somewhat unusual, and also thinking that Mrs. Williams was a bander, I wrote to her and relayed to her what data I had on the birds and commented generally on the coincidence. Her reply was an even greater surprise!