

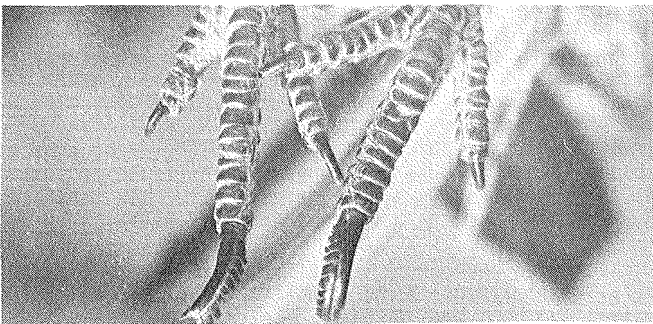
An Unusual Instance of Mortality in the Barn Swallow

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On 26 May 1979, I observed a pair of Barn Swallows (*Hirundo rustica*) refurbishing a nest that had been used during the previous season. The first egg was laid in the nest on 30 May and 3 eggs were present the morning of 1 June. I visited the nest again on 4 June and 3 eggs were still present but so was the body of the male Barn Swallow. Evidently, while attempting to add to the nest lining, the bird had found a piece of monofilament fishing line (about 37 cm long). While incorporating this line into the nest lining, the swallow had become entangled and was hanging in the loops of the monofilament line. The female continued to visit the nest but was not observed after 7 June.

Bent (U.S. Natl. Mus. Bull. 179, 1942) writes of Barn Swallows becoming hopelessly entangled in horse hairs when attempting to line the nest with them. It appears that in this instance a modern synthetic was used in place of animal hair with like results. I have found many different species of waterfowl and waterbirds entangled in monofilament fishing line. Likewise, I have observed nests of other landbirds in which monofilament fishing line had been used in the construction. This was the first instance where I observed death to occur in a landbird due to monofilament fishing line.



Did you know that Common Nighthawks (above), other Caprimulgids, herons, and the Barn Owl all have "combs" on the middle claw of each foot? They apparently use these in preening. (Photo by J.A. Jackson)