

FROM FIELD AND STUDY

Late Nesting of a Pair of Barn Swallows in Montana.—Last fall (1930) I had the opportunity of observing a pair of Barn Swallows (*Hirundo erythrogaster*) raise a second brood of young surprisingly late in the season. The date on which the young birds left the nest, September 15, is much later than any other corresponding date, for any species of native bird, that I have found in recording more than thirteen hundred nests in Montana during several years past. Of interest also is the fact that the average date of fall departure for the Barn Swallow here, as determined from my records, is eleven days before this brood of young birds left the nest, and twenty-one days before these birds began their migration.

The nest, used in raising both broods of young, was built upon a short plank nailed to the lower side of two rafters of a machine shed on our ranch near Fortine, Montana. Construction of the nest was finished on June 11; the set of five eggs was completed by June 17. Two of the young birds left the nest for the first time on July 21, and the remaining three left on July 23.

For about two weeks following the latter date, the adult birds and all of their family frequented the shed when not feeding. On August 1, one of the adult birds was seen carrying feathers to the nest. Thinking that a second brood of young was to be raised, I examined the nest every day for nearly a week. As no eggs were found, and no further indication of a second nesting was seen, I paid no particular attention to the frequent visits to the shed made by all seven of the swallows.

On September 1, however, upon noticing that the adult birds seemed to be carrying food into the shed, I examined the nest. To my surprise, it contained two young birds, appearing to be about a week old, and one addled egg. The average fall migration date for the species here, September 4, was nearly at hand, and the five young birds raised earlier in the season had left the ranch more than a week previously.

The following entries from my notes describe the successful completion of the late nesting venture, and indicate the difficulties attendant upon the feeding of young Barn Swallows here in September.

September 13.—Has been cloudy and cold for three days (max. temp. today 57°). Swallows have a hard time finding insects for themselves and their young (luckily there are only two young). Fly constantly from daylight till dark, ranging as far as 600 yards from the nest; visit the nest with food only once in fifteen to thirty minutes. I have been unable to see any insects in the air at any time during these three days.

September 15.—Clear, warm day. Young left the nest for the first time about 7 a. m.; remained outside almost all day, in flight much of the time.

September 16.—Young remained in the nest part of the day; were flying most of the afternoon.

September 17.—Young in air the greater part of the day.

September 22.—Swallows fly most of the day; young visit the nest occasionally, to rest. At night the young stay in the nest, and the two adults perch on the plank, beside the nest.

September 23.—Heavy rain fell last night, and continued all day. Swallows were in the shed in early morning, but soon disappeared; they were not seen again during the day, and for the first time did not return to the nest at night. Perhaps their migration has begun.

September 24.—Swallows not here at daylight, but appeared in the air about 8 a. m. Not seen again until 6:15 p. m., when they were flying about the shed. After dark I found them all at the nest, perching for the night. (No insects visible in the air yesterday or today.)

September 25.—Very frosty this morning. At 6:15 a. m., about an hour before sunrise, while the temperature stood at 26°, the four swallows flew out of the shed from the nest, circled the farmyard once, twittering, then struck out almost directly southward, in close formation, climbing as they flew. When they disappeared from view, a quarter of a mile distant, they were about 300 feet from the ground. Their delayed migration had begun.—WINTON WEYDEMEYER, *Fortine, Montana, February 4, 1931.*