

## BANK SWALLOW HABITS.

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Lake Forest is situated on high ground on the west side of Lake Michigan. A few rods back from the shore are cliffs about seventy-five feet high, which always present an almost perpendicular face of glacial till, that is constantly being eroded away during stormy weather. The till is mostly clay, with sand "pockets" of several square yards cross sections frequently occurring; and these are in great favor with Bank Swallows as nesting places.

A group of these pockets near one of the walks along shore contained the burrows of about seventy-five pairs of Bank Swallows.

On May 10, 1898, I happened by this place. It was a bright, warm afternoon, and a good time for sun-baths. I found the swallows indulging in a performance somewhat different from anything that I had ever seen before. All seemed to be at it, and everything was done in earnest and with remarkable regularity. Gathered at the entrances of the burrows which were more or less completely excavated, the males would perform as we so often see cock sparrows do when courting, though with less vigorous demonstrations. The characteristic motion was a rapid vibration of the wings held a little apart from the body. Some of the time this motion seemed to be indulged in by all, which caused me to doubt its being a simple nesting performance; and I am not sure that the birds were doing anything more than having a play time. Every four or five minutes, during the hour I watched them, the whole lot would leave with a whirl and circle out over the lake a few rods, always returning to repeat the same performance again and again.

R. M. STRONG, *Lake Forest, Ill.*

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## BIRDS FROM THE CAR WINDOW.

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If one could judge from the attitude and occupation of the majority of rail-road travelers, an extended journey of that kind is not a thing to be desired. Indeed, the traveler who persists in window gazing, and perchance makes frequent use of note-book and pencil, is pretty certain to be relegated to the interesting tho not wholly desirable "greenhorn" type. Nevertheless, current writings give indisputable proof that nature study from the car window is coming more and more into favor as a regular and profitable means of making a journey pass pleasantly.

The morning of July 20, found the writer whirling over the broad prairies and swamps of western Indiana and eastern Illinois, on the line

of the "Nickle Plate" rail-road. He had been warned against the endless monotony of this region in vain. Monotonous it may be at noon-day, under the scorching rays of an almost vertical sun; but in the tender light of an early morning, while the birds are scarcely yet at their early devotions, while all vegetation is bending under the weight of a refreshing dew and the rich green of the lithe marsh grass sweeps away to the very horizon, it certainly is not monotonous to the nature student.

But birds are the topic under consideration. In the gray light of the early morning nothing could be seen against the green of the marsh grass, but clouds of swallows were startled from their perches on the telegraph wires and circled dizzily about. The stronger light revealed Red-winged Blackbirds, Meadowlarks and Bobolinks as they were startled from the marsh grass. As the day advanced birds continually passed in review. From the telegraph wires and poles Barn, Cliff, Tree and Rough-winged Swallows and Sparrow Hawks were startled by the approaching train. From the marsh and bog grass and reeds Green Herons, Bitterns and Short-eared Owls started up and soared away. Marsh Hawks and Great Blue Herons sailed lazily over the broad fields, and in the distance the Red-shouldered and Red-tailed Hawks could be seen. Huge flocks of Bronzed Grackles, with Cowbirds intermingled, passed in review from roost to feeding ground. The Song and Vesper Sparrows were everywhere present, and the Long-billed Marsh Wrens were much in evidence.

As the wet prairies gave place to sand dunes and wooded copses, Indigobirds, Scarlet Tanagers and Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, with the company of Flycatchers, put in an appearance. Tempting coveys of Bob-whites whirled away; Cardinals and Baltimore Orioles flashed from cover to cover; Red-headed Woodpeckers and Flickers vainly tried to outstrip the train; the Migrant Shrike was startled from his vigil, and the Belted Kingfisher from his reverie above the water. The Mourning Dove, Robin and Goldfinch were everywhere in evidence. At the water tanks Wood Thrushes, Maryland Yellowthroats, Field Sparrows, House Wrens, Towhees, Red-eyed Vireos, Wood Pewees, Catbirds and Chipping Sparrows were heard singing. Swifts darted about overhead continually.

On the return trip from Chicago, Crow, Bluebird, Blue Jay, Yellow Warbler, Purple Martin, Spotted Sandpiper, Prairie Horned Lark, Brown Thrasher, Grasshopper Sparrow and Ruby-throated Hummingbird were added to the list. It is seldom that I have made a larger list in a day's study in summer at home, not to mention such rarities as Short-eared Owl, Bittern and Great Blue Heron. One of the more in-

interesting facts learned was that the swallows and most of the Icteridae had already begun preparations for the southward migrations. Many of the birds were evidently still burdened with household affairs, but many of them were in the molt.

To you who find a rail-road journey irksome I beg to recommend a note-book tonic. It will do as well at one time of year as at another, and whether the journey be over new or familiar ground. It will be no harder on the eyes than reading, and far less confining.

LYNDS JONES, *Oberlin, Ohio.*

### A PUZZLED GOLDFINCH.

Our woodshed is lighted by a single window of six small panes, or rather, five panes and a hole where one ought to be. On the outside a grape-vine is trained against the wall, and has grown up so as partially to shade the window. An ambitious runner has found its way through the open space and is groping wildly about in the inner gloom. This runner forms the mainstay of a complicated system of cobwebs which cover the window inside.

Yesterday, my wife, as she was passing through the shed, heard a peculiar tapping on the window, and called me to see a female Goldfinch seeking admission by one of the lower panes. We were at a loss to know at first what she was after, but came to the conclusion that she was hunting cobwebs. The particular pane she was at had a tempting network of them on the inside. The bird pecked and fluttered and worried for a long time until she gave every evidence of being mentally depressed. It was her first experience with bottled cobwebs, and it put her out considerably. She tried different panes so far as she could find support for her feet. Several leaves brushed the glass, but they would not hold the bird's weight, so she hit upon the scheme of biting the outer ribs in two and doubling the leaf over on itself. Thus folded the leaf would support her and she could peck away on the windows to her heart's content. All this time she manifested no interest in the broken pane where she might have secured easy access to a perfect mine of cobwebs. So enamored was she of her self imposed task, that she paid little attention to me as I approached from the inside. I even proffered her a grass head through the opening, and she nibbled at it sulkily without show of fear.

To-day she has returned to the attack. The outside webs have all been gathered, and I doubt not that she is somewhere lining a nest with