

GENERAL NOTES

Conducted by M. H. Swenk

A House Wren Despoils a Purple Martin Nest.—We have had quite a little argument regarding the destructive habits of the House Wren (*Troglodytes aedon*) and it has been pretty hard to believe some of the articles that we have read, but they say "seeing is believing," and at our house we are converted. We watched a wren enter the Purple Martin house and throw out an egg, in spite of our efforts to frighten it away, so that ends the wren houses at our place, although they have nested there for twenty years.—T. ROSS WALLACE, *Atlantic, Iowa.*

A House Wren Drives Away a Pair of Cardinals.—Our screened porch, covered with grape vines, affords a most habitable place for birds, and in the spring of 1925 we discovered a pair of Cardinals building a nest. I watched them from day to day until the nest was finished and the eggs were laid. A pair of House Wrens, however, occupied a nest in a neighbor's yard, and I often saw them flying about. One day while busy indoors I heard an unusual amount of scolding and chattering near the Cardinal's nest, and upon investigating found a House Wren in the Cardinal's nest with its bill in an egg. I immediately frightened the wren away and was determined to see the outcome of this heinous act. The unhappy Cardinal stayed on, until another time I again heard the same confusion and scolding. This time the incorrigible little wren had thrown the egg on the ground and was again occupying the nest. The Cardinals this time abandoned their home.

Last summer our vines were occupied by a family of Catbirds, but they finished their nesting season without any disturbance. However, we have done away with all the wren houses in our immediate neighborhood.—Mrs. C. G. SCHMIDT, *Elkader, Iowa.*

Observations on the House Wren in Virginia.—As there has been much discussion recently concerning the nest-robbing habits of the House Wren, the following observations may be of interest.

I have about my home a number of one-room bird houses of different sizes, suitable for House Wrens, Bluebirds, Crested Flycatchers and Flickers, and two Purple Martin houses, each with ten rooms of standard dimensions. Early in the season a pair of House Wrens built in a Crested Flycatcher house, and at once filled a Bluebird house about fifty yards away with sticks. They raised a brood in spite of two attacks from Black Snakes (*Coluber constrictor*), which, luckily, I saw in time to save the nestlings.

On July 27, they had a second brood in a gable room, in the east end of a Purple Martin house thirty yards from the house in which the first brood had been reared, and had filled one room on the north side of the house with sticks. That house had not been taken by Purple Martins this season. On this date I noticed that a pair of Bluebirds were nesting in a room on the south side of the same martin house, evidently having very young nestlings at that time, the young wrens being two-thirds grown. This situation was of great interest to me, as it is the first time I have known either species to nest in the same house with any other species, so I watched them quite closely, mornings and evenings, through the rest of their stay in the house.

Only twice did I see any signs of trouble between the two families, and in both cases the male Bluebird was the aggressor. He made a dash at one of the wrens, who at once took refuge in their nest, when the Bluebird went on about his business. On August 7, the young wrens had left the nest, but I cannot say just when they left, as I had been away for three days prior to that date. The young Bluebirds left the nest on August 12. As the wrens left the nest at least six days before the Bluebirds did, they probably began housekeeping a little the sooner, though a shorter incubation and feeding period might have made up that difference.

I am sorry that other demands on my time made it impossible for me to keep closer watch on these two families.—JOHN B. LEWIS, *Lawrenceville, Va.*

Watching the House Wrens.—The returning birds of two springs ago (1925) found our garden ready for their reception. Of attractive plants there were the Bush Honeysuckle, High-bush Cranberry, Russian Olive, Wild Gooseberry, Snow-berry, Barberry, Bittersweet vines, a grape arbor, three cherry trees, and an apple tree. There were a couple of feeding stations, a bird bath, Robin shelves, a Purple Martin house, and a Bluebird house. The advertisements read that you should have three House Wren houses for each pair, and for fear they would not understand my hospitality, I put up four of them. These, with the two on my neighbor's lot to the north, made six wren boxes within fifty feet. With the sparrow trap going full blast and the cat trap doing its duty all was set for the coming of my bird friends.

A pair of Bluebirds came first. They had some difficulty in deciding which house they would take—the green keg on the grape arbor, the three entrance house on the pole or the little brown cabin—but they finally selected the last named. The Purple Martins rented sixteen apartments in their house. About this time my attention was called to an article in the *WILSON BULLETIN*, which urged that the placing of wren boxes be discontinued. Against this I protested, saying that I just couldn't turn against the wren. I had never seen so much song and energy concentrated in such a tiny mite. Then it was so busy attending to its business that I couldn't see when it could find time for any mischief. I intended to put out my wren houses and *watch*. Not a bad idea if one will *watch*. This I did.

When the birds arrived I began to watch the House Wren. Not much was seen. I found Robin's eggs punctured, the Catbird's nest destroyed with punctured eggs on the ground, but I really didn't see the wren do these things. I was still in love with him and was glad to feel something else must have happened.

The Bluebirds brought out two of their family. Their accustomed absence occurred and in due time the little family returned with the children pretty well grown. Mother selected this time the keg on the arbor. Father was too busy feeding the first family to help much in furnishing house number two. The House Wrens soon sent their family on its way and then decided on the cabin, which in the meantime had been cleaned and put up on the east end of the arbor. The Bluebirds didn't want the wrens for neighbors and one day there was a lot of trouble until about noon.

I went down town that afternoon and wasn't in the garden until the next morning. Then I settled myself on the bench under the apple tree to watch my happy family. The wrens were very busy with the cabin, but no Bluebirds about.