

UNUSUAL NESTING SITE FOR BANK SWALLOWS

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On 5 June 1986, in the Hinton, Alberta area a number of Bank Swallows were observed concentrated around an old sawmill site (53° 16' N 117° 43' W). Closer observation revealed that they had selected the sawdust pile as an alternative to their normal nesting sites. The vertical section of the sawdust pile is approximately 3-4 metres high and faces northwest. There were about 100 tunnels of which 20 appeared to be occupied. Although there are several other sawdust piles in this area swallow activity had not been observed at them. Godfrey, Harrison and Salt and Salt do not mention sawdust piles as potential nesting sites, however Bent reports two incidents in 1902, one in New Hampshire and the other in Michigan.^{2 3 4 1}

The birds may have selected this site over other more natural ones and over other sawdust piles in the area for several reasons: 1) The size of the material facilitated excavation; 2) The vertical face was created by the removal of part of the

sawdust pile; 3) The age of the pile and the stage of decomposition of the sawdust provided a very stable medium for the birds.

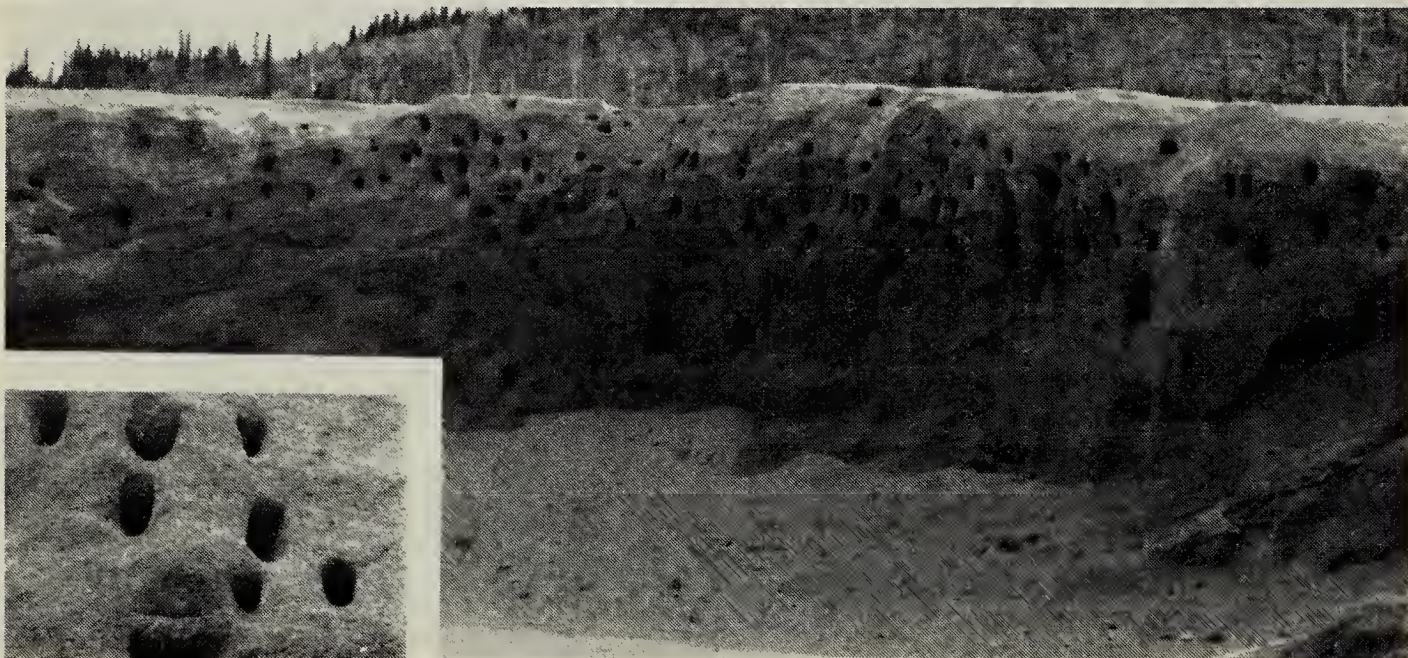
The nests were not checked for fear of disturbing the birds, however on 6 October 1986, I returned to photograph the site and it appeared that the vertical portion was stable and had withstood the very strong chinook winds in this area. I believe the birds will return to this site next year.

¹ BENT, A.C. 1963. Life histories of North American flycatchers, larks, swallows, and their allies. Dover, New York.

² GODFREY, W.E. 1966. The birds of Canada. Bull. No. 203, Biol. Ser. No. 73. Nat. Mus. of Canada, Ottawa.

³ HARRISON, H.H. 1979. A field guide to western bird's nests. Houghton Mifflin, Boston.

⁴ SALT, W.R. and J.R. SALT. 1976. The birds of Alberta. Hurtig, Edmonton.



Bank Swallow nests in sawdust pile.

Kendall Collett

PURPLE MARTIN CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION

The Purple Martin is a bird which has been managed by man longer than any other North American bird species. Even before European man colonized the New World, native American indians were enticing these companionable birds to nest in their villages by attaching hollowed-out gourd "nest boxes" to the support poles of their wigwams. Modern man has continued this gourd-using tradition to attract martins, but he also has taken to using elaborate wooden, plastic, or aluminum multi-compartmented bird condos (i.e. "martin houses") which he mounts on poles and proudly displays on his lawns.

Today however, this man-dependant species is declining within parts of its breeding range. In an attempt to remedy the situation, the *Purple Martin Conservation Association* has been formed to help coordinate the management efforts of

North America's martin landlords. Through its *Colony Registry Program* it is attempting to locate and register most of the martin colonies in North America in preparation for several worthwhile projects, including a continent-wide nest-record card scheme.

If you know of someone who has a martin colony or is trying to attract one, or if you are interested in starting a colony yourself, please write to the P.M.C.A. You can further assist by looking for martin houses or gourds in peoples' yards during your travels. If you locate some, please try to obtain the mailing addresses from either the street & house numbers, rural mailboxes, phone books, or by stopping to inquire. Please send addresses to: P.M.C.A., P.O. Box 178, Edinboro, PA 16412.

