

# RESCUE OPERATION — SWALLOWS

The last few days of April 1991 have been nice. A lot of the birds are back. I see Tree Swallows flying over Wascana Lake. On the evening of 30 April 1991, it turns cold (-2°C) and it snows. On my walk around Wascana the next day I see a few Tree Swallows huddled together on the ground. A few are flying around. As I go further on I see a few dead swallows and see a few birds on the ground by a large tree that has a triangular hole at the base. There are quite a few birds on the ground. It finally dawns on me that these birds are under stress from the cold weather. I go to the museum and tell the people there what I have seen. One staff member gets a large cardboard box and returns to the lake with me. We go to the tree where I have seen the birds. We decide to catch what birds we can and take them back to the museum for warmth. I reach into the hole at the base of the tree and start pulling

swallows out and putting them in the box. I pull approximately 150 birds out of the hole. Some are dead, others alive. We check several other holes in nearby trees and rescue still more birds. We take them to the museum and release them the next day.

Did we rescue these birds? Did we help them in any way? I'm not sure. I know some smothered in the holes, as they were dead when we took them out. We couldn't feed them - how do you feed birds that eat on the wing? I think what we did was proper. We acted out of kindness and must have saved a few that would have suffocated had we not taken action. Nature seems so cruel at times, but I guess it is so that only the most fit survive.

— *Keith Barr*, 40 Richardson Crescent, Regina, Saskatchewan. S4S 4J3



Migration: Birds seem to possess uncanny skills as astronomers. Most birds migrate at night, says biologist James Gould of Princeton University. They recognize patterns of stars and the tilt and rotation of the night sky as navigation aids. *Globe and Mail*. 8 March 1994.