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# LETTERS

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## DUTY-SHARING BY ROBINS

My husband and I have been observing and studying the birds and animals in our area for years. We especially find that the birds are very interesting. Within a radius of 2 miles of our home we have observed throughout the whole year at least 65 different birds including the transients.

On 7 April the bluebirds arrived and established their territory. The robins are also returning. Speaking of robins, I would like to share this happening:

Two years ago in the middle of July I noticed father robin picking Saskatoons in the bluff, 10 feet from the house. He would pick the berries and then drop them on the ground. Mother robin was right there. She just stuffed them into her mouth.

On looking a little closer I noticed that her right wing was dragging on the ground and that it was nearly severed from the body. She probably flew into some hydropower wire or something sharp to cause such a wound.

I dropped everything and followed the pair. After father robin, too, had his mouth full of berries they proceeded south to the shelter belt. Father robin all the time flew circles around mother as she hopped some 300 yards across the yard to the shelterbelt. In a spruce tree branch 6 feet above the ground was a nest containing 4 baby robins. Mother robin dropped her berries on the ground at the foot of the tree. Father robin picked them up and fed the young. When they were finished they returned to the

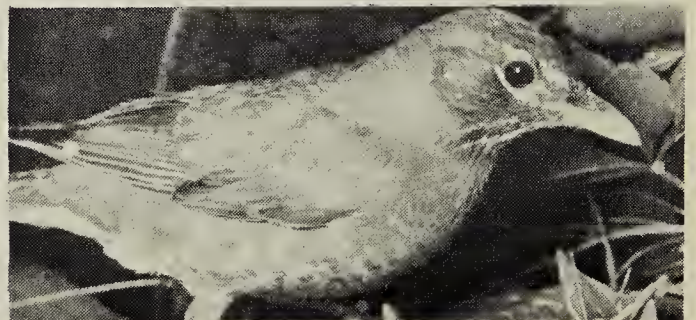
bluff for more berries. Father robin was constantly circling around mother as she hopped across the yard. This scene somehow touched my heart! This went on day after day.

That year I had a little garden just 10 feet from the shelterbelt. I was hilling potatoes. Mother robin hopped along the row and picked cutworms, earthworms and grubs. Her mouth looked like a hayrack with long hay hanging out the sides. She hopped to the tree and father took over.

Finally the young robins were out of the nest and were flying around. Mother made courageous attempts to try to fly, too, but every time she tried she would come to the ground. Her wing was not mended yet.

In the fall cooler weather came. Flocks of robins from the north stopped to rest in the yard, on their journey south. The young and the father left without mother.

I noticed her some weeks later. She could fly short distances but not very well. Whether she made it south I do not know. I am watching for her every day and hope she comes back. — *Annie Knight*, Box 71, Bangor, Saskatchewan. SOA 0E0



*Robins.*

*Hans Dommasch*

## NEW BLUEBIRD TRAIL

I would like to report on the success of a "Bluebird Box Trail" that we placed in Douglas Park this spring. We placed 19 boxes in the park and I am happy to report a 98% occupancy by bluebirds and Tree Swallows.

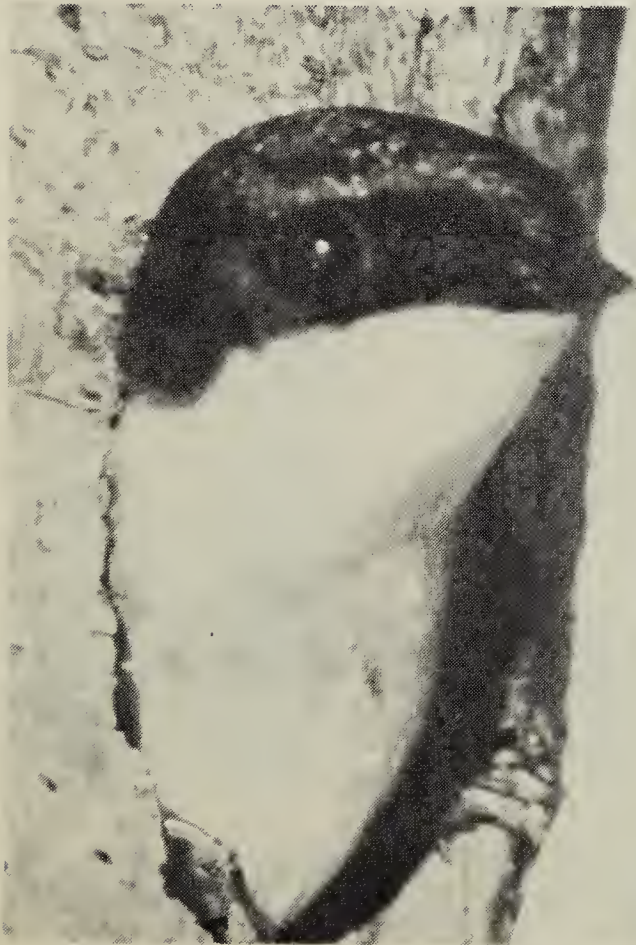
Below is a detailed list of the boxes and their occupancy. I hope to be able to return to check the hatching of swallow eggs. Another year we'll have to do our checking a little later.

I was delighted with the results and will endeavour to place more boxes next year. I operate a Home for Mentally Handicapped Adults, and it was a real learning experience for us all.

## JUNE 18 CHECK OF NEST BOX TRAIL IN DOUGLAS PARK

| Box No. | Contents                                       |
|---------|--|
| 1       | 1 dead swallow (adult)                         |
| 2       | 6 Tree Swallow eggs                            |
| 3       | 2 Tree Swallows hatched + 4 eggs               |
| 4       | 3 Tree Swallow eggs                            |
| 5       | 4 Tree Swallow eggs (swallow stayed sitting)   |
| 6       | 6 Tree Swallow eggs                            |
| 7       | 5 Tree Swallow eggs                            |
| 8       | 7 bluebirds hatched and feathered              |
| 9       | empty  |
| 10      | 6 Tree Swallow eggs                            |
| 11      | 5 bluebirds + 1 egg                            |
| 12      | 5 bluebirds                                    |
| 13      | 3 Tree Swallow eggs                            |
| 14      | 5 bluebirds                                    |
| 15      | 3 swallow eggs seen (bird sitting on the nest) |
| 16      | 5 bluebird eggs                                |
| 17      | 6 Tree Swallow eggs                            |
| 18      | 7 Tree Swallow eggs                            |
| 19      | 7 Tree Swallow eggs                            |

— Brenda D. Winch, Box 65, Ernfold, Saskatchewan.



*Tree Swallows.*



*Robert J. Long*