

BANK SWALLOW BANDING

By Leslie E. Bemont

My Bank Swallow total looks good compared to those you reported for the previous year. But compared to Nodecker's efforts (Ebba News, 20:49) it's just peanuts. I used mist nets in the way he described a couple of times in the latter part of the Bank Swallow nesting season, and for banding sheer numbers it's excellent. I would be a little afraid to try it at the height of the nesting season for fear of being swamped, especially with two nets, but then I was working alone. At any rate this method doesn't give much information on the individual birds.

To match each bird with its mate, parents, etc., without damaging the burrows by reaching in, I use ladies' nylon hair nets mounted on frames made of coat hanger wire. I form a circle of the wire about 6 inches across on which the net is mounted, and leave a handle, like a tennis racket handle, of about a foot. About half of this handle is bent to form a 90° angle with the rest, so that it is perpendicular to the hoop, or at least the plane of the hoop.

I park my car about 20 feet from the colony so I can use it as a blind. I sit there watching the colony until I see a bird go into a hole within reach. Then I dash from the car and fasten one of my nets over the burrow entrance by pushing the end of the handle into the dirt above the hole. I then return to the car and wait for the bird or birds to come out and get caught. Using 6 or 7 hair nets it took me about 5 hours to band 50 swallows in this way one day last spring.

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CONSERVATION IS A CONCEPT

Many persons have struggled to adequately define the word, "conservation". About the best anyone has been able to do is to say it means "wise use".

Defining the word is difficult because, in reality, conservation is a concept.

From the practical point of view, the conservation concept asks that topsoil be held in place, where it is most productive, by living plants. It sees a forest as something more than a wood factory -- a storage reservoir for rainwater held in the ground by millions of small roots. It regards surface streams and lakes as arteries of life-sustaining water, of immense value to municipalities and industries and agriculture, rather than just waste disposal systems.