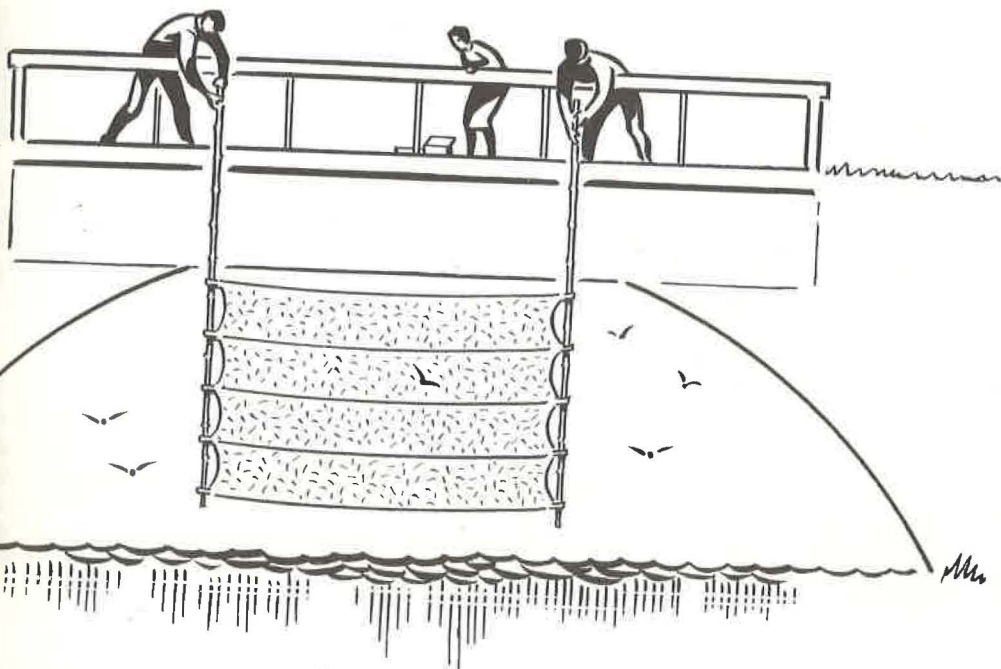


## CLIFF SWALLOW BANDING IN NEBRASKA

By Willetta Lueshen

For several years Cliff Swallows (*Petrochelidon pyrrhonota*) have been nesting under two bridges about four miles from the John Lueshen home near Wisner, Nebraska. These bridges are one mile, and two and one half miles south of Pilger, Nebraska in Stanton County on state highway #15. One bridge is over the Elkhorn River; the other, one half mile to the south, is over what is locally known as Turtle Hole. This is the runoff from pumped gravel deposits, and slow moving water is here the year round.

As the bridge is closer to the water at Turtle Hole than at the Elkhorn River an effort has been made to band birds here. The bridge is constructed of concrete and any wind movement pushes the net against the



Drawing by William Ferguson

bridge rail, or sides, and the fine threads snag on the concrete. Therefore, a calm day must be chosen. At least three people are needed for the project.

Using two light weight sectional bamboo fishing poles about twelve feet in length, a net is placed on the poles with the top loop as close to the top, or tapered end of the pole, as possible. Both the top and the bottom loops of the net are securely taped in place. Using one person to handle each pole, the net is lowered over the bridge railing to the water, but not touching it (See drawing on preceding page). Fortunately the distance between the water and the lower edge of the bridge structure is usually about eight or nine feet which leaves little escape space for birds, should they detect the presence of the net.

When, from two to six or eight birds have been pocketed, the net is hauled up, hand under hand, to the bridge floor, continue to keep the net in a somewhat vertical position. It is also best to keep the net stretched its full length to avoid tangling the birds. A third person (even more can be helpful here) then removes the birds and bands them. When the birds have been removed, the process is repeated.

On each banding venture it was found that the birds were easily caught as they flew both toward and away from their nests under the bridge. Far more time was used to remove the birds than to hold the net below the bridge, although the birds were never badly tangled. The Cliff Swallows seemed to be able to see the net better when held on the shaded side of the bridge than when suspended in the bright sunshine.

By experimenting it was found that a person hidden under the bridge on the side opposite the net could, by clapping his hands, flush large numbers of birds from their nests into the net in a fraction of a minute. However, a higher percentage hit the net with enough force to bounce off. Nonetheless, it hurried the process of catching birds.

On July 10, 1958, the writer, with the aid of her husband and a small boy, caught 23 birds in 45 minutes. During the summer of 1959 the bridge was torn out and a new concrete bridge put in its place. The project took most of the summer and, while the Cliff Swallows were nesting, it was impractical to do any banding. In 1960 a return visit could not be arranged. On June 20, 1961 the writer and her husband, along with two other people, again went out to catch Cliff Swallows. This time 76 birds were caught in two hours. There were many others still unbanded when the party had to depart.

The most rewarding part of the whole venture came when two Cliff Swallows that were banded in 1958 were recaptured. This is a 9% return.

Were it not for the inconvenience of finding a third party, both willing and capable, to help with the project, more attempts to band would

be made. Week-end recreation in the area causes such heavy boat and auto traffic that it is not profitable to attempt netting then. Unfortunately few people have time for aiding in this venture during the week.

As yet only the nine meter net has been used, but an attempt should be made to use the 18 meter net next time; however, it is doubtful that it can be handled as successfully as the shorter net.

On the bridge is posted a sign "No Fishing from the Bridge". An officer who might stop to question the use of bamboo fishing poles hanging over the bridge railing would likely be quite surprised to see the catch. Fortunately as yet no officer has stopped.

Wisner, Nebraska

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#### OPERATION RECOVERY IN POLAND

By Dr. W. Rydzewski

From September 15 to October 14, 1961, a first experimental "Operation Recovery" was carried out along the Baltic coast of Poland. Six points manned by three people each, working with a few mist-nets only (43 nets altogether), succeeded in trapping and banding 10,534 birds of 82 species, with 1604 local retraps. Each bird was weighed, measured, and examined for external parasites.

The list of species was headed by the European Robin (*Erithacus rubecula*) with 3768 birds banded, Goldcrest (*Regulus regulus*) 2313, and Great Tit (*Parus major*) 886. Among the rarer species were one Siberian Thrush (*Turdus sibiricus*) and a Yellow-browed Warbler (*Phylloscopus inornatus*), both being the first definite evidences for the Polish list.

Among the birds trapped two Great Tits bore Moscow bands, one Robin had a Swedish band, and one Blackbird had a British band.

The most interesting recovery, however, was that of a Robin banded on September 5 at the easternmost point of the chain of stations and re-trapped after 12 days, i.e. September 17, at the westernmost station, a distance of 230 km. (about 144 miles) as the crow flies.

The results of this first experimental operation are encouraging and it is planned to repeat the operation next year if the necessary equipment (mist-nets) is available. It should be mentioned that the operation has been organized by three young enthusiastic undergraduates of the Warsaw University who, helped by their friends and colleagues, carried out successfully this experimental project.

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