

THE
PRESIDENT'S
MESSAGE

During the fall migration I have been rather negligent of my duties as EBBA President due to the pressures of business and personal problems. Naturally the influx of correspondence has continued. Now I am organizing and replying to many letters I have received. One point has been quite violently driven home! Everybody knows about it, but right now it is very much on my mind. In common with the rest of the world, EBBA has a communications problem.

With our large membership, with our large council, with our large geographic area, how can we have an effective interchange of ideas? How can the President interact with his Councillors hundreds of miles away? Letters are slow and time-consuming. Phone calls are miserably expensive. Even conference calls do not permit really effective group discussions.

One general meeting per year is stimulating. It is also short. During the period of a few hours the Council must transact an entire year's business.

More frequent Council meetings would bridge much of this gap. As long as the expense of gathering remains a personal one, this avenue to communicating is impractical. It just plain costs too much!

Right now, EBBA NEWS is our best spreader of the word. Last year EBBA was in the sad position of having to break in both a new President and a new Editor. Our Editor, in particular, was in a sensitive position. He still is, for that matter. Change of any kind is difficult to adjust to. Let's try to shrink our communications gap in every way we can. You can be most effective in this by using EBBA NEWS to tell other EBBA members what you are doing and why, or even what ought to be done.

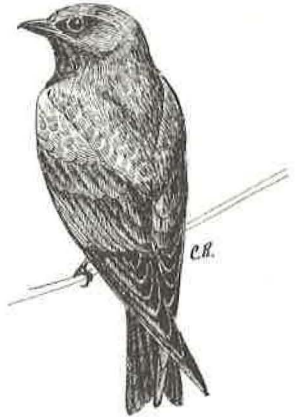
Communicate by contributing.

Emil J. Berger, Jr.
President



A Bird Bander's Diary

by Ralph K. Bell



This is to be a continuation (from the last issue of EBBA NEWS) about the "NOTES ON THE PURPLE MARTIN AND BIRD HOUSES FOR ITS SUMMER HOME" by J. Warren Jacobs. But first, I would like to comment about the man himself.

"Mister Jacobs" as he was both respectfully and affectionately addressed by all who knew him, was a self-educated naturalist in the Thoreau tradition, specializing in the study of bird life - not only in Waynesburg, Pa., but in the middle Atlantic States as well.

Like many ornithologists of his time, he started out quite young collecting bird eggs and nests. His first egg collections were placed in old cigar boxes and eventually grew to be one of the largest and most complete in the United States. It numbered more than 4,500 eggs that came from every state and territory in the United States as well as areas of Canada, Mexico, the West Indies, Iceland and Greenland.

Some of the eggs were obtained by trading with other egg collectors. Each collector "swapped" eggs that were readily available in their respective areas. This way each collector could build up his collection without the time and expense involved in traveling to various areas of the world and doing the collecting himself.

The eggs of the Red-tailed Hawk were easily obtained by Mr. Jacobs and were in good demand. In fact, this hawk was considered "abundant" here in Greene County, Pa., at the turn of the century. Mr. Jacobs was a good tree climber and getting these eggs was no problem to him. But one of his sons told me that his father once came face to face with

a horrifying experience while on one of these egg gathering jaunts. He often searched out the nest trees alone and once while high in a giant tree near a Red-tails nest, slipped, and one arm became caught in a deep crotch of the tree. He was trapped and faced possible death. After what seemed hours, he managed to free his arm but some ligaments in his shoulder were torn and this about ended his tree climbing.

Mr. Jacobs egg collection was one of the town's chief tourist attractions for many years and was also visited for study purposes by college and university professors and noted naturalists from many parts of the nation. It was praised by them for the highly scientific manner in which it was catalogued. Together with its supplementary drawings made by Mr. Jacobs himself, photographs of sites, etc., and commentary on the exhibit, its visual impact for teaching purposes won the admiration of visitors and local people as well.

J. Warren Jacobs was a gifted cabinet maker and he eventually turned most of this ability into the manufacture of bird houses. They were of such excellent quality that they graced the homes of famous people like Henry Ford, Thomas A. Edison, John D. Rockefeller, the U.S. Government lawns in Washington, D.C. and many state and local institutions such as courthouses, hospitals, etc. His birdhouses possessed distinctive designs and quality that gave Waynesburg itself a national and international identification.

The accompanying pictures, taken from one of his advertising brochures, gives one an idea of the size and types of beautiful martin houses he produced in 1920. (Pictures may be found on p. 52. Editor).

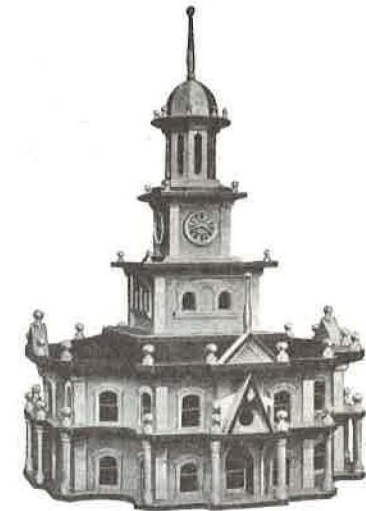
His interest in Purple Martins, as with his egg collection, reached far beyond his home area. Part of the widespread interest in martins was due to the publications Mr. Jacobs put out for several years giving information and helpful hints on how to get and keep Purple Martins. These booklets were titled "Gleanings from Nature" and he mailed them to any interested individual as well as any martin box customer. To give the reader an idea of the contents of these booklets, I'll take interesting excerpts from "Gleanings No. 5" (published in 1909) that includes interesting details about Purple Martins congregating after the nesting season in 1907 and how he tried to help others establish martin colonies as far away as Vermont and Maine. The following is in Mr. Jacobs own words.

"On August 17th (1907) I read in a Pittsburgh, Pa. daily, a dispatch from New Martinsville, W.Va., stating that thousands of "wall martins" or "swallows" came into the town to roost on the telephone wires and so great was the weight thrown on the wires that the telephone company became alarmed lest the increasing flocks break down their wire service."

Independence Hall

Model 3

45 Rooms



"Suspecting the birds to be the Purple House Martin, and being desirous of settling this point and facts as to the number of birds, I wrote my friend and former townsman, Frank V. Iams, attorney, now residing in the W. Va., city. In reply, Mr. Iams corroborated the published dispatch, except that the telephone company, owning the wires, had not yet deemed it necessary to molest the birds. The birds, he said were 'all House Martins, such as nest in boxes put up for their use.' He further stated that the published statement that their were ten thousand of the birds, far underestimated the number, for he could sit at his home and see more than that number and the lines stretched out of sight of his residence.

They continued to increase in numbers until, he thinks, there were nearly 25,000, if this estimate is not inadequate. After the 28th of August they began to diminish in numbers until, when he last saw them, Sept. 5, only about one-fourth remained.

The birds came into town in large streams or 'string-flocks' from all directions. Those coming down the Ohio River, and those coming up the stream, being the largest. At some parts the flocks were over a hundred feet wide. They seemed to come to the town by way of nearby valleys. Besides the large flocks already mentioned, unusually large assemblies came down the Fishing and Doolin Valleys, and from the valleys coming into the Ohio River from the opposite side of the river. When the birds reached the town, which was about dusk, they would circle around before settling on the wires.



The Capitol

Model 4

104 Rooms

Broad porches and beautiful peri-style colonades on all four sides. Numerous roof ornaments; raised window trimmings, cornice, mouldings, etc.; nine stories high, including the three stories in the clock tower; complete tin roof and porch projections. Beautiful "Marble Palace" painted solid white (decorated trimmings in colors extra). Shipping weight 1035 pounds.

Price, including double iron fastenings and crating **\$150.00**

With hinged pole, 21 feet -----**\$185.00**

Size over all, 52x52x99 inches.

Complete instructions with each purchase.

From the foregoing it would seem that our beloved House Martin is in no immediate danger of extinction, notwithstanding bad weather conditions, during the past four years, have affected them, at nesting time, all over eastern United States, where they once thrived, they are not almost extinct.

How to get the birds....that is the question. You first build your bird house and experiment by erecting it in a conspicuous place, and wait for the birds. Keep out the sparrows, and if no martins come the first year, try a second or a third time. In new territory the box should be put up in april, to attract passing migrants, but near old colonies, the latter part of that month is soon enough to put up a box.

It you are interested, it is well worth an effort to try to establish the birds. My friend, Mr. John T. Timmons, of Cadiz, Ohio is blind, but he built an elaborate bird-house for his residence grounds, that he might hear these fine birds, although he could not see them. He was succesful, and writes me of his great pleasure he has of listening to the babbling warble of the birds.

In conclusion, I wish to give the results of my experiments in re-establishing these birds in communities far from my breeding colonies.

Several years ago, I sent a gentleman in Elmira, N.Y., a pair of old birds which he liberated, but not according to my instructions, which might not have succeeded anyway. He never saw the birds again.

For several years I sent martin eggs to Chas. H. Kingsbury at Barnard, N.Y., to be hatched in Barn Swallow nests. In nearly every instance the eggs hatched, but accidents befell the young birds. At another time I sent eggs to W. C. Horton, Brattleboro, Vt., to be hatched in the nests of Tree Swallows, which had taken possession of his deserted martin house. These eggs hatched, but after two weeks constant care by the foster parents, Mr. Horton found something had killed all the young birds and carried three of them away.

Mr. Kingsbury (Barnard, N.Y.) made another effort to establish the birds last year, by raising by hand, six young birds I sent him from my own and Mr. Reese's colonies. He stated it was wonderful the number of insects these youngsters devoured, one of his farm hands occupying his entire time in tending to their wants. Two of the birds died, one escaped, and the remaining three were seen with a flock of swallows some days after they were liberated. He may see the return of these birds the coming spring.

The White Race is not wholly responsible for the House Martin evolving in its nesting habits from the natural cavities in trees and cliffs to the elegant home-like nesting boxes with which it is now provided. True, the white man's high state of civilization and culture has perfected the scheme, but to the American Indian, who loved and honored this bird, must the credit be given for first providing rudely constructed receptacles for its accomodation. Waynesburg, Pa., February, 1908."

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