

house, leaving twelve eggs unhatched. Occasionally a few return and fly about as if trying to catch a glimpse of the inside of their home but none have ventured to enter up to this date (July 17).—FRANCES B. HORTON, *Brattleboro, Vt.*

Sand Swallows (*Riparia riparia*) Nesting in Sawdust.—In the summer of 1902, while I was in Franconia, N. H., Mrs. Annie Trumbull Slosson pointed out to me a pile of sawdust, on the perpendicular face of which, earlier in the season, she had noticed what seemed to be entrances to Sand Swallow nests. The pile is constantly being shovelled away, and at the time of my visit no holes were visible.

This year (1903) Mrs. Slosson wrote me, under date of June 18, that she had been out to the place (on the Easton road) two days before, and seeing a hole in the vertical (newly dug down) side of the sawdust heap, had taken pains to investigate the matter.

"We sat in the carriage," she wrote, and watched the hole, and soon saw a swallow enter it and, immediately after, another. They came out, flew away, and returned, entering the hole again. Each time they went in little clouds of sawdust puffed out like smoke. I got out of the carriage and went up the mound to the hole. I put my hand and arm in as far as I could, but it was not far enough to reach eggs or young, and I was afraid of the mound's coming down upon me. After I returned to the carriage the birds came back, but were very shy of going into the disturbed hole, making several starts, vibrating their wings, then flying away. But in a few minutes they gained courage and again entered the hole. I think there is not the slightest doubt that it is their home. I could find no other hole, but have little question there were others which had been wrecked by the workmen, who had been digging down that side of the pile."

Some days later she wrote: "On Saturday we drove again by the sawdust heap. There were full twenty holes, and apparently all were occupied; swallows flying in and out all the time, a regular colony, just as you see them in a sand-bank. Poor simple creatures, I fear an earthquake—or dustquake—has even now destroyed their work."

I begged her to make absolutely sure of the species, if she had not already done so, though really there could be no reasonable doubt upon that point, and on June 25 she replied: "Well, the species is all right. I verified things yesterday. We went out to the mill, and I went up the steep, sliding mass to the holes, 'where the swallows dustward fly.' About half a dozen of the holes had disappeared, but there were fourteen left. The birds, came about me, and I easily identified them as Bank Swallows, with white throat and a dark band across the breast."

Whether the breeding of Sand Martins in sawdust heaps has ever been recorded I do not know, but the occurrence seems to me of considerable interest, especially because the Sand Martin is the one member of its

family, as seen in eastern North America, that I had supposed never to have altered its manner of life as a result of what we call civilization.—
BRADFORD TORREY, *Wellesley Hills, Mass.*

An Interesting Solitary Vireo (*Vireo solitarius*).—On April 28, 1903, a male Solitary Vireo appeared in our garden; this, although situated in a thickly settled part of Cambridge, more than a mile from the nearest woods, covers upwards of an acre of ground and contains, in addition to much dense shrubbery, a number of well-grown trees of various kinds, including a few pines, spruces and hemlocks. The bird evidently found the place to his liking, for he remained there during the whole of the following three months, spending most of his time in the garden but also ranging through the cultivated grounds which surround the houses of our nearer neighbors. So far as we could ascertain he had no mate, although it is possible that he built a nest, for on one occasion late in June he was seen tearing strips of loose bark from a birch and taking them into the trees on the opposite side of the street.

That so notorious a forest lover as the Solitary Vireo should ever choose for his summer home a city garden, however wild and primitive, is sufficiently remarkable, but a still more interesting characteristic of this particular bird was that he had two perfectly distinct songs, one typically that of his own species, the other absolutely indistinguishable from that of the Yellow-throated Vireo. These, although used with about equal frequency, were never confused or intermingled. He would sing one for minutes at a time and then take up the other for a longer or shorter period. Not once when I was listening to him did he interpolate any of the notes of either strain among those of the other, nor ever change from one to the other save after a well marked interval of silence. To the ear of the listener, in short, he was either a Solitary or a Yellow-throat, as the mood happened to serve, but never both in the same breath.

When rendering his own legitimate theme this bird was as typical and fine a singer as any Solitary that I have ever heard. Indeed, he appeared gifted to a really exceptional degree with the wild, ringing quality of voice, the generous repertory of varied, exquisitely modulated notes, and the (at times) rapid, ecstatic delivery which combine to make the song of the Solitary so delightful to all discriminating lovers of bird music. But when, on the other hand, he chose to play the rôle of his yellow-throated cousin he reproduced with equal fidelity and success the latter's characteristically slow, measured delivery and rich contralto voice. So perfect, indeed, was the imitation that when, as repeatedly happened, I had opportunity for directly comparing it with the song of a true Yellow-throated Vireo that also frequented the garden, I was unable to detect any differences whatever in the notes of the two birds.

It may be well to add in this connection that Mr. Walter Faxon has heard one Yellow-throated Vireo (in Waltham, Massachusetts) and I another (in Lancaster, Massachusetts) which sang almost exactly like a



Torrey, Bradford. 1903. "Sand Swallows (*Riparia riparia*) Nesting in Sawdust." *The Auk* 20, 436–437. <https://doi.org/10.2307/4069761>.

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