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RENTING HOUSES FOR SONGS

There is a shortage of good housing facilities for bird tenants. A survey proves that the lack of suitable houses is more critical in some sections than in others.

A woodpecker can build his wooden cabin in a dead limb with ease because like a good carpenter, he carries his tools with him. Bluebirds, swallows, and wrens often lease second hand woodpecker holes but there is a shortage of old stumps. They much prefer modern bird houses.

Building a bird house for rent is like erecting a dwelling for a human family. It should be made to accomodate the tenants. The door is an important feature. It should not be on a level with the floor but should be at least ^{six} ~~eight~~ inches above. Tenants require this to avoid the danger of the nestlings falling out of the house before they can fly.

A box house 5-5-8 inches with a doorway $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches in diameter is acceptable to a bluebird. The round limb of a tree sawed in two lengthwise, then hollowed out and fitted together again, makes an attractive bird house.

Location is important. It should be from eight to fifteen feet from the ground. A place slightly sheltered, especially on the side of a building or under the eaves, is more likely to be rented. Tenants are looking for protection from enemies. A house in a tree or in the woods is more dangerous.

One should never try to furnish a bird house. Each feathered tenant prefers to gather his own timbers for a foundation and appropriate material for the nest. The roof should be hinged or the house built so the old nest can be taken out and

cleaned after the young birds have left.

A rustic or natural wood finish is preferable. Paint is not a necessary attraction to a bird house, although a brown, gray or dull green may be a protection from the weather.

BIRDS EVERYONE SHOULD KNOW

Violet-Green Swallow

The violet-green or white-breasted swallow returns from the south to his summer home around Portland about the middle of March. Anyone can recognize this bird by his snowy breast. Another mark is the metallic violet or purplish-green back flashing in the sun.

A wayside telephone or electric light wire is his favorite perch. Gnats, mosquitoes and house flies are the game gathered in while cruising the sky lanes.

Did you ever happen to think how sharp are the eyes of a swallow, how quick on wing and how expert in gathering a gnat in his mouth gliding along at top speed? This is one of the marvels Nature exhibits at every turn outdoors.

Here is a game any person can start during the spring when the violet-greens have laid the foundation of dry grasses for a home. Take a handful of feathers, stand out in the open if you see these white-breasts flashing past, and blow a feather in the air.

It's like tossing a quarter in front of a street urchin. A swift turn, a sweep and zip goes the feather to the nest. A soft bed of feathers is as essential to a violet-green's nest as is a mud frame for a robin's home.

The news of a feather fortune generally spreads like wild fire. One morning, I had six different swallows circling and scooping to snap up the floating feathers. Competition was so keen that one of the birds grabbed a feather from my fingers whenever it was held at arm's length.

In the beginning, these swallows nested in holes in dead trees. As the land was cleared and buildings erected, they preferred the nooks and crevices nearer to man. A little hole in the side of a building with a box inside is the ideal location for a pair of these swallows. Next is a bird house under the eaves.

This is only the beginning of swallow lore. Oregon is rich in other species of swallows. The Tree swallow is like the violet-green, but a sharp eye can easily detect the difference. The Bank and Rough-winged swallows nest in holes in banks. The Barn swallow with deeply forked tail and rich chestnut breast generally nests inside a barn or under a bridge. The Eve or Cliff swallows are the birds that nest in colonies, plastering their mud nests against the side of a rocky cliff or often under the eaves of a barn.