

ing; but probably there is always an occasional spinster or bachelor bird fated to spend the summer alone unless some such accident as this provides a mate.

Some of the birds meet their affinities much sooner than others, for the first young of the colony are out two weeks before the last broods are hatched. By the first of July most of the doors are crowded with little heads, and the whole front of the house blossoms suddenly with enormous yellow mouths whenever an old bird sweeps in with its beak full of insects. Numerous counts made at different times of the day during the first two weeks of July, 1917, showed that, with remarkable regularity, a parent arrived with food every thirty seconds. This year nine pairs occupied the house, and assuming that each pair had four young, and that they were fed in turn, then each nestling was fed every eighteen minutes. A similar count for a whole day, from 4 a.m. to 8 p.m., cited in Chapman's Handbook of Birds of Eastern North America, when reduced to the same basis as my results, gives a feeding every twenty minutes. This is the colony's busiest time, and the strain begins to tell on the old birds, their glossy plumage becoming dishevelled and soiled. As the young grow up, however, they are not fed so often. After the middle of July the pace slackens considerably, and the old birds have more time to sit around on the verandahs and nearby trees, and gossip and scold.

The martins usually fly high but they do not hunt far afield, and my colony can generally be seen hawking within a radius of a quarter of a mile from their home. They appear to find ample food in this comparatively small area,—an indication of the large number of insects that must frequent the upper air. A considerable proportion of their prey seems to consist of dragon flies. Now the purple martin stands very high in the list of birds useful to mankind, but in destroying the rapacious and carnivorous dragon fly, it cannot be said to be conferring any favor on us. The truth is, in order to determine the value of any species of bird to man, it is necessary to open an account with it, debiting it on the one side with the beneficial insects it consumes, or the toll it levies on our vegetables or cultivated fruits, and crediting it on the other side with the noxious insects or weed seeds it destroys. When this is done, very few birds will be found without a large balance to the good; and I doubt if we should be able to refuse even the cheque of the English sparrow with the excuse of "no funds."

Besides the supply of food to the young, a very important duty of the parents is the removal of excremental matter from the nest. As they leave after feeding their brood, they almost always carry away a dropping enclosed in its gelatinous sac, generally conveying it some distance from the nest, but sometimes letting it fall alarmingly close to the inoffensive observer. Once or twice a mother was seen to dispose