

is only after the former have been fully met that we can indulge the latter. This does not necessarily mean that taste and ingenuity in the designer is an objection, but only that the fundamental rules of art govern bird house building as well as more serious architecture—that the structure must first be adapted to its intended use and that beauty that interferes with this use is false art and bad architecture. A shingled cottage built to look like a mediæval castle is bad taste, and a bird house in too close imitation of a city hall, viewed by the canons of pure art, is equally questionable. Artistically, the most successful bird house is the one, which, while fulfilling the practical bird requirements, retains pleasing lines and agreeable surfaces but looks frankly what it is—a house for birds and not a toy human habitation.

THE PURPLE MARTIN.

Probably the bird most generally welcomed about the home is the Purple Martin. This is our largest swallow, comparable in size to the omnipresent, English, or, as it is more correctly named, House Sparrow. In colour, the adult male is all black with steel and purple reflections that give the species its name. The female and young male are almost black above with slight indications of iridescence, dull or dirty grey below, almost white on the abdomen, and darkest across the breast. The forehead is greyish, leaving a contrasted dark bar from the bill through the eye, bounded below by the lighter throat.

Esthetically, the Martin is a joy forever. Its deep throat gurgles and soft warblings fall pleasantly upon the ear. Unlike these pests the Grackles its voice is never raucous or harsh, nor has it the egg-stealing proclivities of those clownish rascals. Misguided people will occasionally be found who object to having their morning's rest broken even by Martins. Doubtless such folk would object to being awakened by a symphony orchestra. They should be pitied rather than blamed; but, in either event, disregarded. To my mind the soft morning chorus of the Martins is soothing and does not disturb rest; but is conducive to a luxurious semi-consciousness or borderland to sleep that permits the enjoyment of slumber without awakening.

Martins are companionable. They live together in colonies, visit each other's housekeeping establishments, and chatter together continually. The new comer is greeted pleasantly and the departing guest sent on his way with good wishes and merry quips. Visitors from other colonies are received and permitted to peer in and examine the growing families with the expressed satisfaction and approval of all concerned. The greatest good nature prevails.

Though passing differences of opinion may occasionally occur and be argued loudly and vigorously, they are rare and do not interfere with the general harmony of the colony. It is only when strangers of other species intrude that all unite to eject them. The House Sparrow is on its best behaviour on the premises and even the family cat walks with circumspection, retreating hastily if not gracefully to the nearest cover at the first assault of the angry birds. In fact such open rough and tumble warfare and tumult is not to the cat's liking and it usually prefers a considerable detour to crossing the open under a thriving Martin colony.

Martins have a strong love of home, and certainly develop a sense of proprietorship, almost human, in the house they are accustomed to occupy. The occupation of a new house already in the possession of Sparrows or other birds, is seldom insisted upon, but on return in the spring to an ancestral home, intruders are positively and rudely ejected. Sparrows, being already on the ground and choosing the most desirable locations before most migrants arrive, often succeed in fighting off other more desirable tenants or even jumping the claims after they have been established by legal possession and labour, but the Purple Martins are a match for sparrows nearly every time, though, like law-abiding citizens, they rarely lay claim to more than they have legal title to. Another point of interest in regard to Martins and their attachment to their home, is the fact that they return to it after its use as a nursery is past. Other birds, probably all other Canadian birds, evince no interest in a nest after the young have left it, at least until a new nesting season recalls it to use. With them the nest is not a home or a shelter, but merely a receptacle for holding eggs and young, useless and without interest when that use is accomplished. Martins, however, retain possession until they gather, for the fall migration, and the old homestead remains the family meeting place until the time of departure comes. After the middle of August, though through the day the Martin house may stand empty and silent, towards evening the whole joyous colony regather about the home of their late infancy and family associations. They clatter, gurgle, and exchange family jokes and affectionate greetings until, as the sun goes down, they crowd into the cubbyholes and the wonder is where so many fully grown birds find room. Their voices grow softer and night and silence steals over all. As daylight comes, awakening chirps are heard, heads appear at the doors, birds emerge, and from the topmost points of the house they roll a vocal welcome to the day. Soon all are displaying themselves to the morning sun, preening and fluffing to let the grateful warmth sink