

deposit her eggs, she moves about uneasily from tree to tree, until she discovers a nest from which the rightful owner is absent at the moment, and then quietly drops in her egg and flies off.

It never deposits more than one egg in the same nest, although it is probable it thus leaves several in different nests. The birds employed as foster parents are all smaller than the Cow Bunting. The Chipping Sparrow, the Maryland Yellow Throat, and some of the smaller species of Fly Catcher, are among those thus favoured—the Chipping Sparrow, perhaps, most frequently so with us. The egg of the Cow Bunting is a pale, greyish blue, sprinkled with umber brown dots and short streaks, more numerous towards the larger end.

As the young Cow bird grows up, it is provided for by its foster parents with all the care and assiduity that would be displayed towards their own offspring; and long after it has left the nest, it continues to be fed by its affectionate guardians. Frequently where the Chipping Sparrow has been the foster parent, the tiny little bird may be seen carefully placing some choice worm or dainty insect in the open mouth of its great clumsy, fluttering nursling, nearly half as big again as itself, whose sooty brown colour, as well as its size, offers a curious contrast to the delicately marked plumage, and pretty slender form of its foster mother.

The plumage of the Cow Blackbird, in its adult state, is brownish black on the head and neck, glossed with blue and purple tints. The female is a dusky brown.

As the month draws near to its close, the power of the sun becomes sensibly felt, and in spite of cold winds and an occasional night's frost, there is an increasing mildness in the atmosphere, and a perceptible advance in vegetation. Then come the first warm spring showers, making the air soft and balmy, and filling it with a perfume of young leaves, and opening blossoms, and springing herbage.

The birds are all jubilant. The Robin and the Bluebird, the Song Sparrow and all its kindred, are heard raising their glad voices in every direction, from wood and field; and hark! what cheery twittering note is that above our heads? The Swallows have come, and despite of the old adage, we are ready to welcome the arrival of these "harbingers of summer" as a sure pledge that all frost and cold are over, and warmth and sunshine will now be ours.

The first to make their appearance of the Swallow tribe are generally the White-bellied Swallow and the Purple Martin. The two resemble each other very much in many of their habits, but the White-bellied Swallow (*Hirundo Bicolor*) is probably the most pugnacious and quarrelsome of its species. It seems to be in a constant state of warfare with its cousins, the Martins and Barn Swallows. In the country, this Swallow generally prefers a hollow tree wherein to build its nest, which is of a globular form, composed of fine grasses, and lined with feathers of various birds; but in towns, it will frequently resort to the boxes or "bird-houses"

which have been erected for the accommodation of such feathered visitants, in the same manner as the Purple Martin.

The flight of the White-bellied Swallow is extremely graceful and rapid, and it is easily recognized by the pure glistening white of the lower part of the breast and belly.

The Purple Martin (*Hirundo Purpurea*) is well known to all dwellers, both in town and country, as the constant tenant of the numerous bird-boxes or swallow houses which are erected alike on the sign board of the village inn, or on some out-building in the farm-yard, or in the crowded streets of the populous city.

It is a bold handsome bird, fearless of all other birds, attacking even hawks or crows when they come in its way, and always friendly and familiar with man. They seem to become attached to particular localities, and seldom fail to return to the same boxes or "bird houses" to build their nests, and rear their young, season after season.

The plumage of the Purple Martin is peculiarly soft and silky—of a deep blackish blue, with intense purple and blue reflections.

The Barn Swallow (*Hirundo Rustica*), and the Chimney Swallow (*Hirundo Pelasgia*), also arrive before the end of the month.

The former lose but little time after their arrival in preparing for the duties of incubation.

After they have revisited their usual haunts, and examined their last year's tenements under the eaves of the barn, or the side of a beam or rafter of some cattle-shed or out-building, they betake themselves to the margin of the nearest stream or pond, where they form small pellets of mud or moist earth, which they carry in their bills to the chosen spot.

They dispose of these pellets in regular layers, mixing them with bits of grass, until it forms a fabric of sometimes nearly two pounds weight. Within this shell of mud is arranged a thick bed of dried grasses, over which again is placed a quantity of large soft feathers. The eggs, from four to six in number, are white, spotted with reddish brown. The plumage of the Barn Swallow is very handsome. The anterior part of the forehead is bright chestnut, the rest of the head, back of the neck, deep glossy blue-throat a bright chestnut, a broad band of black, glossed with steel blue, on the lower part of the neck. The back and smaller wing coverts deep blue, quill feathers and tail brownish black, the latter with a white spot on the inner web of each feather, excepting the two middle ones.

The pretty little Sand Martin (*Hirundo Riparia*), or Bank Swallow, comes to us sometimes even earlier than the Barn Swallow or the Martin. Its flight is exceedingly light and graceful, and capable of great continuance. As they procure their food more commonly than the other species, along the margins, or even the surface of pools, lakes or rivers, they may constantly be seen skimming rapidly over the water, in pursuit of insects, or dipping and bathing on the wing. Whenever sand banks or artificial excavations, such as railway cuttings occur, these birds are