

Our Feathered Friends - Aug. 10

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By **RAY POPE**

Many of you are probably tired of me mentioning my vegetable garden each week. I had hopes of entering some of them in the Wilson County Fair, hoping for a repeat of my success from last year.

Karen Franklin, along with her daughter **Anna**, picked me up to go with them to enter some of Karen's pictures in the photo contest at the fair. After returning home, I started over to my next door neighbor, **Ashley Boyd**, when I noticed a stalk of my corn lying on the ground, uprooted. It hadn't been too long after we got the rain storm on Saturday, so *maybe* the wind had caused the problem.

After I walked back to see what had happened, I found all the ripe tomatoes had been taken by someone. Also a large bunch of my sweet peppers were gone too. The watermelons and cantelopes had been confiscated by some unknown thief. There were many hours work and many dollars spent to produce these fine vegetables for someone to just take them.

The thief made a return trip on Sunday about 3:30 in the afternoon to get more stuff and took my butternut squash which I could kick myself for leaving it on the vine for a couple more days so I could enter it in the fair. Is nothing sacred anymore?

The last couple of weeks, I have been talking about Swallows. Another Swallow we have in a few choice locations is the Cliff Swallow (*Petrochelidon pyrrhonota*). This species is considered

the streamlined harbingers of spring, especially in the California area. Each spring colonies of master masons return here from deep down in South America flying several thousand miles to reach their ancestral home.

At chosen locations, the male will select a spot and stake his claim and drive off hovering neighbors. When the female alights, the pair begin building their bottle shaped nest with the entrance at the neck. A mud puddle is located and groups of swallows surround it and gather little drops of mud in their beaks. They return to the nest site and carefully place each little drops of mud against the wall. Clusters of nurseries grow out from the verticle bases on the preferred surface. Bickering Swallows steal mud from other birds' houses, while birds that fail to breed form roving gangs that harass other members of the colony.

The birds colors are a pale forehead and rump, black crown, dark brown throat and cheeks streaked back with a square tail. Now that's a mouthful.

Before the birds place the roof on the structure, the female lays four or five brown spotted white eggs in the nest. A colony often raises its family in the same nest year after year unless the nest deteriorates and falls to the ground.

I myself have never seen Cliff Swallows here in Wilson County, but I haven't checked under every bridge on every creek, but maybe some of you can. I was fishing for large mouth bass over in Granville several years ago when I spotted a small colony of Cliff Swallows nesting under the bridge on Highway 53 where the creek intersects the road at the Jackson County line. Maybe our resident fisherman **John L. Sloan** has noticed these birds at this location. I admire Mr. Sloan because he is a nature lover with many years of experience and cares about all wildlife.

Melissa Turrentine, please contact me where I can forward an e-mail to you from someone at the Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge in Alabama about a sighting on the lake there.

I received an e-mail from a dear friend, **Barbara Manners**, telling me about her Bluebirds. Barbara said that her Bluebirds raised their first brood and left the nest, then came back to do it again.

The nest was built, but no eggs were laid. I am afraid that his mate must have perished before

the eggs were laid. I must have been living under a rock back in late May as Barbara's husband of 44 years, Joe, passed away. I have known Joe for several years and got to visit with him at one of **Roy Garr's** seminars on Bluebirds and Purple Martins. He was a special person with a happy disposition and really loved his birds. Barbara, the best thing I can do for your loss is to keep you in my prayers.

After Church services Sunday, my cousin **Traci Walker** was telling me about her cat that is fearful for its life when she puts it outside. It's not a large dog but a pair of Mockingbirds that chases the bird, pecking it on the head when they do a fly-by.

The cat has a very fluffy tail that also grabs the pair of Mocker's attention, so it is losing its hair at a faster rate than I did.

I would love to hear from you as to what's lurking about in your neighborhood and at your feeders. You can write me at 606 Fairview Ave., Lebanon, TN, 37087, call me at 547-7371 or e-mail me at raysfeatheredfriends@yahoo.com

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