

Our Feathered Friends - Aug 1

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By RAY POPE Checking out my garden the other days, the Bluebirds started dive-bombing me again, so I opened up their nesting box to find four babies, mouths wide open, waiting for mom and dad to stuff something into their gaping little beaks.

This is the third brood that they have raised this year. The only ones to return are the parent birds, which makes me wonder if the little ones are having a bad time surviving the real bird world. Usually young Bluebirds will help feed and raise their siblings.

Kind of like back in my mother's younger days, as she was expected to help cook and take care of her younger brothers and sisters. After doing all that, it's no wonder that she is such a great cook, and her banana pudding is off the chart when it comes to desserts; just ask her younger brother, **Charles Gann**.

Last week we learned a little more about the Barn Swallow, which is very plentiful around Wilson County. These past few days, I have watched many of them wheel and soar above the hay pasture in my backyard eating unwary insects.

Several years ago, my bird count partner, the **Reverend William Senter** and myself was headed out on Cainsville Road to a couple of the creeks out there where the water had carved out a slight bank on one side of the stream.

Bill pointed out some small holes about two inches across where there was a family of Bank Swallows taking up residence.

Bank Swallows (*Riparia riparia*), sometimes referred to as a Sand Martin especially in Europe, is a migratory passerine bird in the Swallow family. This bird has a wide range and can be found

over the pond to Europe and the Mediterranean area as well as North America. Here in the United States, it arrives about early spring to breed and raise it's family and known here as the Bank Swallow.

Bank Swallows are sociable in their nesting habits with from a dozen to many hundred pair depending on the size of the bank. Their nests are at the end of tunnels from a few inches to three or four feet in length, dug in sand or gravel.

The nest is a litter of straw and feathers in a chamber at the end of the burrow. The female lays four or five white eggs which usually hatch in about 15 days. Sometimes the birds will raise a second brood here in the south. When I was in Florida with **Dotty Kim** this past year there were thousands that were staying over for the winter, lining utility wires almost making the wires sag with all the weight on them. Some birds go there while many go on down to Central and South America.

I got an e-mail from **Charles and Gail Morris** asking if and when we would like to do a boat trip on Old Hickory Lake in the Spring Creek area. Gail, right now I believe we should wait till this unbearable heat subsides. I will get back to you on this.

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, or call me at 547-7371 or e-mail me at [This e-mail address is being protected from spambots. You need JavaScript enabled to view it](#)

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