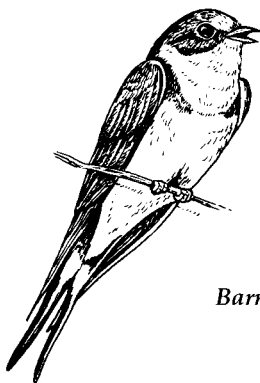


SECTION A - OPENLANDS AND WOODLAND MARGINS

can be donated to a local science teacher for a class project on barn owl food habits.

For barnside boxes, there should be a clear flight-path to the box entranceway, which ideally should face open fields (not the property owner's house, because young owls can be highly vocal at night).



Barn Swallow

Barn Swallow

Plan 6 (page 36)

Barn swallows are common inhabitants of farmsteads where they frequently nest on the rafters of barns and other outbuildings. Their mud nests are usually stuck onto the sides of rough-sawn rafters. These beautiful birds eat flying insects and are characterized by iridescent bluish-black backs, reddish breasts and deeply forked tails.

Barn Swallows also will use the nesting shelf illustrated in Plan 7. Sometimes barn swallows are a nuisance because they nest over light fixtures in doorways. Then they "defend" their territory against people trying to pass through the doorway. To solve this problem, staple a small piece of clear plastic above the light fixture after knocking down the nest. The plastic will prevent mud from sticking to the wall. The nest should be removed only

after the young have fledged. Then place a nesting shelf nearby on the house or garage wall, where it's at least 10 to 20 feet from the doorway.

Little & Big Brown Bats

Plan 10 (page 42) & Plan 11 (pages 43 & 44)

The most common bat species you'll find in a man-made structure are Little and Big Brown Bats.

Except for a few hardy big brown bats, these species leave structures by mid-October and fly to caves and mines where they hibernate over winter. The females will return to their summer homes (your attic) usually sometime in May.

Bat boxes that are little larger than a bluebird box are common "for sale" items. These boxes are rarely used or needed. The primary use of and need for a bat box is to house a colony of female little brown or big brown bats and their pups. This is why we've only included plans for larger bat boxes in this book.

Why the growing popularity of bat boxes? One reason is that bats consume pest insects. Unlike Purple Martins, bats start feeding when mosquitoes are most active. A single bat can take up to 1,200 mosquitoes in an hour. Because bats are an important form of natural control for insect pests, it is in our own best interest to perpetuate them. This is already being done in much of Europe where bats are totally protected and people build bat houses much like we build Purple Martin houses.

Female bats are devoted parents. Expectant female bats join together in nursery colonies where they congregate to raise their young. Little



Bat Feeding

and Big Brown Bats give birth to, respectively, one and two bat pups per year. Female bats help each other with rearing young. Each mother recognizes her own pup.

The relatively low reproductive rate of bats is compensated for by a relatively (for a small mammal) long life. Some will live for more than 15 years.

If a dwelling or outbuilding is "safe housing" for mother bats and their pups (with plenty of insects nearby), the colony will slowly increase as years pass. While such gradual increases may go unnoticed, a sudden increase poses more of a problem for both bats and the owners of older homes or outbuildings. What causes a sudden increase?

Many older buildings are being torn down or remodeled. If a resident bat colony survives this activity, it's in the market for another house nearby. Because new construction or remodeled houses are weather tight, bats are sealed out. The result is that the excluded colony may move in with another nearby colony in another old house.