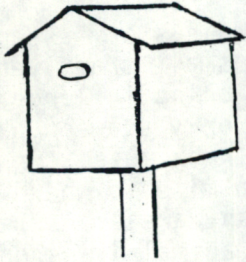


As early as I can make my first visit to my cottage on Rustico Bay, which is usually about mid-April, my heart lifts to hear the welcoming trill of the song sparrow who has been a longtime resident there.

This year I was eagerly awaiting any arrival at my bird nesting box, as it was home to two species last season ('88), namely, tree swallows first, and after the young were fledged and the family vacated it, the box was taken over by a pair of tree sparrows. The nests those parents prepared for their broods were indeed works of art.



I was very fortunate this spring to be there when a male tree swallow flew in, giving every appearance of former ownership. Hard on his heels came a cocky tree sparrow, the male of the '88's tenants, also acting as though he had "squatter's rights". Without batting an eyelash, the brave tree swallow went into action, even grappling with his adversary as they tumbled to the ground at one point. I can't tell what language was used during the skirmish, suffice it to say it ended very quickly with the tree swallows being the nest's occupants this summer.

Quite early in our season there, I was shown a bird's nest in a most unusual choice of location. The nest had four beautiful eggs in it, which were easy to see since the nest was on the ground. The eggs were quite large: I would liken them in size to a small pullet egg. All four eggs lay with their small, tapered ends pointing toward the centre of the nest. Have you guessed the bird? At first, all was quiet as my friend led me to the spot just in front of her cottage. Suddenly, across the road and immediately opposite, a pair of killdeer set up a loud, agitated crying, the while giving a wonderful "injured wing" performance. I say wonderful because the spreading and fluttering of their wings allows a clear view of the bright variety of colours in the feathers. I judged the nest, there in a slight depression on the lawn, to be around 3 to 4 yards from the edge of the roadway. As my cottage is some distance from where the killdeer were nested, I was unable to watch to see what the outcome was. I regret to say the eggs were likely stolen, for I later saw an adult pair of killdeer along the shore acting as though they were brooding young nearby.

Every summer one sees a number of bank swallows along our shore where their sprightly comings and goings in producing and caring for their broods add much pleasure to those people who are interested and take time to observe.

For the first time in recent years, I noticed several large holes high in the banks, as I walked the beach area. I was mystified, wondering who could use such a large entrance/exit cavity. True, I'd seen the occasional kingfisher over past summers, yet not a sign of one in recent residence. This year though, a few pairs were sharing those banks with the familiar swallows.



One pair of kingfishers nested adjacent to my bank, and were wont to perch on the top rail of my stair, giving onto the shore proper. There he/she would