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## Book Review: Swallow Summer

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at that time along the Mississippi River. Our present-day pleas for preservation of the state's last remaining natural remnants are echoes of the pleas uttered eighty years ago, and we too continue to walk the thin line between assuring availability to the natural world and avoiding its abuse.

These struggles are likely to continue into the coming century. They are best comprehended, and best dealt with, when seen in

historical context—the assumed task of the relatively new discipline of environmental history. Its growing literature is helping us perceive how we, as a society, and in the twinkling of a star, have attempted to destroy and then reclaim the magnificent wilderness that once was America. Conard's book places Iowa on the shelf of our understanding.—CORNELIA F. MUTEL, *Iowa Institute of Hydraulic Research, University of Iowa, Iowa City, IA. 52242.*

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**Swallow Summer.** Charles R. Brown. 1998. The University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, NE. 371 pages. ISBN 0-8032-6145-4. \$16.95 pbk.

Charles R. Brown and Mary Bomberger Brown are authors of *Coloniality in the Cliff Swallow: The Effect of Group Size on Social Behavior* (1996, University of Chicago Press). Their monograph details results of the first 12 years, since 1982, of their long term study of Cliff Swallows (*Hirundo pyrrhonota*) in western Nebraska. The Browns still return yearly to continue observations and to maintain an extensive program of mark and recapture.

This book, *Swallow Summer*, is a popular account of the Browns' fifteenth year at Cedar Point Biological Station in Keith County, Nebraska. Brown presents a daily log of the activities that he undertakes for the 1995 field season, describing the work supporting his research program. In the preface, Brown hopes *Swallow Summer* can explain his fascination with Cliff Swallows and why he enjoys his research. His intent is to describe "the challenges, thrills, and frustrations that come with studying wild animals in the field" and to tell the Cliff Swallow story. Brown truly has a love for Cliff Swallows and for the process necessary to understand their complexities of their social behavior. Brown and his field crew—wife Mary and

three field assistants (identified by aliases to prevent embarrassment) maintain a vigorous, repetitious field routine. Their goal (it seems) is to mist net every Cliff Swallow in Keith and Garden counties—several times, if possible. The banding of new birds and recaptures of banded birds (both within and between seasons) provide the framework for the Browns' questions of coloniality. Why do birds switch colonies between years, or even within year? How do colony size, composition and quality change between years? Brown continues with his adventure of discovery.

*Swallow Summer* should appeal to any with even a casual interest in natural history, but Brown hopes it may serve as inspiration for students or others more professionally involved in field biology. The writing is very engaging; it is quite easy to open the book anywhere and get involved in the routine and anecdotes of the swallow crew. The included index seems unnecessary. Unfortunately, for anyone inspired to seek more information, there is little explicit direction for additional readings. I offer the following for this minor omission. With regard to swallow biology, go to the Brown and Browns 1996 monograph (cited above); it has a wealth of information and can lead you as far as you wish to go. For more of Cedar Point Biological Station, two books by John Janovy, Jr., *Keith County Journal* (1978, St. Martin's Press, New York) and *Dunwoody Pond, Reflections on the High Plains Wetlands and the Cultivation of Naturalists* (1994, St. Martin's Press, New York) offer more writing on the love of research. The second of Janovy's book includes a chapter on Brown's swallows.

Enjoyable as casual reading, *Swallow Summer* still dispenses much swallow biology in a painless manner and poses questions of coloniality for contemplation. Read it, and enjoy!—PETER E. LOWTHER, *The Field Museum, Roosevelt Road at Lake Shore Drive, Chicago, IL 60605-2496.*