



Summer Stories

By Enid Blyton

The Bird Man



There was once a little boy called Ben, who loved watching the birds that flew among the trees and about the blue sky.



He was a little town boy who had just come to live in the country, and often his school friends laughed at him because he didn't know as much as they did about the flowers and animals of the countryside.



When the swallows came back, Ben watched them flying high in the air, catching the insects. 'What are those birds with forked tails called?' he asked his friends. They laughed at him scornfully.



‘Don’t you know that?’ he said. ‘They are swallows!’

‘But they are not all swallows, are they?’ said Ben, puzzled.

‘Some of them seem a bit different.’

‘Don’t you believe it!’ laughed his friends. ‘All those birds with forked tails are swallows.’



All the same, Ben felt sure some of the birds were different from the others. He was standing in a field watching them one day when a bright-eyed man came along whistling.

‘What are you looking at?’ he asked.



‘At all those swallows!’ said Ben. ‘They do make such a pretty twittering sound as they fly.’

‘They are not all swallows,’ said the little twinkling-eyed man. ‘There are three different birds up there in the sky! Can’t you tell the difference?’



‘Not very well,’ said Ben. ‘I’m really a town boy.’

‘I’ll show you the difference!’ said the little man. He began to whistle in a strange twittering manner. A little bird dropped down from the sky and lay quivering in the man’s outspread hand.



‘Here is the real swallow, the barn-swallow who loves to build in barns and outhouses,’ said the man.

‘Look at his steel-blue back – his chestnut forehead and throat – and his pale underpans. See his beautiful forked tail!’



The bird flew upwards with a glad twitter, and Ben saw the flash of its pale underpants. The man again gave a soft twittering whistle and another birds dropped down to his outspread hand. It seemed very like the barn-swallow.



The man stroked the little creature lovingly. 'This is a cousin of the barn-swallow, the house martin,' he said. 'He builds under the eaves of your houses. See his white underparts right up to his beak, and see this white patch at the bottom of his back. You can always tell him by that as he flies. His tail is not so forked as that of the real swallow.'



He sent the bird up into the air, and then uttered such a curious screech that Ben jumped. Another bird dropped to his hand, screeching just as the little man had done.



‘This is a swift,’ said the man. ‘He is not a cousin of the swallow, yet he has the forked tail and sickle-shaped wings you see in them. He is sooty-black all over except for his white spot on his chin. Hear him screech as he goes!’



Up went the little bird, screeching madly. Ben watched him
– and then he turned to the bird man. He was gone! It was
most mysterious!



Anyway, I know more than country boys do now, though Ben, pleased. I can point out the swallow, the house martin and the swift to them, as they fly. Won't they be surprised?





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