

He makes his own

High cost of bird houses pushes Sontag into hobby

Elery Sontag often finds himself in the doghouse in his retirement years, and also in the bird house.

He builds them as a hobby. Sontag, 67, of 6574 Gage Street, Gageton, spent 20 years as custodian-bus driver-sexton, etc. for St. Agatha's Parish in Gageton, managed the Boron station there for three years, then worked for Walbro for three years before retiring 3 1/2 years ago.

Although he started with doghouses two years ago, it was a poorly made bird feeder Sontag purchased for \$14 several years ago, that sits on a pole in his backyard, that got him interested in building housing for man's feathered and four-legged friends. "The reason I got interested is that I couldn't see \$14 for a slimsy thing like that."

A son wanted a doghouse, so Sontag built one, patterned after the little red barn storage shed in his back yard.

He has now built five doghouses, included an L-shaped one for two dogs.

He then started building bird feeders and has built 20 so far. Some he gave away to friends and relatives and some he sold.

There are lots of relations he can give his creations to. He and wife Madeline have four children and 13 grandchildren. Their children are sons Jim of Bach and Morris of Cass City and daughters Judy Shope of Gageton and Marie Smith, who lives in Florida.

It was in January that Sontag started on his most intricate project, building 12-family, two story houses for purple martins.

He built the first one because a cousin wanted one. He has built three so far and is ready to tackle other types of bird houses.

He patterned the first one after a commercially built martin house he had in his back yard. That one he has rebuilt by putting in new partitions and adding a porch.

Martins are particular fussy birds, he and his wife explained. A scout bird flies ahead of the other birds when they arrive from the south each spring to look for a suitable site.

If sparrows have taken over the house, the martins won't enter. If, however, they get there first, they will fight off any sparrow intruders.

The Sontags have had a martin house in their back yard for several years and have never had martins in it. Sparrows have always gotten there first.

Although the mothers-to-be like to be alone while they hatch their eggs, they also like to be part of a group, hence the multi-compartment bird houses.

The martins also like a clean house, which means

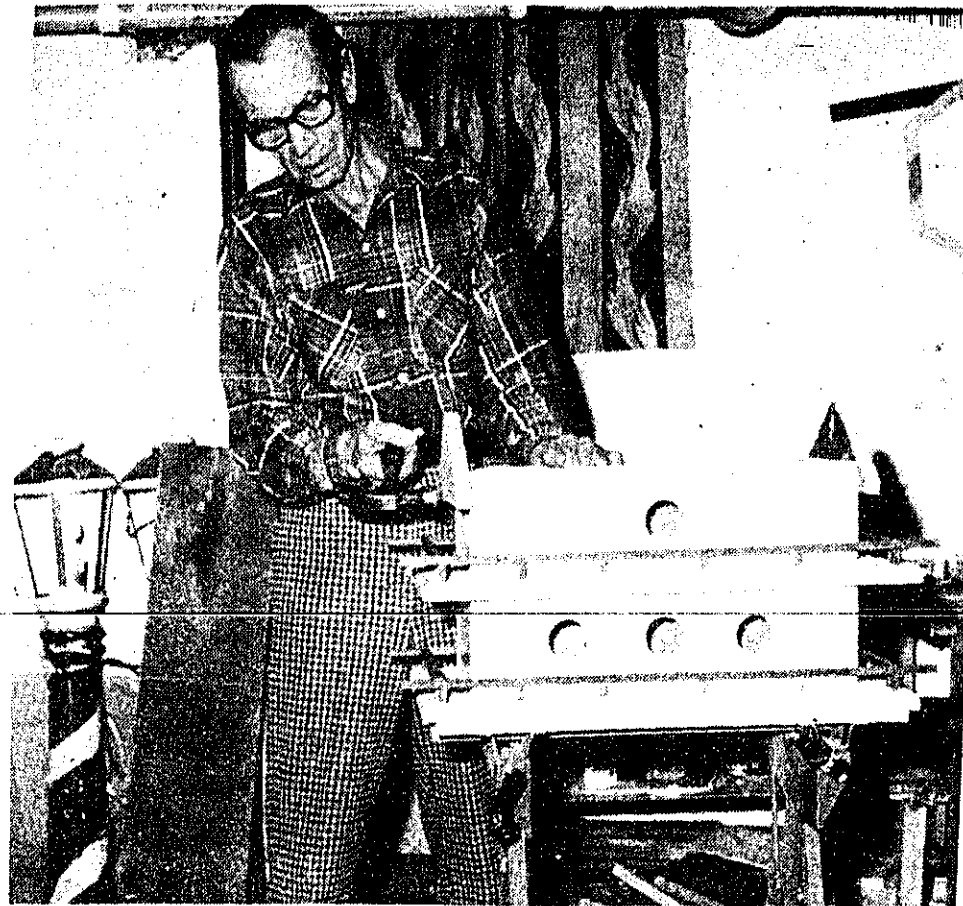
that the human owner, after the birds have flown south for the winter, must clean out the birdhouse. For that reason, the structures are built so that they can be taken apart easily. They are normally mounted on a 20-foot three-section pole, which allows easy lowering of the house for cleaning.

In exchange for having to put up with the martins' peculiarities, martin house owners get a most practical bird. Martins eat mosquitoes and other bugs and one 12-unit martin house holds enough birds to keep a back yard insect free, according to the Sontags.

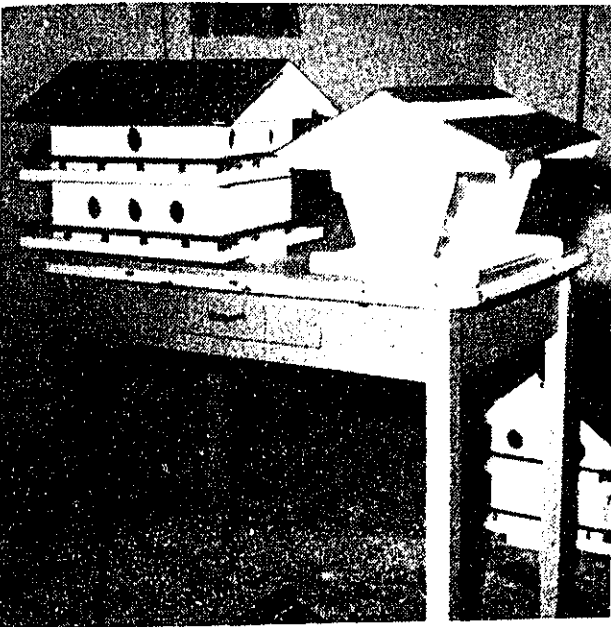
In their back yard, incidentally, they have the martin house, two feeders and a bird bath. Bluejays, cardinals and sparrows don't fly south for the winter, so there is plenty of bird-watching activity year-round.

Sontag as much as possible tries to build his dog and bird houses and bird feeders out of scrap materials in order to keep costs down.

The former Gageton village president and council member, and presently its clerk-treasurer, describes his hobby as therapeutic. "When you don't feel too good, you go down there (to his basement workshop). I enjoy it."



HOME BUILDER -- Elery Sontag nails a sidepiece onto the purple martin house he is building, which is divided into 12 compartments spread over two levels. A finished martin house and a bird feeder are shown below.



Cass City, Cros-Lex tie in first meet

Cass City High School track season last Wednesday at Cros-Lex High School. The two teams battled to a draw, 79-79.

The Hawks were led by their distance running star Steve Richards, who won the mile, 880 and anchored the winning mile relay team.

The only other performer to win two individual events was Craig Heglin of Cros-Lex who won both the 100 and 220-yard dashes.

The complete results: Shot - Shawn Westly, CL; Mike Soffin, CC; Brian Beaubien, CC; Doug Stewart, CL, 41'10".

Disc - Shawn Westly, CL; Mike Vatter, CC; Brian Beaubien, CC; Mike Soffin, CL, 124'9".

Long jump - Tom Loomis, CC; Scott Mahnke, CL; Larry Paleschi, CL; Roger Barry Lapp, CC; Mike Scheid, CL, 17'4 1/2".

High jump - Bud Westly, CL; Craig Heglin, CC; Barry Lapp, CC; Mike Scheid, CL, 5'9".

Pole vault - Mick Miller, CL; Phil Zawilinski, CC; Joe Decker, CC; Tim Fuller, CL, 11'0".

High hurdles - Tim Sontag, CC; Scott Hobart, CC; Steve Hollis, CC; Shawn Westly, CL, 16.9.

100 - Craig Heglin, CL; Rob Clarke, CC; Max Morish, CC; Scott Mahnke, CL, 11.3.

Mile - Steve Richards, CC; John Bigger, CL; Dan Dickenson, CC; Gary Walker, CL, 4:47.6.

880 relay - Larry Paleschi, Dave Gonzalez, Tim Fuller, Mick Miller, CL, 1:42.8.

440 - Bob Sawdon, CC; Barry Lapp, CC; Tim Doris, CL; Mike Vatter, CL, 55.6.

440 relay - Larry Paleschi, Dave Gonzalez, Tim Fuller, Craig Heglin, CL, 48.3.

Low hurdles - Scott Hobart, CL; Mike Scheid, CL; Tim Sontag, CC; Shawn Westly, CL, 43.0.

880 - Steve Richards, CC; Bud Welch, CL; Bob Vancamp, CC; Steve LaLonde, CL, 2:08.6.

220 - Craig Heglin, CC; Bob Sawdon, CC; Steve Dadacki, CC; Scott Mahnke, CL, 24.0.

2 mile - John Bigger, CL; Scott Hobart, CC; Dan Dickenson, CC; Gary Walker, CL, 11:01.5.

Mile relay - Barry Lapp, Bob Sawdon, Tim Sontag, Steve Richards, CC, 3:43.

VICIOUS CIRCLE

Time might be money, but a lot of people spend heaps of money trying to have a good time.

ESCAPE HATCH

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Gageton Area News

Mrs. Harold Koch Phone 665-2536

FARM BUREAU

The North Elmwood Farm Bureau group met Monday evening, March 31, at the Gageton town hall with 10 members attending.

William Owen, Caro, taught the group life-saving techniques of CPR.

The meeting was arranged and hosted by Mr. and Mrs. Ken Hofmeister.

The next meeting will be April 28, hosted by Mr. and Mrs. Tom Lounsbury on Dodge Rd.

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Mr. and Mrs. Frank Weatherhead, Mr. and Mrs. Lee Hendrick, Mr. and Mrs. Ron Hendrick and children,

Mr. and Mrs. Scot Hendrick and David Nickel were Easter guests of Mr. and Mrs. Richard Hendrick of Cass City.

Becky Loomis of Traverse City is spending her Easter vacation with her parents Mr. and Mrs. Don Loomis.

Mrs. Helen Rocheleau returned home recently after spending the winter months in Florida.

Mr. and Mrs. Elger Gerardous arrived home Saturday after visiting relatives and friends in Florida the past four weeks.

Mr. and Mrs. Harold Koch, Janet and Ray and Mr. and Mrs. Franklin Koch and Karen were dinner and supper guests of the Carl

Weber family Easter Sunday. The occasion also honored Heidi Weber, who was confirmed at St. Lorenz Lutheran church in Frankennuth, Palm Sunday.

Mr. and Mrs. Roy Messer and family were Easter guests of her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Franz Meyerhofer.

DELAYED NEWS

Greg Carolan of St. Meinrad Seminary in Indiana is home for the Easter holidays.

Mr. and Mrs. Harold Koch and Mr. and Mrs. Nelson Koch attended the Amhoist third annual Service Recognition dinner at the Elks Club in Essexville Monday evening, March 24.

Elaine and Dick Hendrick were callers at the Frank Weatherheads one day last week.

5 generations at Wright home Sunday

There were five generations at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Richard Wright, Cass City, Sunday.

The oldest were Marion Guinther, Cass City, and her brother, Emerson Brown, Detroit, both in their 80s.

The remaining generations were Evelyn Gruber, Cass City, daughter of Mrs. Guinther; Mrs. Richard (Patricia) Wright, daughter of Mrs. Gruber; Sherry Spencer, Deford, daughter of Mrs. Wright; and Mrs. Spencer's son, Kevin James, 2 months old.

OLD STORY

With groceries what they are, some families are hard-pressed to keep the wolf from the cupboard.

FARM EQUIPMENT AUCTION

Located 8 miles East of Lapeer or 5 miles West of Imlay City on M-21 then 5 miles South on Lake Pleasant Rd. then 1/4 mile East at 4700 Sutton Rd. on:

MONDAY, APRIL 14
at 11:00 A.M.

TRACTORS: Case 1370 w/Cab-air-front wgrs-940 hrs.-20-8x38 tires-18x38 duals-new fall of 78, Dakota 10' dozer blade for Case 1370, J.D. 3020 Gas w/wide front-new motor. **TRUCK:** 1970 Ford F-700 w/grain box & hoist. **COMBINE:** J.D. 7700 rotary screen turbo hydrostatic diesel w/cab monitors-30-5x32 front tires-18-4x16-1 rear tires-14' grain head-straw chopper-SN 113792, Sund 92" pickup for J.D. 7700, J.D. 643 corn head. **EQUIPMENT:** J.D. 7000 plateless 6 row planter w/cross auger & monitor-min. tillage coulters-dry fertilizer, J.D. 400-15' rotary hoe 3 pt., J.D. FB-B 15 hole grain drill w/fert., J.D. 220 18' disc, J.D. 8' new blade, Case 1200 27' hyd. fold field cult. w/cold flo, Heath 6 row bean puller, Lockwood bean windrower, IHC 720 SAR 5x16 plow, IHC 3 pt. 15' chisel plow, IHC 27' cart harrow, A.C. G0430 corn head w/C-II adapter, set of George White 360 gal. aluminum saddle tanks & sprayer, Lilliston 6620 vibra shank 6 row cult. w/rolling shields-1 yr. old, 2 Kill Brothers 350 bu. gravity boxes, Kill Brothers fert. auger, Midwest 27' 2 bar harrow, 1500 gal. water tank, small jewelry wagon & other items.

TERMS: Cash.

ARNOLD HUGHES, OWNER
AUCTIONEERS: Ray & Ron Tosch, Phone Capac 313-395-4985

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