

# Chihuahuan Desert Wildlife Rescue

## THIS OLD SWALLOW NEST

A lady called voicing great concern about a swallow's nest that was coming loose from its moorings. Since I live only 20 minutes away, I went to her home to assess the situation that afternoon. I found an old swallow's nest on an stucco covered horizontal beam on the woman's patio. The right half of the nest had pulled away from the beam and was in imminent danger of falling.

My heart warmed to the lady as she told me her story. Swallows had used the nest for the last five or six years. Her eyes lit up as she talked of the thrill of seeing the birds return each year. (Just the way I feel as our migrants return each spring.) The lady and her son (now away at college) would enjoy sitting on their patio and watching the swallows as they refurbish the nest, line it with feathers, lay and hatch eggs, and rear their young. This year the nest had degraded badly, needed an overwhelming amount of work, and there was no mud available due to our drought.

So I returned home to consider the options. A padded shelf under the nest might help, but I didn't want to damage the stucco by mounting it. The shelf could be held in place by a couple of Quick-Grip clamps, but it and the clamps might very well scare away the swallows. So I decided that simplest would be best. I got my caulking gun, loaded with Liquid Nails, and prepared to return the next day to glue the nest back in place.

Fortunately my wife, Jane, gave thought to the problem also. After the last rainy season I had harvested a 5 gallon bucket full of clay from a ponding area east of our house. Jane uses this as one component of her potting mixes, and suggested that I take some along just in case. So I put several inches of clay chunks in an old coffee can and was on my way.

Back at the nest site I found that swallows had already begun lining the nest, and the lady said that they had been perching on her porch lamp to consider their situation. Up the ladder, I found the situation to be much worse than it first appeared. The old nest was riddled with deep cracks and was in danger of falling apart. I put a small dollop of Liquid Nails behind the main part of the nest and held it in place for about 5 minutes until the adhesive began to set. Then I added water to the clay, mixed it thoroughly, and began dabbing the clay into the fissures of the nest. It was easy to glue all of the pieces together and then reattach the whole nest back to the beam. As I worked, the swallows flew by several times to observe.

As viewed through my 'retrospectoscope,' the clay mud alone probably would have done the job. But, like a man wearing belt and suspenders to hold up his trousers, the combination of adhesive and mud should ensure that the nest stays put. The kind lady has phoned several times, effusive in her thanks, and to inform that the swallows are using the nest. In fact, there are now three of them squabbling over it. I feel as proud as Norm must when he completes a project.

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Transporter/Troubleshooter