

## Life Lessons for a Fledgling House Martin

Mark & Christine Turner

Since the first two House Martins arrived on our estate in Broadway on 9<sup>th</sup> April, they have been a feature in our lives on a daily basis throughout the summer just as they always do.

We are very fond of our House Martins and during 2017 we have closely monitored one particular nest in the eaves across the road, visible from our living room. Two broods fledged from that nest, the second lot taking all day to disperse once the first fledgling took flight mid-morning. It's worth mentioning here that the brood returned to the nest many times post fledging particularly it seemed to shelter from persistent showers.

Of course the downside of having a large successful breeding colony such as this draws in no end of predators and we often have numerous incidents bringing drama, tension and heart-stopping moments to rival anything you will see on the television. Magpies and Jackdaws can stir up as much panic as do Sparrowhawks, Kestrels and Hobbies.

Mid-afternoon of Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> July during a quiet potter in the garden, Christine and I found ourselves caught in the middle of a life and death struggle between a singled out juvenile House Martin and a very determined adult Hobby. As usual, alarm calls rang out as we frantically looked all around for the reason. All of a sudden predator and prey crashed through our back yard area, culminating outside the entrance porch to the flats with a grounded Martin and a bewildered Hobby that fluttered and hovered awkwardly trying to determine where the victim had fallen. The Hobby aborted the mission and flew off around the block.

As we looked on in disbelief, Christine suddenly ran round to the porch from the garden to find the young House Martin on the paving in a corner by the porch doorway. Apparently unharmed with no obvious injuries, the little bird sat happily in the palm of her hand for a good half an hour regaining composure.

The palpable panic stations had emptied the sky of all House Martins, many of which had returned to their nests. When calm returned, the birds tentatively emerged, passing overhead and twittering as usual. The bird in Christine's open palm called back in response and began to perk up. Meanwhile, I walked out into the road to listen to the conversational House Martins tucked away in their mud homes as normality returned.

and coming home. It flew around calling loudly, making one final pass over the garden as if to say "thank you for saving me" and then it was gone back in the flock.



01. Fledgling House Martin that survived a hobby attack. Christine Turner.

Our little rescued Martin looked around, watching its companions flying about. It fluttered its wings several times as if warming them up and then launched itself skyward calling from the second it left Christine's hand as if to let its family know it was safe and sound