

### A macabre swallow nest

On 22 December 1984, I was called to the farm of Mr McKenna, near Dannevirke, to see an unusual nest of Welcome Swallow (*Hirundo tahitica neoxena*). It was built into a corner of a small pump shed, glued directly on to the wall on two sides, a triangle with a curved front. Round the front of the nest was the body of a dead adult swallow (Fig. 1), positioned with wings outstretched to the corners and head hanging down in centre front. It was firmly fixed with dry mud round the edges of the wings but not obscuring them. In the nest were four young swallows. The dead bird was well coloured, the blue and rusty red being as in life.

Although Mr McKenna had seen two swallows building the nest, and the chicks were being fed, I could not tell whether one or two swallows were still in attendance. The chicks eventually flew from the nest.

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