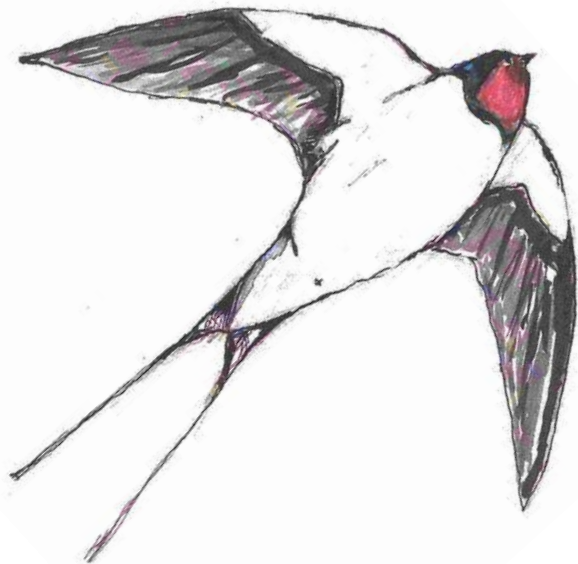
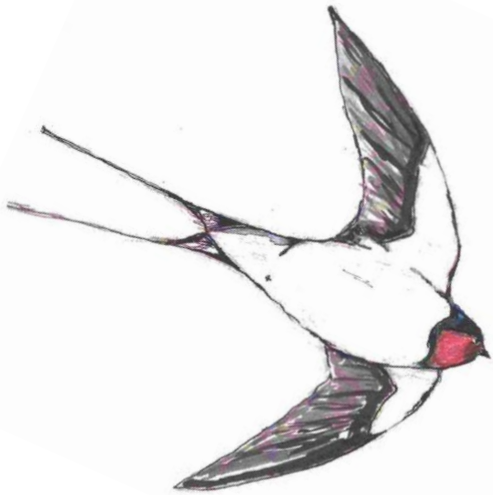


# The Swallows

Flit and Flight were exhausted.

They had flown and flown for a very long time, travelling over the land and over the sea for six whole weeks. They had only stopped to have a drink and to rest when it got dark.

The two little Swallows left South Africa and flew North.



They flitted over the Congo Rainforest, dodging pesky parrots as they flew.

They soared across the hot, dry, golden Sahara Desert, swooping over the enormous sand dunes.

They glided over colourful, domed buildings in Morocco and then swooped over the bright, blue Mediterranean Sea which was glistening in the sunshine.

Flit and Flight fluttered over Spain where it was warm and sunny. They looked down upon groves of orange and lemon trees growing in the red and brown countryside.

Then they flew over France, swooping over the vineyards and long winding rivers as they went.



Finally, they arrived in Ireland and flew around, searching for the special place where they had hatched the year before. In the patchwork of green fields below them they saw mother sheep with their lambs and black and white cows grazing the grass and waiting to be milked. It was springtime. Eventually they found the big, grey, familiar house with the lush, green, grassy meadow and the glistening, little river, trickling over the stones at the front. They were so happy to be back at last...



They flew and fluttered.

They swooped and soared.

They darted and dived around the big, green meadow, zigzagging into space.

They ate fat flies as they flew. It was so good to be home!

After a few days Flit and Flight began to build a nest in the eaves of the big, grey house. They worked very hard, carrying bits of soil in their beaks. They stuck it together to make a strong, round nest. They used grass, mud pellets, straw and feathers. After a few weeks the nest was finished.

Flight flew into the nest and after a while she laid three little white eggs covered with reddish-brown speckles. She snuggled up over the eggs to keep them warm. Flit worked very hard catching flies and bringing them to her so that she would not be hungry. In a few weeks the eggs cracked and hatched. Three little baby swallows popped out into the nest. They began to cheep and chirp loudly because they were very hungry.

Flit and Flight were so proud of their three chicks. They called them Flo, Phyllis and Flop. The skinny, little swallows shouted to their dad and mum to bring them food and Flit and Flight flew around the meadow and over the green garden catching flies in their beaks. All day long they carried fat, black flies to the three baby swallows. They flew back and forward, forward and back, only stopping when it got dark. Looking after their brood was very hard work. The three little swallows continued to make a lot of noise each day until their stomachs were full.





The baby swallows grew very quickly and soon it was time for them to learn to fly. Flit and Flight taught them to carefully hop out of the nest and spread their little wings. They showed them how to flap their wings and away they swooped. First Flo, then Phyllis and after that came Flop. Flo and Phyllis soared up into the air, but poor Flop just turned over and over and over!

He began to spin around and around and then started to tumble slowly down towards the ground!

He did not see the green, glistening eyes hiding and watching and waiting...

Luckily Flight was waiting and was there to catch him before he hit the ground! She turned him around and showed him once again how to flap his little wings. Suddenly he flew up into the blue sky. He glanced back and saw a flash of orange fur slink quietly away and disappear under the hedge.

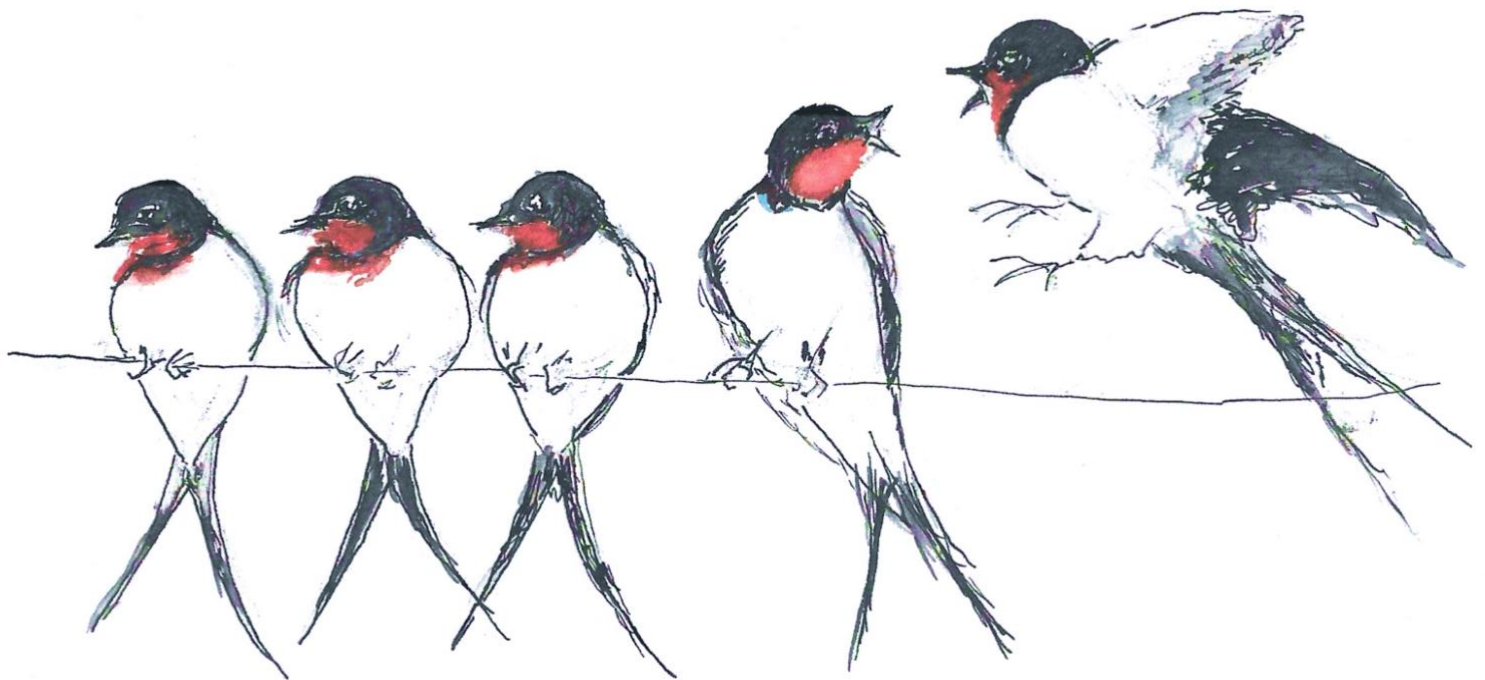
All summer long the three little swallows flew over the lush, green garden, down to the sunny meadow. They learned how to catch fat bluebottles and horseflies as they flew. They swooped and flew around in ever widening circles, swerving downwards and skimming over the long grass, scooping up beetles and caterpillars on the wing.

Flit called out to the three little swallows and warned them about the big, fat ginger cat who was lurking in the long grass. Flo, Phyllis and Flop immediately soared high in the sky because they didn't want the big, fat ginger cat to catch them. They had heard the story about their cousin Swift and did not want to end up as he had!



Soon it was September, and it began to get colder. There were fewer swarms of flies for the swallows to eat. It would soon be autumn. All the swallows began to gather side by side, in long lines on the telephone wires. They were fidgety, restless and ready to go. Occasionally they launched off the wire for a quick snack and then they returned to the waiting line with the others.

It was time...



The little family soared into the air, joined a flight of swallows and started off on their long journey south.

They flew 10,000 kilometres over France, then Spain and the Mediterranean Sea. They soared over Morocco and then the hot Sahara Desert. They hovered over the Congo Rainforest, swooped down over South Africa and finally arrived back at the reed beds outside Bloemfontein.

