

Nests!

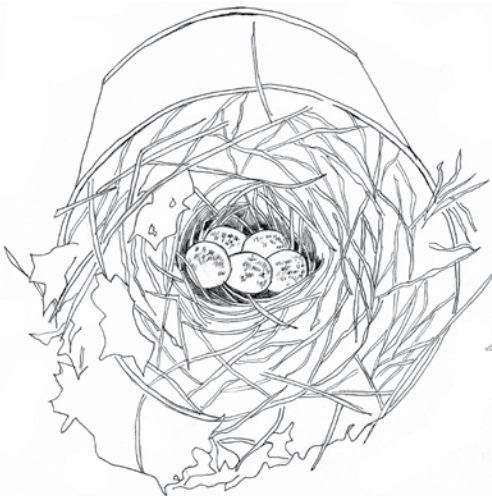
What role do nests play in the life of a bird? Do birds live in their nests all year round, like a house?

Did you know that in many songbird species, it's the female who builds the nest? Sometimes the male helps her find a suitable location and, occasionally, he actually helps build it. After building the nest, the female lays a **clutch** of eggs which she then **incubates** or sits on to keep warm. Once the chicks hatch, both parents usually take turns feeding their hungry **brood**. The chicks grow and develop and eventually are ready to **fledge** or leave the nest! Once songbird fledglings leave the nest, they don't return to it. Their parents busily follow them around for a few weeks, feeding them wherever they go. Soon the fledglings disperse and become independent. Next summer, they will return to the area where they hatched to find mates, build nests and raise chicks of their own!

- Different types of birds make different types of nests.
- Vireos build a nest that is suspended below the branch, often in a fork
- Bald eagles make nests that have sticks as large as a man's arm and can be as big as a house!
- Hummingbirds build TINY nests, about as big as a quarter! They often decorate their nests with lichen.
- Many warblers build a tightly woven cup nest. They often look like knots on a branch! Other birds build their nests on the ground in leaves or hidden in grasses.



- Carolina Wrens can build nests just about ANYwhere! They often build nests in boots, mailboxes, hanging baskets, buckets, garages and many other unlikely places. Woodpeckers make holes in trees with their strong beaks. They build nests in these holes and frequently roost in them at night when not breeding.



What do birds use to make their nests?

Here is a list of possible nesting materials a bird may use:

- Grass
- Twigs for smaller birds, branches for bigger birds
- Dried leaves
- Grapevine bark
- Pine needles
- Moss
- Lichen
- Hair - human, horse, bear, hog
- Trash - yes, they will often add pieces of plastic or other trash



But how do they get all that material to stick to the branch? Many small birds use spider webs as glue to hold the nesting material on the branch. That's pretty resourceful, isn't it?

Build A Nest

Draw your own nest!

Pretend you are a bird – any species, you choose! ‘Construct’ your nest somewhere in this scene. Draw your nest, label it, add a sketch of your bird. Make a list of the materials you used to make your nest. Now you are ready to raise your own brood!

