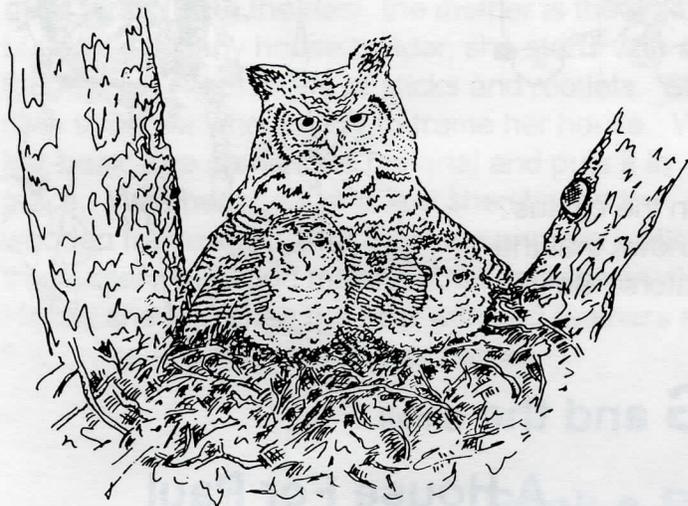


NATURE DETECTIVES



winter 1998-99

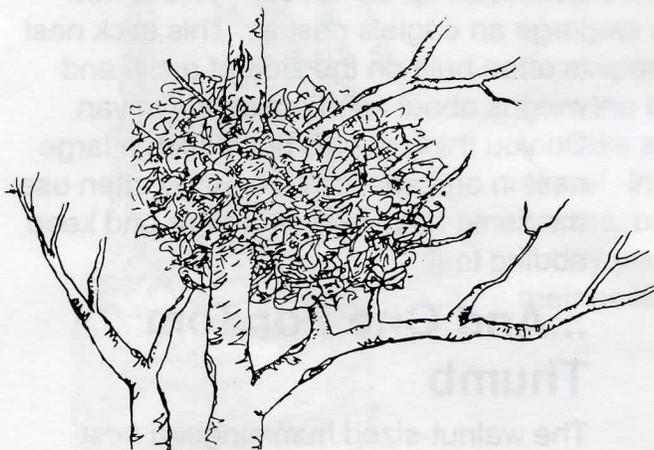
Sticks and Stones and Woven Homes



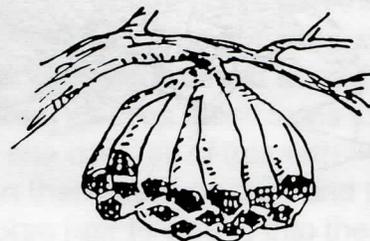
Winter brings soft snow, frozen ponds, and birds' nests. Wait a minute, nests in the winter? It is true! Nests often remain hidden in leafy trees through the summer and fall. Only in winter, when all the leaves are gone, do these nests show themselves.

While most birds build and use nests in spring, some, like the great horned owl, simply use an empty nest to raise their families in the winter. Look for owls and nests as you walk along the trails this winter.

STOP! Before you look for nests, remember that birds are not the only animals that build nests. Can you think of any other nest-builders?



How did that jumble of leaves get up on the fork of the tree? The wind could not have piled them there. They are the work of a squirrel — they are its nest.

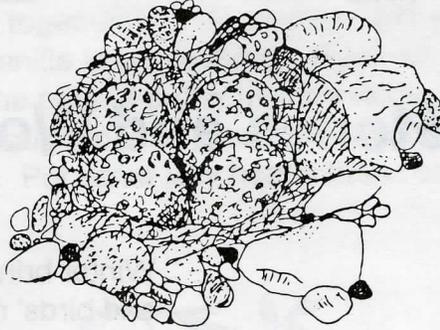


You can find these gray paper nests on trees, under the eaves, and even in sheds. The paper is actually chewed up cardboard or rotten trees mixed with saliva like papier-mache. The nests are smooth outside with little combs inside. In each comb lies a wasp egg or larva. Leave a wasp alone and it will eat the insects in your yard. Bother it, and it will leave you with a painful sting.

Birds build nests in all kinds of places — high in trees or on the ground, on the sides of buildings or on rocky cliffs, above water or in tree cavities, in bushes, porches, streetlights, or even in stream banks. So when you are out looking for nests, look high, low, and all around. You may see a nest where you never imagined!

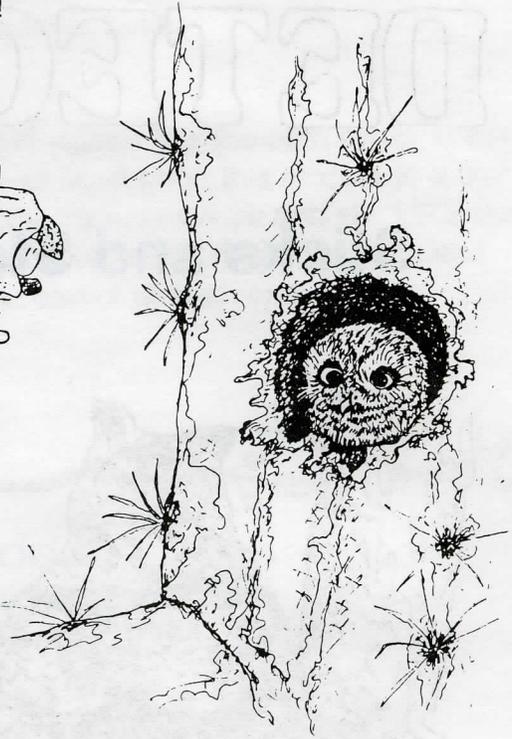
Peek-a-boo Eggs

Kee-dee, kee-dee! A bird with a broken wing cries piteously as it walks. Now the wing seems fine because the bird is flying. It is a killdeer guarding its nest. See the depression in the rocks with those speckled eggs. Hard to find, isn't it?



Naturally Burglar-Proof

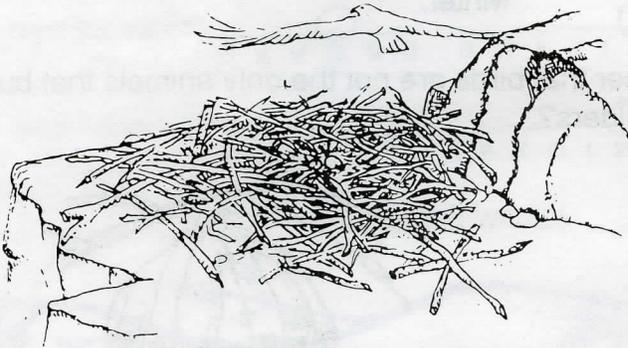
Whose eyes are peering out of that hole in the cactus? The tiny elf owl of the Desert Southwest knows that the spines on the cactus will keep away predators. So its eggs and babies will be safe.



The BIG and the small

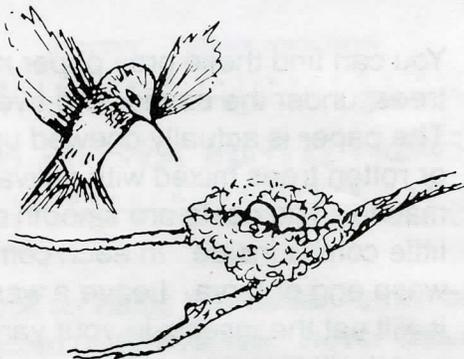
A House For Paul Bunyan...

The eagle nest, or eyrie, wins "Colorado's Largest Nest" award. Turn a minivan up on its rear. This is how large an eagle's nest is. This stick nest is often built on the side of a cliff and weighs about as much as a minivan. Do you think eagles build such a large nest in one season? No, they often use the same nest year after year and keep adding to it.



...And One For Tom Thumb

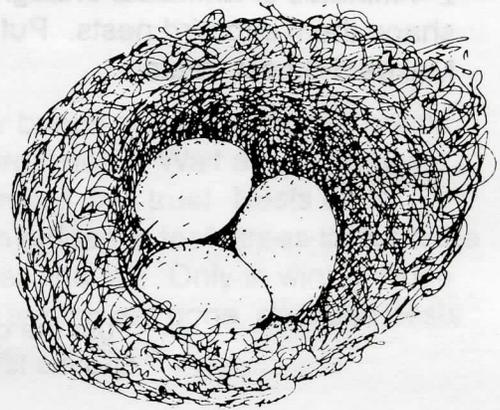
The walnut-sized hummingbird nest wins the "Smallest Nest" award. The birds themselves are often no larger than a big butterfly. You may see them getting nectar from your red flowers.



Birds use a variety of materials to build their nests. These materials provide both support and insulation. Some nests are built entirely of twigs. Other nests have grass, leaves, bark and moss. Some birds use sticky spider webs or their own saliva to hold the nest together. Others use mud. Birds use soft materials such as feathers, fur or hair from other animals, cotton, wool, soft seed heads, shells, lichen, snakeskin, cow droppings, or cocoon silk, to line their nests. They may even use paper, string, tin foil, or Kleenex!

You Can Huff and Puff...

...And still probably not break this nest. The robin builds its cup-shaped nest on a fork near the trunk of the tree. Although both birds collect the material used for building the nest, the mother is the sole builder. Like any house builder, she starts with a foundation -- a platform of sticks and rootlets. She then uses her whole body to frame her house. With her beak, she carries the material and puts it in place. With her chest and feet she shapes the wooden framework. She then cements the walls of the nursery with mud making it almost indestructible. Finally she furnishes the nest with soft feathers and fine grass -- a mattress for her babies.



Rock-a-Bye Baby on the Treetop

The oriole builds its nest at the tip of a tree branch so predators like cats cannot get out there. The nest must be very light so it won't bend the branch too much. The female oriole weaves blades of soft grass together until she gets a nice basket-like nest. She starts by weaving two separate walls which hang down next to each other from the branch. She then weaves these walls together to make a pouch. And she does all of this with her beak alone! In the past when there were no cars and lots of horses, orioles used horse hair to weave into their nests. Today you might find string, paper or other garbage in their nests.

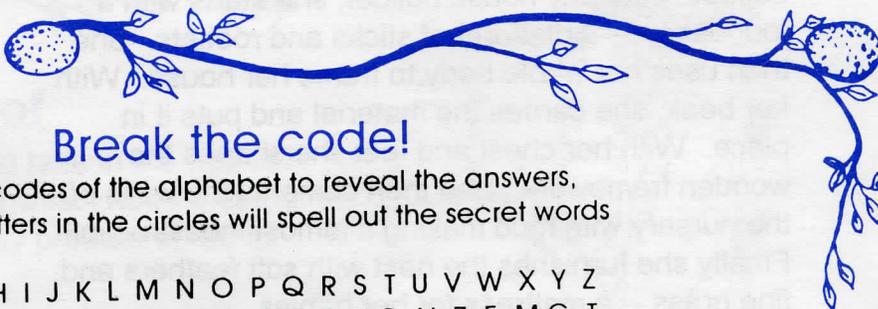
If you were a bird, where would you build your nest?
How big would it be? What materials would you use?

A Nest You Can Eat

3 cups crispy rice cereal
 1 cup shredded coconut
 1 teaspoon vanilla
 jelly beans

1/3 cup light corn syrup
 1/2 cup brown sugar
 1/2 cup peanut butter

Mix the cereal and coconut together in a large bowl. Set aside. Mix the corn syrup, brown sugar, peanut butter, and vanilla in a saucepan. Have an adult bring this mixture to a boil and stir it well. Then add the peanut butter mixture to the cereal mixture and stir. Let it cool 2-4 minutes or until cool enough to touch, but still warm. Divide into 5 or 6 sections and shape them into bird nests. Put some jelly beans in the center of each one as eggs. Makes 5-6 nest treats.



Break the code!

Use the codes of the alphabet to reveal the answers,
 and the letters in the circles will spell out the secret words

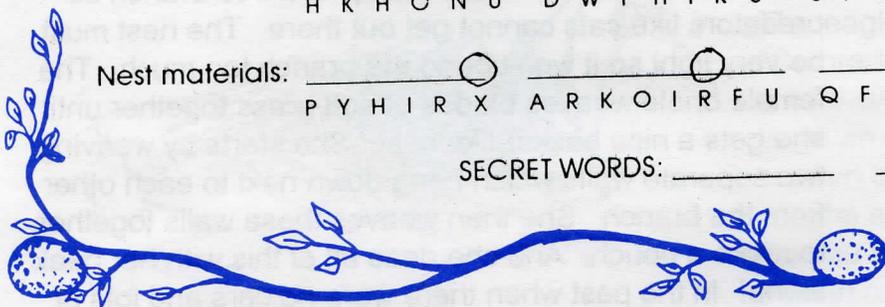
A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z
 code letter: K S H L R A Q I Y B V P C X W D J F U O N Z E M G T

Nest builders:
 E K U D U U J N Y F F R P I N C C Y X Q S Y F L R K Q P R

Nest locations:
 H K H O N U D W F H I R U S F K X H I R U H P Y A A U

Nest materials:
 P Y H I R X A R K O I R F U Q F K U U O E Y Q U C N L

SECRET WORDS: !!



SECRET WORDS: WINTER NESTS !!
 Nest builders: W A S P S S A U I R E L H U M M I N G B I R D E A G L E
 Nest locations: L I F E S L I F E S B R A N C H E S S T R I C K H I R U H P Y A A U
 Nest materials: L I C H E N E A T H E R S G R A S S T W I G S M U D
 P Y H I R X A R K O I R F U Q F K U U O E Y Q U C N L



As you look for nests this winter, remember that all birds' nests, whether occupied or not, are protected by federal law. Never disturb a nest in any way.