

**NESTING OF THE HOUSE FINCH IN DOWNTOWN JACKSON, MISSISSIPPI**

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On 15 June 1991 we found and photographed two active nests of the House Finch (*Carpodacus mexicanus*) on the top floor of the Holiday Inn Downtown parking garage in Jackson, Mississippi. Two nests from which young had already fledged and a nest under construction were seen and photographed at the same time. Seven or eight adults were at the site of the active nests. One or more of the adult males were singing or calling near the nests.

The first active nest examined contained four young in early pinfeather stage. They were being fed by the male, apparently by regurgitation, since no food was visible when the adult visited the nest. The second active nest contained one egg. The female flushed from the nest twice when approached. A brightly colored male and a less colorful male accompanied this female while she remained in the nest vicinity. Both males and the female made alarm calls and were visibly agitated by our disturbance at the nest.

All five nests were cup-shaped and built inside welded wire covers over 2-bulb fluorescent light fixtures attached to the concrete ceiling and about 4 m above the floor (Figure 1). All nests were made of weed stems forming the basal structure. The lining was made of finer grasses. Some bits of paper, plastic wrapping, string, and other materials were worked into the outer parts and rim. Nests that had fledged young and the active nest with young had the rim covered and built up with dried or fresh droppings from the young. The nest with one egg was new and clean of fecal matter. It had a mummified fledgling dangling from a string attached to the nest. Two streamers of synthetic fabric ribbon also hung from this nest. The nest under construction had the basal structure completed, but no lining. The two older nests contained the dried green stems and immature seed capsules of peppergrass (*Lepidium virginicum*). Peppergrass is common around untended, vacant spaces near parking lots and buildings in the downtown area. Seed of this plant matures

Figure 1. Young House Finches begging from their nest in the wire enclosure of a fluorescent light fixture.

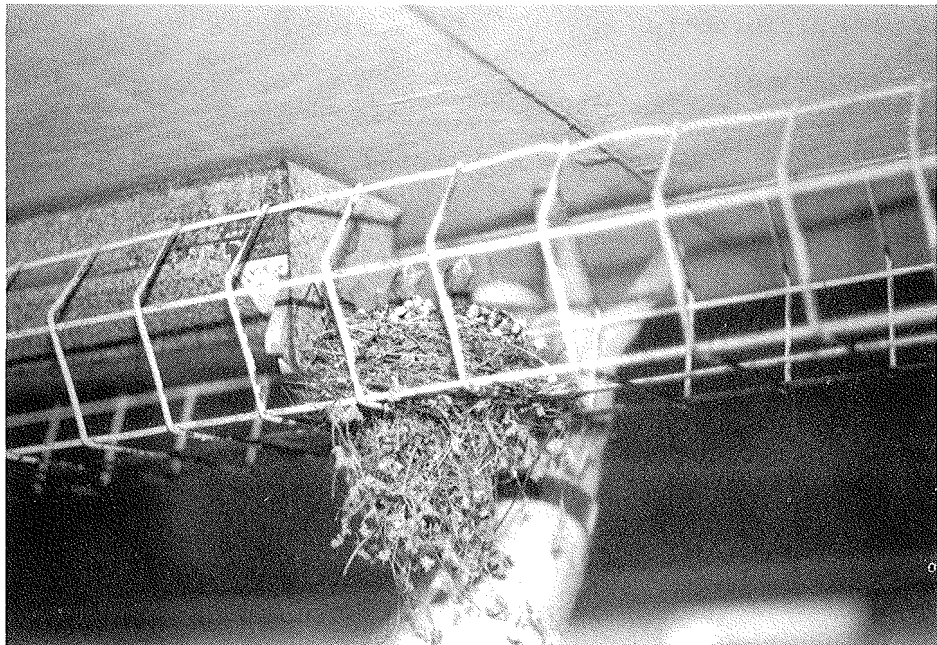
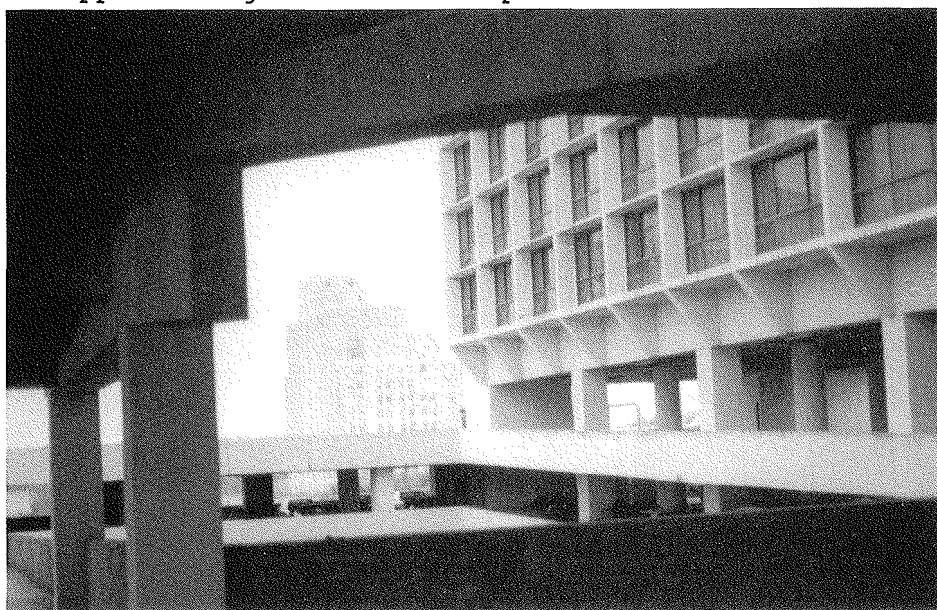


Figure 2. Site of an active House Finch nest on the ceiling of the Holiday Inn Downtown parking garage. The nest was at the upper left just out of the photo.



in early spring and its use suggests that the two nests were completed early in the spring. The nest with one egg was apparently an earlier nest that had been cleaned and renovated. Both the nest with young and that with an egg were infested with mites.

House Finches were seen by Hutto and others in the summer of 1990, and vacant nest was seen at one of the light fixtures on the downtown parking garage. Active nesting was not observed in 1990. The top floor of the nesting location is open on all sides (Figure 2). The lower floors are effectively enclosed with metal screens to prevent entry by birds. The Holiday Inn swimming pool is on the roof of the parking garage.

The House Finch first appeared as a winter resident in Mississippi in 1980 (Jackson 1981). The first breeding record was a fledgling being fed by an adult on 11 July 1986 in Starkville (Jackson et al. 1986). A single male was observed at a feeder in Jackson from 14 July to 20 August 1984. A photograph of that bird was taken by Vic Duvic (Jackson et al. 1986).

House Finches have become common winter residents at bird feeders throughout Mississippi. From winter through late March 1991, House Finches appeared at numerous feeders in the Jackson, Mississippi, area. Turcotte saw flocks numbering from 12 to more than 30 at different locations in Richland. About 12 to 15 used his bird feeders regularly and a flock of about the same numbers fed on blossom buds of three nearby plum trees.

#### Literature Cited

- Jackson, J.A. 1981. The House Finch, a new species for Mississippi. *Miss. Kite* 11:7-9.
- Jackson, J.A., B.S. Jackson, and M. Hodges, Jr. 1986. First breeding of the House Finch in Mississippi. *Miss. Kite* 16:10-12.