

Robin gathering nest material in October.—On 10 October 1974 I saw an American Robin (*Turdus migratorius*) gathering pieces of dried grass in Central Park, New York, N.Y. It was at 08:30, the temperature was 11° C, and many robins were singing. The bird was in a small grassy patch on a rock knoll. It held about 8 pieces of 5 cm long grass in its bill and continued to explore the area, picking up a few more pieces of grass, until it was chased away by another robin flying by. The first robin did not drop the grasses when it took off, but I could not see if it did so in flight before both birds disappeared from view. No robin returned to the site.

The age and sex of the robin gathering nest material could not be determined, but it had none of the spotting of the juvenal plumage, nor the noticeably darker head which some males have in fall. The robin which chased it was in similar plumage. I saw no signs of molt. Bent (U.S. Natl. Mus. Bull. 196, 1949) notes that the nest is built almost exclusively by the female, and that short pieces of grass are usually used by robins in the center of the nest, at the last stages of construction.

In searching the area during the next few days, I found no signs of a nest under construction, nor did I see any robin gathering nest material.

I have found one other record of a robin gathering nest material out-of-season, but not actually nesting. Brackbill (Wilson Bull. 85:238, 1973) saw a robin partially in juvenal plumage picking up and dropping pieces of fine dead grass on 22 August 1972.

Selander and Nicholson (Condor 64:81-91, 1962), in reviewing occurrences of fall nesting in North American birds, noted that many species resident in temperate latitudes have a brief period of sexual activity in the fall. This is associated with the partial recrudescence of the gonads from the preparatory or regenerative phase. In the American Robin, this period is evidenced by the singing heard in September and, most frequently, October (Howell, Am. Midl. Nat. 28:529-603, 1942). However, no records exist of other signs of breeding behavior in the robin at this season. In part, this may be due to the nature of robin courtship; even in spring, courtship and pair formation are inconspicuous, and there are no copulatory displays (Young, Am. Midl. Nat. 53:329-352, 1955).

Many of the recorded cases of out-of-season nesting in the genus *Turdus* may have been induced by unusual environmental stimuli, such as a prolonged period of mild weather, and perhaps confounding stimuli such as artificial light. Berger (Auk 63:668, 1966) found a robin incubating 3 eggs in January in Pennsylvania and Kress (Wilson Bull. 79:245-246, 1967) noted a robin which began a nest in Ohio in December 1965 from which 3 chicks hatched the next month. He suggested that breeding behavior may have been induced by stimulation of the gonads from the red light rays coming from colored lights on an enormous Christmas display across the street from the nest.

Several records exist for other members of the genus. Grummt (Vogelwarte 21:295-296, 1962) found a pair of Blackbirds (*T. merula*) which built a nest in the middle of a neon light in Berlin in December 1959. Young fledged the following February. Snow (Br. Birds 48:120-126, 1955) reports several nestings of the Blackbird and Song Thrush (*T. ericetorum*) during the very mild winter of 1953-54, but none of these nests were begun before mid-November. The only other October occurrence of nesting behavior I have found is Craster's (Br. Birds 50:77, 1957) report of a Song Thrush with a nest of 4 eggs on 11 October 1956. The nest was deserted by 18 October.

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The Mexican chicken bug as a source of raptor mortality.—From 8 May to 3 July 1974, I examined the reproductive success of cliff-nesting raptors in north-eastern New Mexico. The birds were nesting in extensive canyonlands made up of 6–35 m sandstone cliffs. Species observed included the American Kestrel (*Falco sparverius*), Red-tailed Hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*), Prairie Falcon (*Falco mexicanus*), and Golden Eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*). I found 32 cliff nest sites and 92 eggs and/or young.

The abandonment of one clutch of 3 Prairie Falcon eggs and death of 7 young Prairie Falcons (broods of 4 and 3) and a brood of 2 young Red-tailed Hawks I attribute to the presence of the Mexican chicken bug (*Haemotosiphon inodorus*) (Usinger, Monograph of Cimicidae, Horn-Shafer Co., Baltimore, 1966). These bugs feed by sucking blood from their hosts. I counted as many as 30 bugs attached near the eyes and at the base of legs and wings of a single week-old Prairie Falcon. Usinger (1966:475) identified the Mexican chicken bug's native hosts as birds of prey. It has been found in the nests of the California Condor (*Gymnogyps californianus*), Golden Eagle, Great Horned Owl (*Bubo virginianus*), and Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*) (Hicks, Checklist and Bibliography on the Occurrence of Insects in Bird Nests, Iowa State Coll. Press, Ames, 1959; Hicks, Iowa State J. Sci. 36:233–344, 1962).

The Mexican chicken bug commonly infests poultry; Usinger (1966:261) suggests that predatory birds could become infested with the bugs by preying on chickens. This seems unlikely at the nests I observed, since I visited most ranches in the area and found chickens at only one location. In addition, I inventoried remains of 65 prey items and examined 87 pellets and found no evidence of chickens having been consumed.

H. inodorus is indifferent to light (Lee, Pan-Pac. Entomol. 30:159–160, 1954) and can be active throughout the daylight hours. Population densities can reach very high levels; Lee (Pan-Pac. Entomol. 31:47–61, 1955) reported 1778 bugs in a single Barn Owl nest.

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American Kestrels sit on Wood Duck eggs.—While conducting a study of breeding Wood Ducks (*Aix sponsa*) in nest boxes at Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge, Morris Co., New Jersey, I found 2 female American Kestrels (*Falco sparverius*) that were sitting on Wood Duck eggs as well as their own.

The first such occurrence, initially noted on 17 April 1973 involved incubation of 5 kestrel eggs and 1 duck egg. This box, when checked on 27 March, contained only pine shavings. On 17 April it contained several unidentified down feathers as well as 2 pieces of fur. The viable duck egg was found among kestrel eggs. The shavings formed a cup