

ROOSTING POSTURE OF CAROLINA WRENS

William H. Turcotte

*240 Lowe Circle
Richland, Mississippi 39215*

On 12 January 1997, I photographed a pair of Carolina Wrens (*Thryothorus ludovicianus*; Figure 1) as they roosted in a wreath of pine cones hanging on the wall of the front porch of my son Jim's house in southwest Jackson, Hinds County, Mississippi. All of the back and body feathers of the birds were raised so as to show irregular spots of white against the dark gray and cinnamon brown of their plumage. The white spotting on the feathers is concealed when they are not thus raised. In the roosting posture, one bird almost atop the other, they gave the appearance of rounded pin cushions and little resemblance to the shape of a bird. Each bird's tail was raised and flattened against the surface they were on.

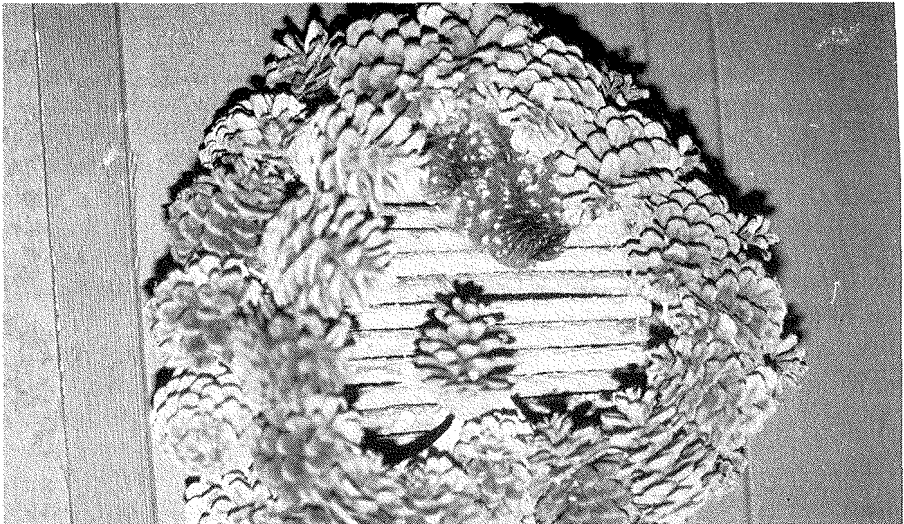


Figure 1. Roosting posture of Carolina Wrens showing raised back feathers with white spots inside the lower part of this heart-shaped pine-cone wreath.

I surmise that this roosting posture might serve as camouflage, protecting the wrens against predators. The raised feathers might also provide more adequate insulation by trapping air between them. The temperature at the time of my observations was in the low 30s F and it was sleeting. Most Carolina Wrens I have seen going to roost used protected niches such as porches, gourds, or nest boxes placed on or near buildings.