

OCCURRENCE OF BIRD NESTS ON JUMPING CHOLLA CACTI

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To study the use of Jumping Cholla cacti (*Opuntia fulgida*) by birds for nesting, I searched a 200-sq-m area at Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument, Arizona, in April 1987. It was also my aim to find out if nesting birds select particular heights of cacti. Sixty-three bird species breed in Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument (Huey 1942, Groschupf et al. 1987).

I classified cacti into three height categories: <1 m, 1-2 m, and >2 m tall; broken cacti and half-built nests were excluded. I found nests of only two bird species, the Cactus Wren (*Campylorhynchus brunneicapillus*) and Curve-billed Thrasher (*Toxostoma curvirostre*). It is possible that one or two older thrasher nests may have been of the Bendire's Thrasher (*T. bendirei*), which also occurs in the study area. Out of 128 cacti, 23 (18.0%) had nests, of which three were active at that time (two of the Cactus Wren and one of the Curve-billed Thrasher). No nests were in cacti <1 m tall, while 31.3 and 68.7% of cacti that were, respectively, 1-2 m and >2 m tall had nests. Previous observations on the Cactus Wren and Curve-billed Thrasher showed that they seldom nest lower than 1 m from the ground (Bent 1948).

Out of all nests, 13 (56.6%) were of the Cactus Wren and 10 (43.4%) were of the Curve-billed Thrasher. The mean height of the Cactus Wrens' nests was 1.51 ± 0.38 m, of the Curve-billed Thrashers', 1.14 ± 0.28 m. This nest height difference between these two species is statistically significant ($p < 0.05$, Mann-Whitney *U* test).

Of Cactus Wren nests, 30.7, 30.7, 30.7, and 7.9% had nest entrance east, north, south, and west, respectively. The Cactus Wrens may select nest entrances to avoid winds during cooler early parts of the breeding season and face them during hot parts of the season (Ricklefs and Hainsworth 1969), or nest orientation may be selected at random (Anderson and Anderson 1973).

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