

Nest-building behavior of the Carolina Wren.—In the spring of 1953 we observed a pattern of nest-building behavior in the Carolina Wren (*Thryothorus ludovicianus*) that seems not to have been recorded previously.

The observations were made in our back yard on the border of a mesic hammock near Gainesville, Alachua County, Florida. There are about a dozen fairly large trees standing in the yard beneath which the underbrush has been cleared out but the leaf mold has been left largely undisturbed. In the area just south of the yard there is a dense thicket of underbrush under the trees.

The phenomenon observed was simply that when the wren, in gathering nesting material, picked up anything larger than a tiny leaf it did not fly directly to the nesting site but instead climbed up the trunk of a tree to a height above the nest and then flew down toward it with the load.

We first noticed this on May 10 when the wrens were collecting material from the leaf mold in the open yard. On this occasion the nest was situated close to the ground. The wrens would leave the nest, fly parallel to the ground and about a foot or two above it to the area where they were gathering the nesting material. With small items, they would take off from the ground and fly horizontally back to the nest, but with larger objects (a leaf an inch or more in diameter, a pine straw, etc.) they would hop to the nearest tree, climb straight up the trunk to an altitude above the level of the nest, then take off and fly downward to the nest. In a tree 44 feet from the nest they climbed to a maximum height of 14 feet and they climbed 16 feet up the side of a tree 49 feet from the nest. On one occasion, one of the wrens selected an item which appeared to be a piece of dead magnolia leaf about 2 inches in diameter. It hopped over some 8 or 10 feet to the nearest tree, which was 49 feet from the nest, climbed it to a height of 16 feet, but then, instead of flying downward directly toward the nest, it flew off at a tangent to another tree, landed on the trunk 8 feet from the ground, climbed to a height of 13 feet, and then flew downward toward the nest which was now only 25 feet away.

While collecting material in the shrubby area south of the nesting site the birds would also gain altitude before taking off for the nest but here they would simply hop up from twig to twig of the shrubs until they reached a sufficient altitude. Once we saw one hop from twig to twig until it reached the top of the shrub about 10 feet from the ground, then hop to a tree and ascend the trunk for another 4 feet above the level of the top of the shrubs. Both the male and the female take part in the nest building and both of them exhibited this same behavior.

While watching a pair (perhaps the same birds) building a nest in June we made a check of fifty flights and found that the birds climbed trees or shrubs to get altitude 28 times as compared to the 22 times they took off from the ground. This nest was placed under the eaves over the front step of our house and hence was about 8 feet from the ground. On several occasions the birds would pick up some item, then instead of hopping to the nearest tree they would fly close to the ground and land on the base of a live oak tree about 6 feet from the door. They would then climb up this tree to a height equal to or above the nest before concluding the final lap of the flight to the nest.

When we discussed this behavior of wrens with our friend, O. C. Van Hyning, he told us that he had seen them do the same thing when carrying food to the nestlings.—COLEMAN J. AND OLIVE B. GOIN, *Department of Biology, University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida, July 21, 1953.*