

VARIATIONS IN BIRD NESTING HABITS

JEAN BANCROFT, 264 Campbell Street, Winnipeg, Manitoba R3N 1B5

From observations I have made during recent years, it would appear that variations may be taking place, not only in the materials used by some birds to build their nests, but also in their nesting sites. This thought has occurred to me as a result of my bird-watching at Whytefold, Manitoba, on Lake Winnipeg, 40 miles north of the city of Winnipeg.

Formerly and still largely, the common materials used are grasses of various types, twigs of all kinds, leaves, shreds of bark, and cotton from poplar seeds; all these being produced by nature herself.

Today, however, birds are picking up materials not previously available to them. For example, I have observed that in addition to the natural materials, the following are now being used: plastic, wood shavings, strands from binder twine and string, bits of kleenex tissue, pieces of cloth, curly clumps of hair from a poodle dog, and cotton fluff from clothes dryers.

Examples from different nests are as follows:

American Robin. 1. Nest of grasses and small twigs, reinforced with mud. A four inch piece of kleenex tissue hanging down on the front of the nest. 2. Grass fibres, twigs, mud, some paper and rag woven in. 3. Grassy nest with cloth woven in and a long, one inch wide piece hanging down from nest. Another nest with green plastic hanging down.

Catbird. 1. Nest of twigs and grasses, with a piece of strong plastic near top and at front of nest, acting as a screen. 2. Twigs, string, plastic pieces.

Yellow Warbler. 1. Plant fibres, very thin strips of plastic, thin strands from

binder twine, and string. 2. Silke strands from tent caterpillars, plant fibres, string. 3. Base of nest a clump of tangled white string; grass and plant fibres. 4. Plant fibres, wood shavings, string.

Trail's Flycatcher. 1. Plant fibres and grasses, much cotton fluff on outside of nest, and some kleenex hanging down. 2. Little clumps of white curly poodle hair woven in with grass and plant fibres.

Northern (Baltimore) Oriole. 1. Nest finely woven of grasses, fine strands from binder twine. Lined with pieces of fluffy cotton from clothes dryer.

2. Grasses, plant fibres and wood shavings. 3. Plant fibres, silken strands from tent caterpillars, plastic strip approximately 1/8 inch wide. 4. Nest woven of 1/8 inch plastic strips and lined with fibrous material. Variations in shape in that it was more cup-like and not as deep. Nest built on bough of oak tree, overhanging a driveway. This nest was confirmed as Baltimore's by H. Copland and Prof. Sealey of the University of Manitoba. I had difficulty observing the nest but realized the bird was an oriole of some kind.

Our **Trail's (Alder) Flycatcher's** nest higher than reported: 1. Twelve feet up in a crotch of a tall, thin ash tree. Fifteen feet from the ground on a horizontal branch of an oak tree. Approximately 15 feet from the ground on a horizontal branch of an oak tree. From what I could observe this may have been the same bird which had built and started to sit on a nest in a Saskatoon bush, 12 feet from the ground. That nest had been disturbed and then I observed a new nest being built nearby in the oak.