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Ron Ryder Award: Steve Jones
Flight Song of Hammond's Flycatcher
Canyon Wren Nest Locations

It is important to remember that as of this writing, the flight songs of Dusky and Hammond's Flycatchers are represented by a single recording each. The low sample size likely hides variation in the structure of these songs, and more recordings are necessary to confirm the preliminary findings reported here. It may be even more important to pursue recordings of flight songs in other species of *Empidonax*, as they have the potential to shed further light on homologies of vocabulary and syntax in the genus.

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FIELD NOTE

Atypical Canyon Wren Nesting Locations

Nat Warring and Lauryn Benedict

The nests of Canyon Wrens (*Catherpes mexicanus*) are cup-shaped, with a base of twigs and coarse material, topped with softer plant down and feathers (Bent 1948, Tramonano 1964). True to the birds'



Fig. 1. Canyon Wren nest located in an abandoned building at the city of Fort Collins' Bobcat Ridge Natural Area, Larimer County, June 2012. Photo by Nora Covy

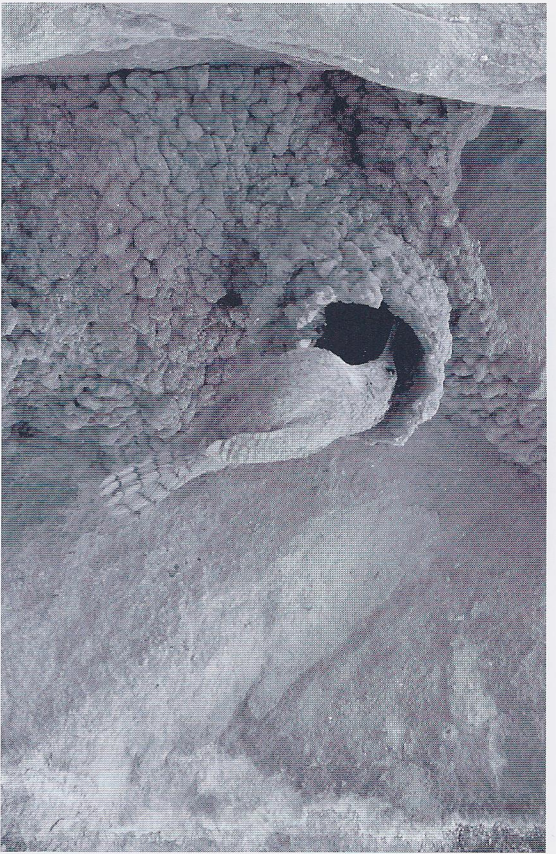


Fig. 2. Canyon Wren feeding nestlings within a Cliff Swallow nest, Horsetooth Reservoir, Larimer County, June 2012. Photo by Aran Meyer

common name, nests are typically built in cliff crevices, often protected by rock ledges, shelves, or overhangs (Jones and Dieni 1995). On occasion, nests are constructed in atypical locations, including in the rafters of buildings or ruins (Bent 1948). This behavior of building nests within structures is known from the southern portion of the Canyon Wren's range (Brewer 2001), but it has not been well documented and may also be more common than expected in northern locations like Colorado.

In the spring of 2012 we observed a pair of Canyon Wrens in eastern Larimer County nesting inside a metal storage cabinet within an abandoned storage shed. Adults and fledglings easily passed through small gaps to enter and exit the cabinet from all sides, while the nest was completely sheltered from the elements. This wren family foraged extensively in the ruins of an abandoned brick works at the same site. A second nest located near Masonville was discovered atop a rafter beam inside an abandoned ranch building at a height of only 2 meters (Fig. 1). This nest was accessed by the wrens through small window openings and crevices in the cement foundation of the building.

In addition to using man-made structures, Canyon Wrens sometimes occupy structures made by other species. One pair that nested on a cliff above Horsetooth Reservoir concealed its nest completely

inside an existing Cliff Swallow (*Petrochelidon pyrrhonota*) nest (Fig. 2). This south-facing nest was located eight meters above the ground on a 12 meter cliff, approximately 10 meters from active Cliff Swallow nests. The Canyon Wrens occupied the swallow nest prior to the arrival of migrating Cliff Swallows, and repelled swallows from the nest during incubation and chick-rearing.

Our observations suggest that unconventional nest sites may be very productive. The pairs that nested in buildings each fledged five chicks, while the wren pair that used the Cliff Swallow nest fledged two successive broods of chicks, the second fledging on 2 July 2012. These atypical Canyon Wren nests illustrate this iconic western species' ability to make opportunistic use of available resources, sometimes in unlikely locations.

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