



American robin nest

# Nest FEST

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**I**n Missouri, bird-nesting peaks the last week of May. This is a great time to *Xplor* the many kinds of nests birds make, make over, or take over in your neck of the woods.

## Quest with Care

It can be hard to spot bird nests, and that's a good thing. In most cases, birds build their nests in out-of-the-way places to avoid predators (including us and our pets).

If you find a nest close to the ground, don't move branches out of the way to get a better view. Grab a pair of binoculars to see the bird's nest without disturbing the parents or attracting predators.



Peregrine falcon chick

## Eggs-act Timing for Every Bird

Each kind of bird spends a specific amount of time growing in its egg before it hatches and in its nest before it flies. Some birds, like ducks and geese, are ready to leave the nest as soon as they hatch. But songbirds, like robins, are blind and naked and need their parents' care.

If you find an active nest, keep track of it. What kind of bird is nesting? Does the male help the female with building, incubating (sitting on the eggs to keep them warm), feeding nestlings, and defending the nest — or is she on her own? How many babies do you see? Can you guess what day they will fly away?



## All Shapes, Sizes, and Places

Birds build their nests with everything from grasses and twigs to mud, spider webs, and dog fur. Nests can be shaped like cups or pouches, and some are just bare scrapes on the ground. They can range in size from a pingpong ball to big stick piles several feet wide. Look for nests anywhere from below ground (kingfishers dig nest holes into creek banks) to treetops and skyscraper ledges.

### Hardly a nest at all!

Killdeer make shallow scrapes in sand or gravel in open spaces around lakes, ponds, and rivers.



*Killdeer eggs*

Don't be surprised to find them and their speckled eggs on a gravel road, railroad, or graveled roof.

### Your nest is my nest

Brown-headed cowbirds lay lots of eggs, but they don't build nests.

Instead, they drop an egg in the nest of another kind of bird. When the cowbird egg hatches, the nestling often pushes out the host birds' babies, and takes whatever food is brought to the nest — tricking the parents into raising it as their own young!



*Cowbird egg in a dickcissel nest*

*Eggs are shown as actual size.*

## American Robin

**Where to look:** Open woodlands and yards with scattered trees, usually near a clump of leaves in the top half of medium-to-large trees.

**Nest design:** An open cup of coarse grass, weeds, and other pickings. The inside will have a smooth inner cup of mud and a thin lining of fine, dry grasses.

**Growth rate:** Hatch in 12–14 days; fly in 14–16 days.

**Who does the work:** The female generally builds the nest and incubates the eggs. The male helps care for young once they've hatched.



*Usually 4 per nest*



## Barn Swallow

**Where to look:** In open areas near water, often above a barn door or under a bridge or culvert.

**Nest design:** An open, shallow cup made of mud pellets mixed with grasses and thinly lined with feathers. Barn swallows often nest in colonies.

**Growth rate:** Hatch in 14–16 days; fly in 17–24 days.

**Who does the work:** Both parents build the nest, incubate the eggs, and feed the young once they've fledged (left) the nest, often in midair.



*Usually 4–5 per nest*





## Ruby-Throated Hummingbird

**Where to look:** In the woods, usually near water, often near the fork of a twig, 10–20 feet above ground.

**Nest design:** A tiny pingpong-ball-sized cup made of plant fragments, lined with down, bound together with spider webs, and covered on the outside with lichens.

**Growth rate:** Hatch in 16 days; fly in 19 days.

**Who does the work:** The female builds the nest, incubates the eggs, and feeds the young.



*Usually 2 per nest*

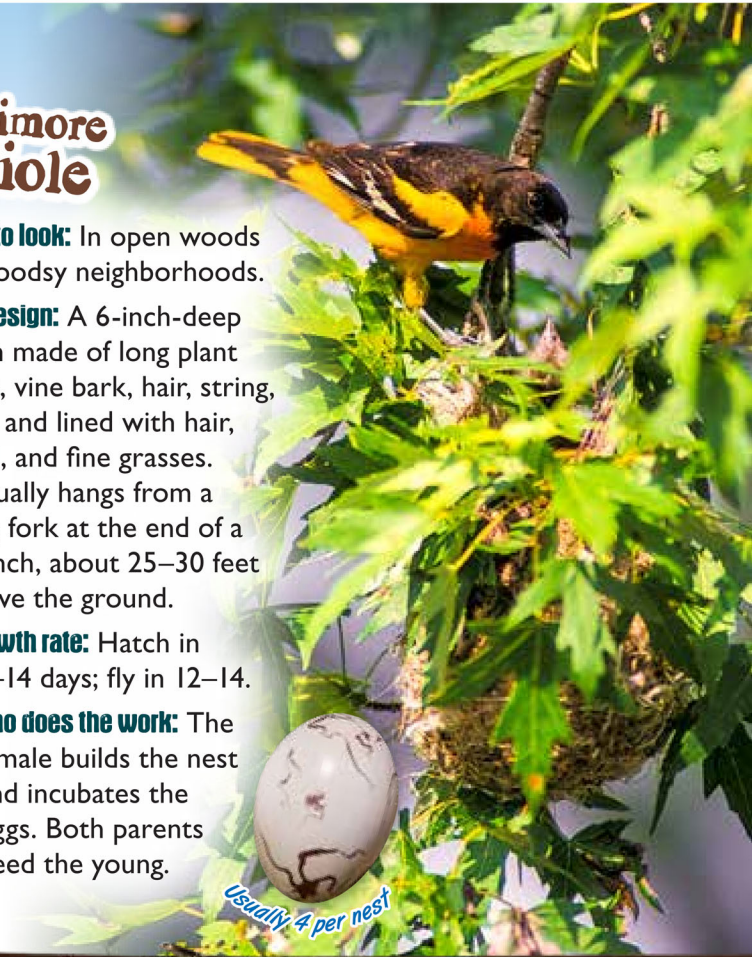
## Baltimore Oriole

**Where to look:** In open woods and woody neighborhoods.

**Nest design:** A 6-inch-deep pouch made of long plant fibers, vine bark, hair, string, yarn, and lined with hair, wool, and fine grasses. It usually hangs from a twig fork at the end of a branch, about 25–30 feet above the ground.

**Growth rate:** Hatch in 12–14 days; fly in 12–14.

**Who does the work:** The female builds the nest and incubates the eggs. Both parents feed the young.



*Usually 4 per nest*

## Pileated Woodpecker

**Where to look:** In woods with large, tall trees.

**Nest design:** A hole about 4 inches wide and 5 inches tall, around 15–70 feet up the trunk.

**Growth rate:** You will likely not see the white eggs, which lie in the tree cavity 10–14 inches deep. Hatch in 18 days; fly in 26–28 days.

**Who does the work:** Both parents hammer out the nest, both incubate the eggs, and both tend the young. Family groups may stay together through summer.



*Usually 3–5 per nest*



## Carolina Wren

**Where to look:** In low, shrubby areas, also in any little nook around yards, barns, or outbuildings.

**Nest design:** A bulky, domed cup made of grasses, weeds, bark strips, moss, and rootlets. Lined with fine grasses, hair, and feathers.

**Growth rate:** Hatch in 12–14 days; fly in 12–14 days.

**Who does the work:** The male builds the nest, and the female lines it. The female incubates the eggs, and both parents feed the young.

*Usually 4–6 per nest*



## Great Blue Heron

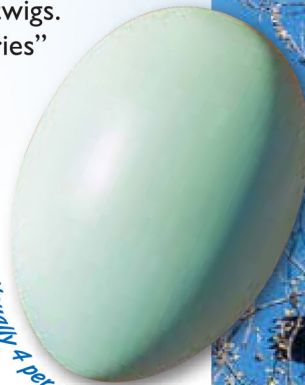
**Where to look:** Way up in the trees along a stream or lake.

**Nest design:** A large, bulky platform of twigs. Herons nest in colonies called “rookeries” and add to their nests every year.

**Growth rate:** Hatch in 25–29 days; fly in 60 days; leave the nest in 64–90 days.

**Who does the work:** The male brings the nesting material, and the female builds the nest in 3–14 days. Both parents incubate the eggs, and both tend the young.

Usually 4 per nest



## Peregrine Falcon

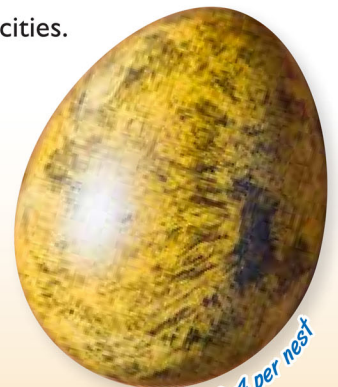
**Where to look:** On cliff ledges or tall buildings in cities.

**Nest design:** A shallow scrape.

**Growth rate:** Hatch in 28–29 days; fly at 35–42 days, but stay with their parents for another two months.

**Who does the work:** After the female lays her second egg, the male begins bringing her food. It's mainly the female that incubates the eggs, and she takes close care of them the first 14 days after they hatch. After that, dad begins tending the young if mom is absent.

Usually 3-4 per nest



**Falcon Cam** The Missouri Department of Conservation is helping to restore peregrine falcons to our state. To watch the nest box camera, visit [short.mdc.mo.gov/ZZJ](http://short.mdc.mo.gov/ZZJ).

## Wild Turkey

**Where to look:** In open woods and clearings.

**Nest design:** A scrape several inches deep among grasses and lined with grass and leaves.

**Growth rate:** Hatch in 28 days. Downy nestlings can search for food soon after they hatch, but they will stay with their brood until winter.

**Who does the work:** The female builds the nest, incubates the eggs, and tends the young after they hatch. Males take no part in nesting, but sometimes several female turkeys will share the same nest.

Usually 8-12 per nest

