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Front Cover: Subadult Yellow-crowned Night-heron (*Nyctanassa violacea*), Pearl River, Hancock, Co., Mississippi. One of the species whose scientific name recently has been changed by the American Ornithologists' Union. Photo by Jerome A. Jackson.

MOBILE HOME OF A CAROLINA WREN

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On 23 May 1989, we observed an unusual Carolina Wren (*Thryothorus ludovicianus*) nest in Columbus, Lowndes County, Mississippi. It had been built behind a headlight about eight inches from the radiator of a van and the bird reached the nest by entering through the grill (Figure 1).

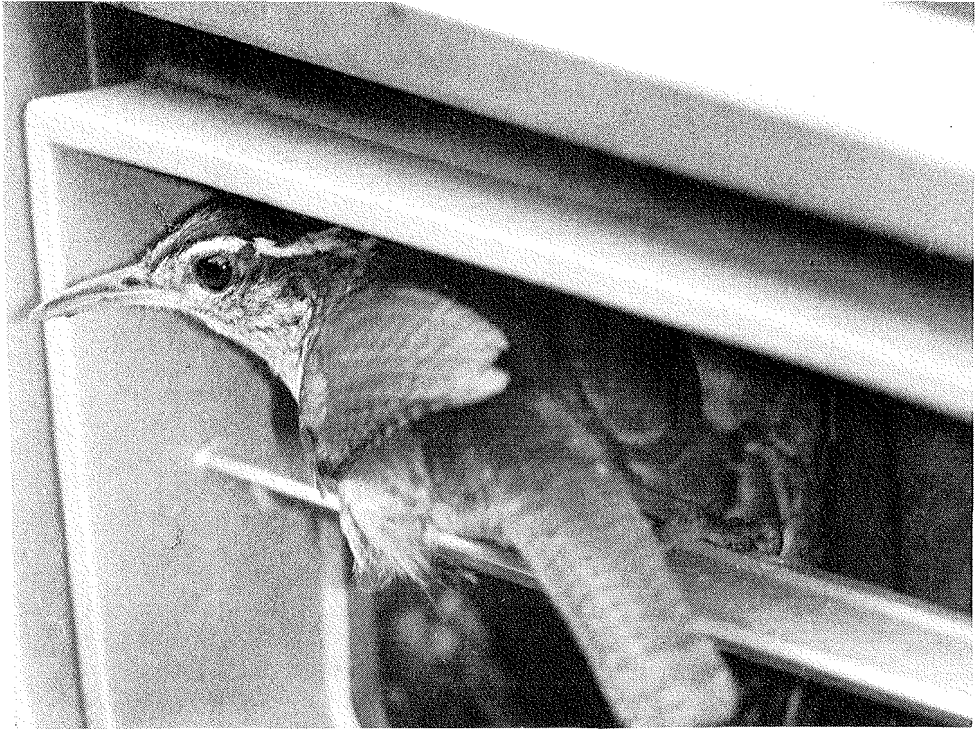


Figure 1. Carolina Wren at its nest in the engine compartment of a van.

The nest had been reported to us by the van's owner, David E. Jones, Sr. Mr. Jones had been hospitalized and his van had not been driven for several days. He first observed wrens entering the grill of his van on about 2 May and he left the van parked in his driveway during most of the nesting period. By 10 May the five eggs in the nest had hatched and the adults were feeding small nestlings. On that date Jones drove the van to a garage approximately two miles from his home and was gone for between an hour to an hour and a half before the van was returned to his driveway. On 13 May, Jones made another trip in the van, a distance of about 5 miles. On that trip the van was gone for about 2.5 hours. One nestling later fell from the nest and although Jones replaced it, it ultimately died and was removed from the nest by a parent. A second nestling subsequently died, and Jones observed the three remaining young fledge on the morning of 29 May.

A nestling period of at least 19 days is unusually long. Bent (1948) and Nice and Thomas (1948) give a nestling period of about two weeks. The death of two chicks and the extended nestling period may have resulted from reduced feeding by the parents during absences of the vehicle and human visits.

Although the Carolina Wren is considered a forest bird and "naturally" nests in tree crevices and in somewhat globular nests among dense vegetation (Bent 1948), it has readily adapted to nooks and crannies associated with human environments. These wrens are known to nest in old boots, shoe boxes, tissue boxes, and almost any conceivable man-made cavity. For Carolina Wrens to construct a nest behind the grill of a long-parked vehicle is somewhat in keeping with its known adaptations for coping in man's world. To continue the nesting effort when the van was moved and absent from the wrens' home range for 1-2.5 hours demonstrates a tenacity that is noteworthy. However, such a "mobile home" is not unprecedented for Carolina Wrens. Herbert L. Stoddard (in Bent 1948:208) reported an active nest in a tractor which was used on a daily basis. Stoddard (1978) also noted Carolina Wren nests "over noisy gasoline engines or water pumps." Another testament to the noise tolerance of these wrens was a nest in the back of a "nickelodeon" at which adults fed

nestlings while the music was playing "full blast" (Hopkins 1968).

An even more incredible mobile wren home was a Booneville, Missouri nest reported by Northcutt (1937). In that instance, a pair of wrens built a nest over the rear axle of a car which was driven 1210 miles during the nesting effort! Although these wrens were identified as House Wrens (*Troglodytes aedon*), we wonder if they too might not have been Carolina Wrens. In the published account of the nest, Northcutt refers "to one of the wrens as having "teakettled" to its mate. "Teakettle" is a common mnemonic device used to describe the call of the Carolina Wren and we would not at all associate it with the House Wren.

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**LEUCISTIC RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD
NEAR BYRAM, MISSISSIPPI**

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On 3 August 1987, I photographed a white Ruby-throated Hummingbird (*Archilochus colubris*) at a hummingbird feeder at the rural home of Ms. Ted Hudson, near Byram, Hinds County, Mississippi (Figure 1). The bird was not completely white, having dark feathers along the leading edge of each wing, on the flanks, and on the side of the head. It also did not have pink eyes and its feet and bill seemed normally pigmented. Thus, this was not an albino, but was what is referred to as a leucistic individual.

The feeder was guarded by an adult male Ruby-throated Hummingbird which chased off at least two normally plumaged female or immature Ruby-throats, but allowed the leucistic bird to feed. I observed several encounters between the white hummingbird and other Ruby-throats; sometimes the leucistic bird was the chaser, and at other times other Ruby-throats were.

Ms. Hudson indicated that the leucistic hummingbird had been coming to her feeders during late July and early August.

A.O. Gross (1965) compiled a list of records of albino birds in North America which included 304 species and 1847 individuals. Among these were records of 16 albino hummingbirds representing four species. No further details were provided, so we do not know how many of these were true albinos and how many might have been leucistic individuals such as this one.

Literature Cited

Gross, A.O. 1965. The incidence of albinism in North American birds. *Bird Banding* 36:67-71.



Figure 1. A leucistic Ruby-throated Hummingbird photographed near Byram, Mississippi, 3 August 1987.

KILLDEER WITH A BROOD OF FIVE CHICKS

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On 1 June 1986, we stopped as we were leaving the campus of the Gulf Coast Research Laboratory in Ocean Springs, Jackson County, Mississippi, to observe an adult Killdeer (*Charadrius vociferus*) as it ran toward our slow-moving van giving a distraction display. We then noticed a second adult Killdeer a few meters away and observed that it was brooding chicks. We stopped and watched from the van and within a few minutes five chicks emerged from beneath the adult and began foraging in the closely mowed grass. Both adults attended from a distance of 5-10m. After 20 minutes of observation we captured all five chicks in order to band and weigh them. The chicks were downy with four elongate downy rectrices, but no emergent primary feathers, similar to the 8- or 9-day-old chick described by Bunni (1959). The chicks weighed 15.6, 19.0, 19.6, 19.7, and 22.3 g. By comparison, a brood of 4 Killdeer chicks which we banded at hatching on 8 May 1980 in Starkville, Oktibbeha County, Mississippi, weighed 18.4, 19.6, 20.1, and 21.7 g at the age of nine days. We saw no more than two adult Killdeer in the area.

Suitable habitat for Killdeer is very limited at the GCRL campus, such that we would not have expected to find nesting Killdeer in the area. The chicks and adults were foraging on the only large (ca 30m X 100m) expanse of close-mowed lawn at GCRL. Most of the small campus is wooded and the borders of the marsh and shore that nearly surround the campus are lined with *Spartina* and other tall vegetation, providing almost no open access to water.

Although we were not able to make further observations, the fact that the chicks were approximately 8 or 9 days post-hatching suggests that their parents could have successfully fledged such a large brood. Schardien

(1981) found that Killdeer chicks in north Mississippi could fly by about 30-31 days post-hatching.

Killdeer are among those species normally thought of as determinate layers, and clutches of four eggs are the norm. Reports of smaller clutches are suspect because of the potential for lost eggs. Although clutches of five eggs have been mentioned, we have found no details describing specific nesting efforts involving five eggs, nor have we found reports of more than four chicks in a Killdeer brood. Miller (1949) reported one clutch of five eggs among 200 clutches examined and no additional information was provided. Other reports of five eggs seem to be second hand (e.g., Stone 1965:383; Townsend 1919). Stone mentions that in a nest in New Jersey found by Julian Potter on 20 April 1919, "only three of the five eggs hatched." Considering the relatively large size of Killdeer eggs, a clutch of five eggs may be difficult to effectively incubate during cool weather. Hatching of this brood of five may have been possible only because of the warm May temperatures in coastal Mississippi.

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