

THIS WEEK ON THE LLANO ESTACADO

Februsry 15-20, 2010



In the winter, last year's bird nests are easily spotted. This is the nest of a Bullock's Oriole, a bright orange, black, and white bird that will return in April.

House sparrow nests are big bulky wads of grass and other material.

Dove nests will have almost fallen apart by now. They only build a small platform of sticks (that can usually be seen through!)

House finch nests are small cups, usually in the forks

of smaller branches. Other urban birds — blue jays and cardinals, for example, hide their nests in hedges and thick evergreen shrubbery.

Very few birds use “nest boxes.” The only species that regularly does is the Bewick's Wren, and it needs to be in a neighborhood with established vegetation. Near San Jacinto Junior High School, there is a small breeding population of Carolina Wrens (common in Abilene and further east, but very unusual here in West Texas.) Quite a few people put up purple martin houses, but those need to already be up, for the “scouts” should arrive any day now.

TEACHERS AND STUDENTS CHALLENGE; Roam around the school yard and see how many nests can be found on school grounds. Do not pick up any nests — it is against the law!