

## Nest Reuse in Blue Jays

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A pair of Blue Jays (*Cyanocitta cristata*) built a typical stick nest next to the trunk in the crotch of the lowest limb of a black locust (*Robinia pseudoacacia*), 17.5 m tall, at Asheville, Buncombe County, North Carolina, in 1982. The jay nest was 6.9 m above ground, exposed, and was situated on the E side of the main trunk. The nest tree is located beside Merion Drive, a suburban road, at the edge of a yard and within deciduous woodlands dominated by tulip poplars (*Liriodendron tulipifera*) that average 25 m high. From 1983 to 1986 and in 1988, Blue Jays reused this nest at least once during each breeding season. The nest was somewhat bulkier after the first year, as the jays relined the nest and repaired the rim. Incubation occurred each year, and young fledged from the nest most years. In 1987, jays did not use the nest but built another 1.8 m directly above it, in the fork of another limb next to the trunk. In 1989 the latter nest was still intact but was not reused; the older nest was destroyed by inclement weather during the preceding winter.

In 1985 at Laurel Bloomery, Johnson County, Tennessee, also in the Blue Ridge, a pair of Blue Jays built a typical stick nest next to the trunk in the fork of the lowest limb of a white pine (*Pinus strobus*), 7.6 m tall. The nest was 2.7 m above ground, exposed, and was situated on the N side of the main trunk. The nest tree was in a small grove of pines planted in the backyard of a rural home surrounded by open mixed pine and deciduous woodlands and thickets. The nest was reused by Blue Jays at least once each season from 1986 to 1988 despite being preyed upon, which caused loss of complete clutches at least twice. Young fledged from the nest at least once. The nest, though still in good condition, was not reused in 1989.

Blue Jays may occasionally reuse nests of their own species (Forbush, 1927; Laskey, 1958; Weeks, 1984; Graber et al., 1987) and rarely those of other species, including squirrels (Hilton and Vessall, 1980; Graber et al., 1987; Ehrlich et al., 1988). At least one other avian species, the Sharp-shinned Hawk (*Accipiter striatus*), has reused a Blue Jay nest (Bent, 1937). Our report appears to be the first that documents reuse of a Blue Jay nest more than twice. Our jays were unmarked; consequently, we do not know whether the same jays were involved in reusing the nests at each locality. Dexter (1978) reported that a female Chimney Swift (*Chaetura pelagica*) used the same nest in a chimney for five consecutive years in Ohio, pairing with a different male each time.

The large, open-cup stick nests of Blue Jays may be very durable, as documented herein. Consequently, we believe Blue Jays may reuse their nests more frequently than the few reports suggest. Large, durable, open-cup stick nests of some other passerines, especially Northern Mockingbirds (*Mimus polyglottos*) and thrashers (*Toxostoma* spp.), may also be reused by the same or other species (Finch, 1982; McNair, 1984), but rarely beyond one year. The significance of nest reuse by Blue Jays remains to be determined. For a discussion on the costs and benefits of reusing nests, see Barclay (1988) and Briskie and Sealy (1988).

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#### North Carolina's First Shiny Cowbird (*Molothrus bonariensis*)

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On 16 November 1989 a single male Shiny Cowbird (*Molothrus bonariensis*) was observed near Aurora, Beaufort County, N. C. It was first discovered in a flock of approximately 45 Brown-headed Cowbirds (*Molothrus ater*) that were feeding on a roadside lawn near the entrance to Texas-Gulf Inc. It was relatively easy to pick out as the darkest bird in the flock. Using 8 x 32 binoculars, from a distance of forty feet, it was obvious the bird lacked a brown head (Figure 1). The bird was about the size of adjacent Brown-headed Cowbirds but appeared slimmer and slightly longer tailed. Its back was dark iridescent purple turning darker and less iridescent on the head. The wings and tail were glossy blue-green. Observations with a 20x telescope revealed a dark