

In one instance, when the birds located in a dead maple trunk set up for them within a few feet of our own house, the birds worked alternately at mining or excavating the hole in which the nest proper was placed. The length of time one would work varied from a few minutes to thirty. Then it would call a few times, and the mate would appear upon the scene and take a shift at the work. Toward the last of the mining operations the male performed that work and the female was busily engaged in collecting material for the nest. This consisted of fine shreds of cedar bark, other fibrous material, hair and a few small feathers, and the whole was well fitted together.

The excavation had been enlarged to satisfactory dimensions, which were as follows: entrance oval, one inch by one and one-eighth in diameter, leading inward an inch and one quarter on lower side, then downward six inches and enlarged to nearly four inches across for half the lower tunnel.

The next cavity measured about one and one-half inch in diameter and depth. All chinks and cracks within the excavation, if they lead to the outside, are tightly caulked with fibrous material of the same composition as the nest.

Before the female had completed the nest, the male began carrying fir balsam, from the trees surrounding their home, and besmeared an area about the entrance to the nest, fully four inches in diameter.

The Nuthatches we may consider our only birds which use artificial weapons for their protection. The entrance to the nests being always fortified by means of balsam, which seems to be applied for the purpose of keeping out the white-footed mouse, an omnivorous little rodent that would gladly avail himself of the opportunity of making a meal of the eggs or young birds, or drive away the old birds and use the nest for its own tenement.

The eggs of this species of Nuthatch are usually six in number, white, with brownish spots, chiefly near the large end. Some sets contain eggs nearly spherical in form.

The duty of incubation is performed by the female and covers a period of twelve days. The male occasionally feeds his mate during this period, adds more balsam about the entrance to the nest, and does general picket duty about home. When hatched, the