



A female bowerbird checks out a nest.



The bowerbird is building his bower, or nest. He picks up sticks and twigs in his beak. He stands them on end to make the walls. Next, he gathers moss to make a rug.

Then he decorates. He makes piles of flower petals on both sides of the nest. He stacks white shells between these piles. Then he uses small, black pebbles to make a path. He even adds a row of dead beetles. The shiny beetles sparkle in the sun. At last, the nest is ready. He waits.

All male bowerbirds decorate their nests. It takes months. Then they wait for female bowerbirds to come by.

Animal Builders

Soon a female bowerbird flies by. The male bird calls to her. He dances, bobs, and sings to her. The female looks at the shiny beetles. Then she flies off. Maybe she'll come back.

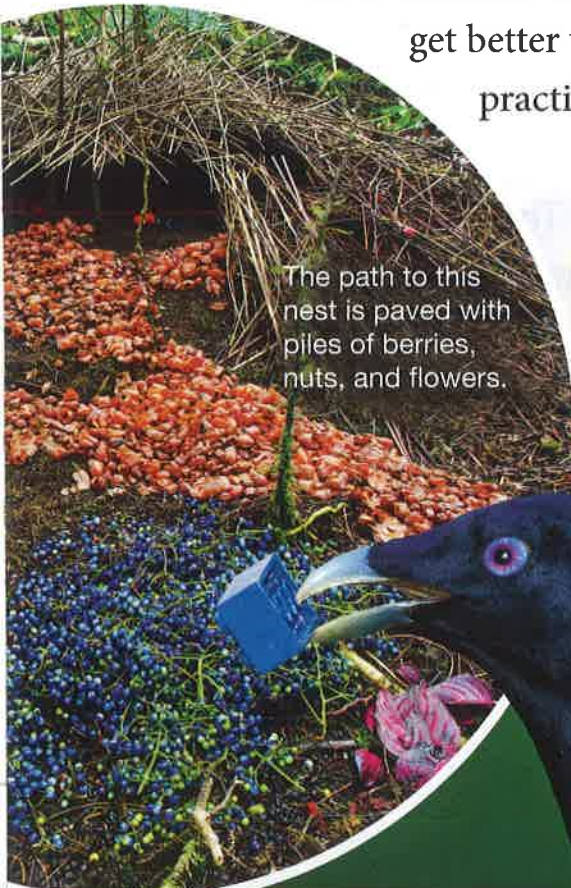
Bowerbirds are builders. For them, building is an **instinct**. It's a natural ability. Still, building a good bower takes practice.

Bowerbirds and many other animals are **architects**. They build nests, dens, and **burrows**. They make tunnels and traps.

Putting It Together

Animals build for different reasons. Some make homes for their young. Others build communities together. How do animals know how to do that? Many are guided by instinct. Some learn from their parents or other animals. All

get better with practice.




The path to this nest is paved with piles of berries, nuts, and flowers.

Bird Builders

Some of nature's best builders are birds. They build nests so they can have a safe place to lay their eggs. Then they raise their young there.

Building a nest is hard work. First the birds have to find supplies. Most supplies come from the environment. Twigs, grass, or leaves make good nests. Mud, spit, or spider webs glue these materials together.

Sometimes birds add odd items. Researchers tell about one osprey they studied. This large bird added three shirts, a bath towel, an arrow, and a garden rake to its nest.



A male bowerbird carries a blue block to decorate his nest.

Woven Wonder

The weaverbird uses leaves to build its nest. The leaves must be fresh and green. That way, the bird can bend them easily.

The weaverbird rips the leaves into strips. Then it ties a few of the strips around a twig. It holds its foot over this knot. Next, the weaverbird takes the loose ends in its beak. It weaves the leaves together.

Slowly, the bird forms a ring. The ring will become the entrance to its nest. Next, it weaves walls, a floor, and a ceiling. This woven nest won't fall apart.

Stitching a Nest

Other types of birds carefully build their nests, too. For example, the tailorbird sews its nest together. It uses its beak like a sewing needle.

This bird looks for leaves that are close together up in a tree. It punches holes into the edges of the leaves with its beak.

Next, it looks for "thread." Spider webs and plant fibers make good threads. The tailorbird pushes the thread into the holes in the leaves. It sews the leaves together into a nest. The nest is strong.

Over time, the green leaves this weaverbird used to build its nest turn brown.



Mobile Home

Bagworms build homes that move with them. A bagworm is a kind of caterpillar.

To build its home, the worm cuts thorns and twigs into small pieces. It then makes silk to glue the pieces together into a tube. The bagworm wriggles inside the tube. Only its head sticks out.

Soon it's time for the bagworm to turn into a moth. It tucks its head inside and seals the top of the tube.

The tube helps **camouflage** the worm. Now it looks just like a stick. Predators ignore it. Weeks pass. Then a newly formed moth breaks free from the tube and flies away.



The bagworm caterpillar builds a case to hide from predators.

In the Bubble

A parrotfish also makes something to hide in. Every night, it squirts out sticky slime from a special gland. The slime forms a bubble.

The bubble grows bigger and bigger. It gets big enough for the fish to fit inside it. From the outside, predators cannot smell the fish. It is safe while it sleeps. In the morning, the fish pops the bubble and swims away.

This parrotfish makes a bubble to hide its smell from predators.





Weaver ants work as a team to build their nest.

Working as a Team

Some animals work together when they build. To make a nest, several worker ants line up. Each one holds the edge of a leaf in its jaws. They hold the opposite leaf edge with their feet. Then the ants pull the leaves together.

Other workers bring larvae from the old nest. Ant larvae are young ants. They look like worms.

Each worker holds one larva in its jaws. Then it taps the larva with its antennae. The larva oozes a thin string of silk. The silk glues the leaves together. It takes the ants more than a week to build one nest.

Digging Deep

Some animals build by digging. That's what meerkats do.

Meerkats have strong paws and sharp claws. Still, they dig carefully in sandy soil. A tunnel in the sand could cave in.

To avoid cave-ins, the meerkats dig where roots hold the soil together. Then they line their tunnels with mud, leaves, or fur. The lining helps make the tunnels sturdy.

Busy Builders

Perhaps the best animal builders are beavers. They have strong teeth. Their powerful jaws strip bark off trees. They nibble away at the tree trunk. Timber! The tree topples over.

Beavers cut trees into smaller pieces. Then they usually build a dam. A dam is like a wall across a stream. Beavers pile up sticks, rocks, and mud to make the wall. Water trapped behind the dam makes a pond.

Beavers also make a lodge in the pond. The lodge is a domed home where beavers live with their family. Its entrance and exit are hidden under the water.



This beaver uses its sharp teeth to cut down an oak tree.

Better Builders

Animals are amazing architects. They make homes so they can survive. They are guided by instinct, and they get better with practice.

Wordwise

architect: a designer of a building

burrow: a hole dug in the ground by an animal that the animal lives in

camouflage: to use colors and marks to blend into the surroundings

instinct: a behavior an animal is born with



Meerkats make their homes underground.



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