

And God Created..... Birds Of A Feather

“Doth the hawk fly by thy wisdom, and stretch her wings toward the south? Doth the eagle mount up at thy command, and make her nest on high? She dwelleth and abideth on the rock, upon the crag of the rock, and the strong place. From thence she seeketh the prey, and her eyes behold afar off. Her young ones also suck up blood: and where the slain are, there is she.” Job 39:26-30

As part of the lesson for Job, on how things came into being, God chose to include this passage on the “eagle.” This teaching includes a little about the nesting capability that God designed this bird with. When we look at the birds we can witness many things that should lead to a renewed awe and reverence for God the Creator. Let’s look at just a few examples of what God has designed for these creatures and learn to glorify God as our Creator as well.

The nest building ability of birds has marveled mankind for thousands of years. The methods, materials, and location that they use to construct their nest is just about as varied as the birds themselves. The nest has one basic purpose, that of giving a place for the young to be raised. These structures can be huge and reused and rebuild year after year as in the case of the Eagles, Hawks, and most other raptors, or they can be small and inconspicuous and just barely able to hold a single egg as in the case of the Lessor Tree Swift. The materials for the nests go from sticks, rocks and mud all the way to little other than the birds own saliva and feathers. It may include plant materials, manmade objects, and even spider silk to help in the construction.

The Tailorbird, a type of warbler found in Southeast Asia, use their skills as sewers to construct their nest. Using a single leaf or two adjoining leaves they begin by using spider silk to wrap around the leaf to pull the sides together then they punch holes in the leaf margin using their beaks. Then finding plant stems, bark fibers, cottony seed fibers or spider silk, they sew the “threads” through the holes and tease ends into a ball or crimp them so the two sides are “riveted” together rather than being “knotted” as some have reported. These nests are almost impossible to find as they hang in the trees looking just like other leaves. Amazing how these animals learned how to do that by “time and chance” isn’t it?

The Rufous Ovenbird of South America constructs a strong complex two chambered mud nest on tree stumps and other projections. These structures about the size of a football have a domed entrance which leads through a chamber around to the inner lined chamber. The Lesser Tree Swift nest is so small that the egg itself just barely fits inside. The mother and the baby after hatching must stand on the branch for support and the baby does just fine after just a few hours.

The nest of many of the Wren family of birds are dome shaped and are insulated with as many as 2000 feathers from the mothers body. They incorporate many very soft materials that allow the nest to expand as the brood inside the cavity grow. This flexibility of the nest lets some of the natives of the Africa country where they live, to use them as purses. The Edible-nest Swiftlets build their nests with nothing other than their own saliva which hardens into a crusty thin nest. These nests are collected and used for a tradition Chinese food “Bird’s Nest soup.”

Indeed as the psalmists has noted "...the sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself where she may lay her young...,"Psa. 84:3. We should look to the birds and see the incredible intelligence God has shown as HE created the things around us.

And God Created.....One Honey of a Bird

Among the amazing animals God created is one that has an understanding about how to use humans and other animals to get to their favorite meal. The animal we are going to talk about is a bird, the Honeyguide of Africa. They have the amazing ability to get food by leading humans and other animals to bee hives where the hive is opened and then the bird has supper. Let's look at some of the amazing details of the Honeyguide.

The Honeyguide belongs to the Family of birds called the Indicatoridae which was named for the birds ability to indicate where a bee hive can be found. The best know of this family is the Genus Indicator, in which the Honeyguide bird belongs. The native tribesman know that if they listen to, and follow these birds for miles into the bush, they will find a rich supply of rich honey.

The Honeyguide can memorize where each beehive can be found over a huge area of the bush. When they need food, the birds will find a human to lead to the food. By giving loud attention-demanding chattering and flitting nervously around people the bird will signal the need for the human to follow. The bird will then fly a little ahead and call loudly, when the human catches up, the bird flies on. This process will continue maybe for many miles, until the bird reaches where the hive is, then the bird will change it's call and sit in one place near the hive. Once the tribesman have opened the hive and gotten their honey, the bird will then move in and eat the grubs as well as the bees wax of the honeycomb they have also been known to eat candle wax. The Honeyguide will also try the same type of behavior with an mammal called the Honey Badger. There have been some speculation about whether the Honey Badger follows because it knows food will be found by following the bird, or whether the bird follows the badger when it finds a beehive.

The Honeyguide have a very thick skin that may protect it from the stings of the angry bees after the hive has been raided. These birds also have a very unique breeding behavior this depends upon other birds, but preferring a bird called the bee-eater, to feed and raise the honeyguide's young.

This behavior is called "brood parasites." The mother honeyguide will find a nest of one of several species of other birds. She will then enter the nest and lay a single egg. The honeyguide may also "pip" the host nest egg(s). This is pecking a small hole in the shell which slows down or stops development of the host egg. If any of the host nest eggs develops and hatches the baby honeyguide will peck it's nestmates with an specially sharp curved beak. This repeating pecking will eventually cause the death of the host mothers chicks. The host mother will then raise the baby honeyguide which will even produce calls that mimic the call of several bee-eater baby chicks, this appears to be a strong stimulus for the host mother to bring extra food for the baby which then grows at a very rapid rate.

Indeed God has created some amazing animals to share this planet we call earth, and the Honeyguide is one of the best examples. How could this bird learn that attracting humans or honeybadgers could it get food if God did not create this behavior in the first bird is very hard to imagine. Yet it appears that many people choose not to believe what has been created around them.