

Animal Architects

Some time ago I received a small parcel from a friend of mine in Nepal. Inside the box I found a note which read: "I bet you don't know what this is." Greatly intrigued, I lifted off the top layer of wrapping paper, and underneath I found what appeared to be two large leaves which had been rather inexpertly sewn together.

My friend would have lost his bet. As soon as I saw the large and rather amateur stitches. I knew what it was; the nest of a tailor-bird, a thing I had always wanted to see. The two leaves were about six inches (15 cm) long, shaped rather like laurel leaves and only the edges had been sewn together, so that it formed a sort of pointed bag. Inside the bag was a neat nest of grass and moss, and inside that were two small eggs. The tailor bird was quite small but with rather long beak. This is its needle. Having found the two leaves it likes, hanging close together, it then proceeds to sew them together, using fine cotton as thread. The curious thing about it is not so much that the tailor-bird stitches the leaves together as that nobody seems to know where he finds the cotton material with which to do sewing. Some experts insist that he weaves it himself; others, that he has some source of supply that has never been discovered. As I say, the stitches were rather large and inartistic, but then how many people could make a success of sewing up two leaves, using only a beak as a needle?

Architecture in the animal world differs a great deal. Some animals, of course, have only the haziest idea of constructing a suitable dwelling, while others produce most complicated and delightful homes. It is strange that even among closely related animals there should be such a wide variety of taste in the style, situation and size of the home and the choice of materials used in its construction.

Answer these questions.

1. What did the writer receive from his friend in Nepal?
2. Why did the writer say that his friend "would have lost his bet"?
3. Describe in your words what a tailor-bird nest look like
4. Do you think the tailor-bird has been suitably named? Why?
5. What is the curious thing about the tailor-bird that still puzzles people?

Which of the following statements is true?

- A. Animals differ in the types of homes they build and the materials they use.
- B. Most animals do not build their homes because they are not architects.
- C. Animals with similar characteristics use the same materials for their homes.
- D. Animals have no taste for delightful homes.

Writing

Write an account of a personal experience in which you felt embarrassed.

Describe **one** of the following:

- I. The first time I attended a party.
- II. The first time I owned a bicycle.

Write a story on any **one** of the following:

- a. The last laugh
- b. A wish come true
- c. Mistaken Identity