

The Nest in the Stovepipe

I've been painting a house that's being remodeled. There was a stove exhaust pipe on the counter today where the carpenter had placed it. I painted near it and noticed vegetation inside the pipe. I picked up the pipe and looked inside. There was

a nest inside the pipe, so I carefully removed it. The nest was daintily appointed with a halo of delicate mustard plant seeds and stems. Carefully-chosen materials were skillfully



stitched together and partially lined with downy cottonwood seed fluff, surely the work of fairies.

My guess is that it is a wren nest. They spend a lot of time in holes and under piles of things like little feathered troglodytes (cave dwellers for those of you not sure just what that word means and indeed the wren family is named Troglodytidae), so nesting inside a pipe would be an appropriate choice. I marveled at not only the construction of the nest but the artistry involved in the arrangement of the mustard plant halo. Wrens are predominantly insectivores so the wren hadn't placed the mustard plants there for anything other than its own artistic enjoyment or perhaps as a precaution against a congested chest where it could use it for a mustard plaster.

I felt sad that remodeling waits for no wren and worried that some poor little egg-filled Mrs. Wren was hastily putting together a shabby cup to lay her eggs. But then I read that male wrens build the nests, and they build a lot of them all around the neighborhood. So perhaps this nest was built by a hopeful, artsy playboy rather than a heavily gravid Mrs Wren. No matter who built it, it was very artfully done.