

EMPTY NESTS DO NOT AFFECT FEMALE MATE CHOICE OR MATERNAL
INVESTMENT IN HOUSE WRENS

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Abstract. House Wrens (*Troglodytes aedon*) remove eggs from the nests of other birds, including conspecifics and heterospecifics and both cup and cavity nests. Egg removal by males before females arrive increases the number of empty nests in and around a male House Wren's territory, and females might use this trait in mate choice. We manipulated the presence of empty nests in House Wren territories prior to female settlement by adding artificial nests with or without plastic eggs. We used the timing of female settlement as an index of mate preference. Our manipulation had no effect on the timing of female settlement or on variables related to maternal investment such as clutch size, egg volume, or provisioning effort. Differential investment in offspring was based on the timing of a reproductive attempt, which was unrelated to the experimental manipulation.