

Structure, Dimensions and Building Materials of the Nests of the Rose-Coloured Starling *Sturnus roseus* (Linnaeus, 1758)(Aves: Passeriformes) from South-East Bulgaria

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Abstract: Eighty-one nests of rose-coloured starlings from four quarries in South-East Bulgaria contain two distinct structural and functional parts of nests: the actual nest plus the nest entryway. In the actual nest, the starling pair raises its young, while the nest entryway narrows the stone crevice diameter to the necessary diameter and creates a pathway made of twigs across the cracks and sharp edges from stones in the tunnel. Rose-coloured starlings do not appear to be particular about the size of the nesting chamber and the tunnel entrance. The colonies have significant differences in the average weight and dimensions of nests. The predominant plants used to construct nests are grasses (Poaceae) with 27 species in 76 nests (93.8 %, n=81). The nest entryway, however, is built of dry twigs of larger forb species or herbaceous parts of trees and shrubs, where composite plants (Asteraceae) dominate with twelve species from fifty nests (61.7 %, n=81). The large variety of plant species used indicates that the starlings do not select for specific species, but choose a particular type of plant material. Rose-coloured starlings use non-plant materials for their nests as well, but their use is not obligatory.

Key words: Rose-coloured starling, *Sturnus roseus*, nest structure, nest composition, Bulgaria