

As I was cleaning the kitchen sink yesterday, I saw something move outside. There is a red leaved tree right outside the kitchen window, so the movement could have been one of the leaves. I looked carefully, and through the shadows, the lines of lights, and the leaves that were rising and falling(1), I saw a bird. It was hopping about on a branch, and looking at me. In its mouth was a white feather, which contrasted with its own dark brown color. "It's nesting," I thought to myself. All of the birds in my back garden are doing the same thing. They are busy, and noisy, and aggressive at the moment; they have a very important job to do, and a short time in which to do it. The eggs will be coming soon, and then the chicks, so their home has to be ready, and just right. Last year, I noticed another bird building a nest in the bird house that is also just outside of the kitchen. It was trying to get into the bird house, through the small, round hole. However, in its mouth were some long pieces of dry grass. It tried and tried, but didn't realize that it had to turn its head sideways(2) in order to get in. It finally just forced its way in, bending the grass. Most birds build new nests each year. However, eagles will often reuse a nest for many years. Incredibly, there are some birds, like the cuckoo, don't rear their own young(3). They steal an egg from another bird's nest, quickly lay an egg there, and leave. The other bird raises the chick, thinking that it is one of its family. There is a lot more going on in the bird world than we realize.

1. 'Rising and falling' describes the movement of the leaves in the wind; it is an up and down movement. We talk about leaves falling in the autumn, which means that they fall to the ground. However, rising and falling is a phrase in which both verbs go together.

a. I saw the balloon rise and fall as the wind took it into the sky.

b. His chest was rising and falling while he slept.

2. 'Sideways' is a perspective, movement, or position that is not straight on; it is when the sides face forward.

a. It's so funny to watch the crabs walk sideways.

b. He looked at me sideways, out of the corner of his eye, without turning his head.

3. 'To rear their young.' Here we have the verb 'to rear' which we use when talking about animals raising their children. 'Their young' is the noun that describes the babies, as we do not use the word 'children' with animals.

a. Polar bears rear their young until they are fully independent.

b. Some birds rear their young only until they learn to fly, and then they leave them.