ROCK SPARROW

BY SHARON BEALS

COLLECTION DESCRIPTION

Contemporary
United States
Common Rock Sparrow
Petronia petronia

Collected from Dalai Nor, Heilungkiang Province, China, 1935
The California Academy of Sciences

This loose arrangement of grass, fur, and feathers was built by a pair of Common Rock Sparrows, a species found in the Canary Islands, Europe, Asia, the Middle East, and Africa. They belong to the family of Old World Sparrows, seedeaters that share an adaptation unique among granivores. They are equipped with tongues toughened with a stiff skeletal structure and horny palates, which work like miniature nutcrackers to crush seeds. These sturdy bills grow longer during breeding season to capture insects. They nest in crevices in rocks, trees, animal dens, and burrows made by other birds, and when close to humans, abandoned or even inhabited buildings.

The nests were photographed in four science collections: The California Academy of Sciences, The Western Foundation of Vertebrate Zoology, The Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, the Cornell Museum of Vertebrates, and the American Museum of Natural History.
Subject Details:
Rock Sparrow
Petronia petronia brevirostris
The California Academy of Sciences
Nest CAS 10003
Asia;China; Heilungkiang Province; Dalai Nor
18 May 1935
Eggs10004
Asia; China; Heilungkiang Prov.; Dalai Nor
29 May 1935

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