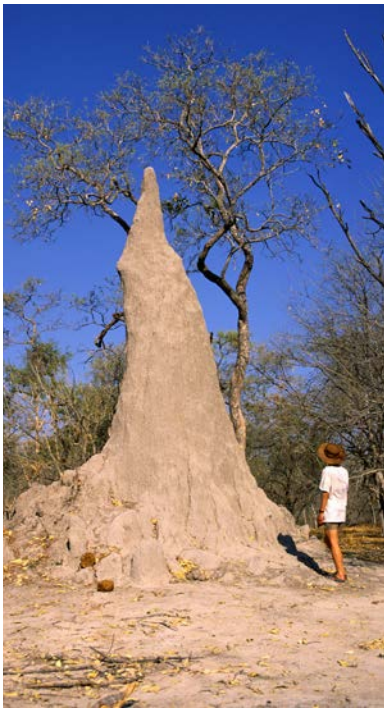

LEVELED BOOK • N
What Built This?
MULTI LEVEL H•K•N
Written by Marcie Aboff
www.readinga-z.com

What Built This?



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Focus Question

What are some reasons animals build?

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Animal Builders

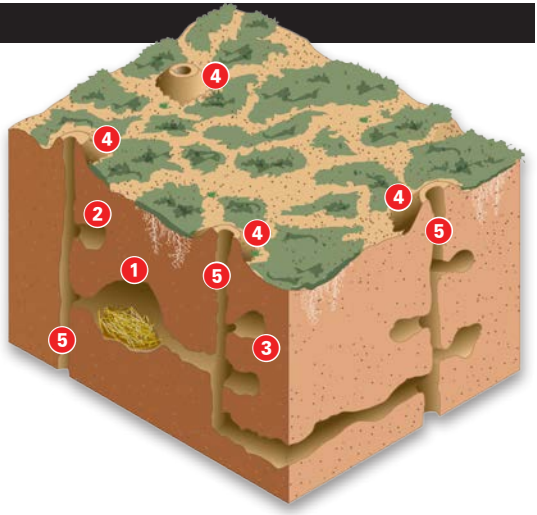
Picture a home big enough to hold four hundred or a home made of nothing but paper. How about an underground tunnel with rooms to eat and sleep in?

These are real, amazing structures, but the **builders** aren't human. Many animals build homes for themselves or their young. Some animals build to protect themselves or to catch **prey**. Some build to attract a mate.

A bowerbird spruces up his bower with a parrot feather—and blue bottle caps. To woo females, the male birds first build the bower, then decorate it!

1. bedroom
2. turnaround burrow
3. food storage
4. entrance mounds
5. air vents

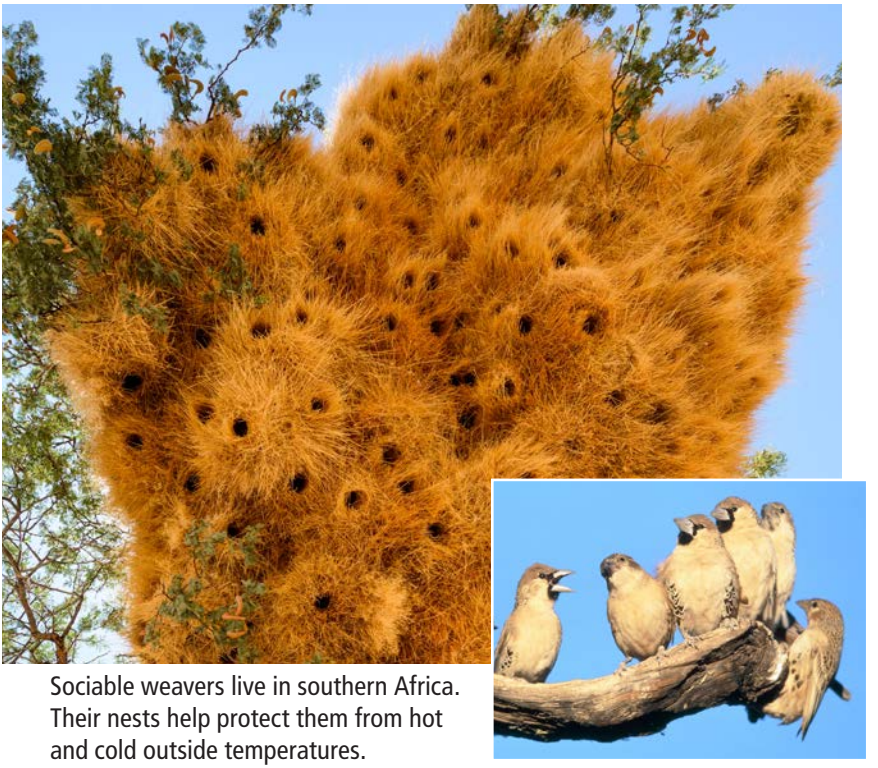
The largest known prairie dog town, in Texas, covered 25,000 square miles (65,000 sq km). It was home to as many as 400 million prairie dogs!



Prairie Dog Towns

Prairie dogs are only found in North America.

Prairie dog **burrows** are like real towns. Their maze of underground tunnels has different rooms for sleeping, eating, and even going to the bathroom! Family groups stay together in separate areas or "neighborhoods" that include many entrances. Prairie dogs spend a lot of time building and fixing their homes.



Sociable weavers live in southern Africa. Their nests help protect them from hot and cold outside temperatures.

Sociable Weaver Bird Nests

The more the merrier for these friendly birds. They build the biggest nests of any birds—their nests can hold up to four hundred birds. They use large sticks and dry grass for the nest's roof and sides. Inside, separate living areas are lined with softer grasses and fibers.

Termite Mounds

A termite mound stands tall in western Africa.

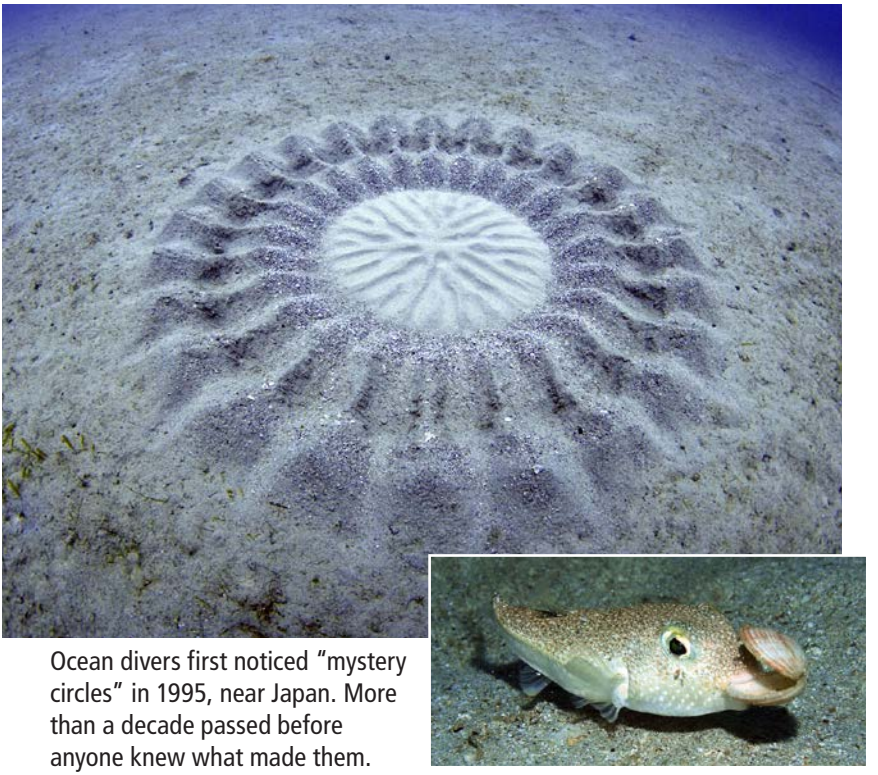
Tiny termites can build structures that are taller than three people standing on top of each other! They build their mounds from mud, chewed wood, and **saliva**. The walls have tiny holes for fresh air. The termite mounds even have a chimney and a **cellar**. The termites build many storage areas for wood, their main food source.

One Queen, 165 Million Eggs!

The king and queen termite live in a special chamber. The queen can produce thousands of eggs per day and can live up to age forty-five. Worker termites carry her young to a nursery room where they are fed until they are adults.

Pufferfish Circles

These male fish create detailed sand art to attract females. They flap their fins on the seafloor to form a large round pattern. Then, they decorate the outer part of the circle with shells. If a female likes the circle, she lays her eggs in the middle.



Ocean divers first noticed "mystery circles" in 1995, near Japan. More than a decade passed before anyone knew what made them.

A trapdoor spider darts from its mossy hiding place.

Spider Trapdoors

These sly spiders dig an underground tunnel, then make a trapdoor in the tunnel to catch prey. They cover the trapdoor with their **silk**, and cover that with dirt. When they hear prey passing above them, they open the door and the prey falls through. The door also protects the spiders from animals that hunt them.

Underground Ant City

Millions of ants work together to build underground ant cities. These giant cities have dirt "highways" and main paths that connect rooms. Side roads lead to gardens and trash pits. Tunnels allow air to flow. These tiny ants lift many times their own weight to build their huge cities.

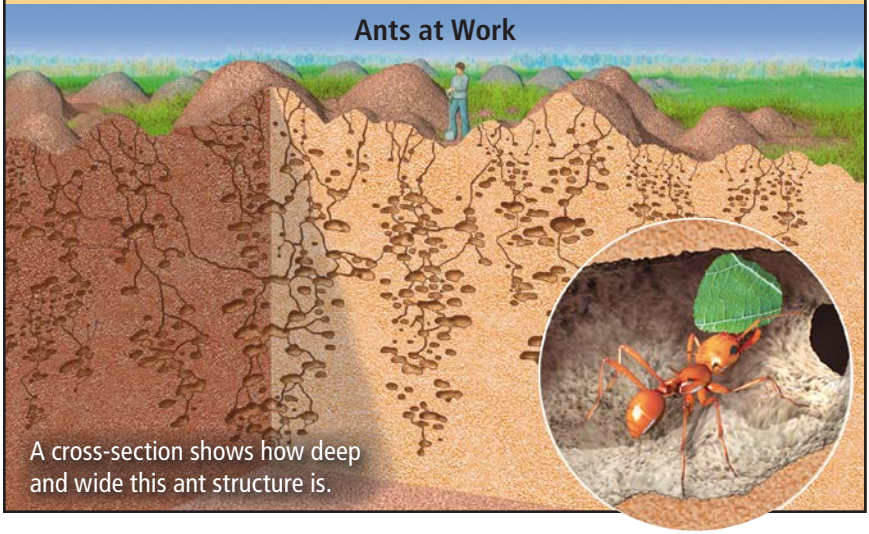
After humans, leafcutter ants (inset) form the largest communities of any animal on Earth.

Researchers stand above and beside a leafcutter city in Brazil.

Little Ants, Big City

Researchers found a huge, empty underground city in Brazil, once the home of leafcutter ants. In order to build their home, each insect would have carried loads of earth more than half a mile (0.8 km)—over and over. In total, the ants moved around 45 tons (40 mt) of soil to create their network of tunnels.

Ants at Work



A cross-section shows how deep and wide this ant structure is.

Paper wasp nests come in a variety of shapes and styles.

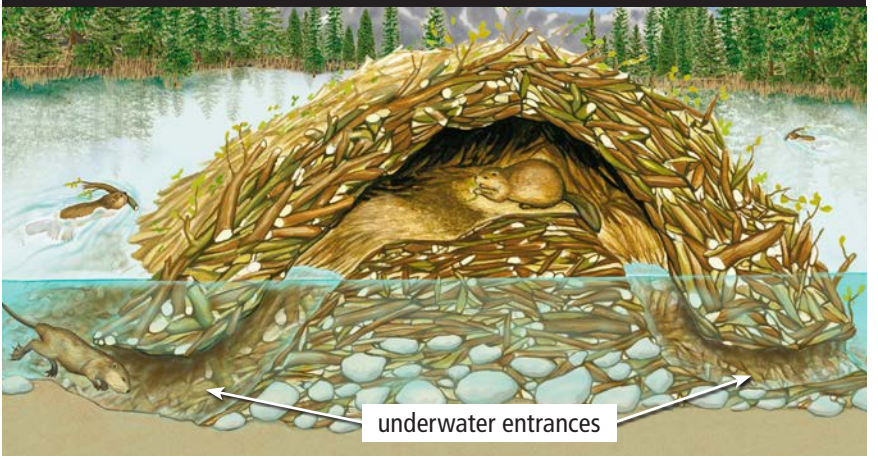
Paper Wasp Nests

Paper wasps gather bits of wood and plants. They chew them into a **pulp**, then spit out the pulp to make a soft nest. The nest is made up of **cells** that look like an egg carton. Wasp eggs develop in the cells. As the wasps grow in number, the nest gets bigger.

Crayfish Chimneys

In order to reach water, some crayfish burrow into moist soil, pushing up wet dirt. The raised soil looks like a small chimney. Since the center of the chimney is empty, other animals, such as snakes, sometimes hide there.

Crayfish (also known as crawfish) breathe with gills. Gills must remain wet, which is why crayfish burrow down in search of water.



Beavers enter their dens by swimming into them, but their living space is built above the water level. This keeps the beaver family high and dry!

Beaver Dams and Dens

If you are "busy as a beaver," you are very busy. Beavers are master builders. They gather sticks and mud to build their dams. The dams create ponds. Beavers build their homes, called *dens*, on the ponds. The ponds protect beavers from **predators**. They also make it easier for beavers to store food during the winter.

Caddisfly Larvae Cocoons

These little larvae use their silk to make cocoons. The larvae add sand, small sticks, even shells to their cocoons to make beautiful artlike cases.

Watch Them Build

Animals build great things. They do not need tools to build. They use their bodies, natural skills, and the Earth's resources to build their structures. Animals are amazing!

A black-tailed prairie dog looks out of its burrow.

Glossary

builders *(n.)* those who make or construct something from parts (p. 4)

burrows *(n.)* holes dug in the ground by animals for use as a home (p. 5)

cellar *(n.)* an underground room that is sometimes used for food storage (p. 7)

cells *(n.)* six-sided cups that form honeycomb, hives, or insect nests (p. 12)

predators *(n.)* animals that hunt and eat other animals to survive (p. 14)

prey *(n.)* an animal that is hunted and eaten by a predator (p. 4)

pulp *(n.)* a mass of soft, wet material (p. 12)

saliva *(n.)* a liquid in the mouth that mixes with food to help begin digestion; spit (p. 7)

silk *(n.)* strong threads made by a spider or silkworm (p. 9)

Words to Know

builders
burrows
cellar
cells
predators
prey
pulp
saliva
silk

Front cover: A bird called the brown gardener builds a bower, then decorates it!

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Level N Leveled Book

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Correlation

LEVEL N	
Fountas & Pinnell	M
Reading Recovery	20
DRA	28

What Built This?

A Reading A–Z Level N Leveled Book
Word Count: 547

Connections

Writing and Art

Choose one of the animals from this book. Draw a picture of the animal and what it builds. Label your picture using facts and information from this book.

Science

Choose two of the animals from this book. Draw a Venn diagram comparing what these two animals build, listing at least five similarities and differences.