

# House Wren

## *Troglodytes aedon*

The most widely distributed of our resident wrens, House Wrens were recorded within 731 priority blocks during the Atlas Project (95.7% of the statewide total). They were widespread in most portions of the state with records from 100% of the Glaciated Plateau and Till Plain regional blocks and were unrecorded in single blocks in the Lake Plain and Illinoian Till Plain regions. In the Unglaciated Plateau region, breeding wrens became somewhat locally distributed along the Ohio River between eastern Adams and western Washington counties. None were found in the Lawrence County priority blocks, although House Wrens certainly breed within this county. Despite this local scarcity, they were found in 85.4% of the region's priority blocks.

The relative abundance of breeding House Wrens on Ohio Breeding Bird Surveys exhibits a fairly similar pattern. Breeding wrens are most numerous in the Glaciated Plateau and Illinoian Till Plain regions, with slightly lower numbers in the Lake Plain and Till Plain regions. The fewest wrens were found in the Unglaciated Plateau, while the largest numbers were recorded from the Glaciated Plateau region.

This widespread distribution in Ohio reflects the House Wren's adaptability in the selection of its breeding habitats. They are primarily occupants of wooded edge habitats, young disturbed woodlots, and openings within mature forests, habitats that are widely available within the state. Shrub/sapling stage fields, orchards, parks, and cemeteries are also regularly inhabited by this species. Narrow wooded corridors along fencerows and streams are as acceptable for breeding pairs as young woodlots less than 20 acres in size and the brushy margins of large woodlands. However, they normally avoid the interiors of undisturbed mature forests. These wrens tend to be most numerous near water, but will also occupy dry upland habitats. House Wrens are not restricted to natural habitats and are regularly found in the vicinity of rural and urban residences, especially where ornamental shrubbery and shade trees are readily available.

During the 20th century, House Wrens have generally been widely distributed residents in Ohio. Their numbers were apparently declining during the early 1900s (Jones 1903), although their statewide distribution was poorly described during those years. In the mid-1930s, Hicks (1935) cited breeding records from every county, noting they were fairly common to abundant across Ohio. He claimed they were less numerous in the southern quarter of the state where their numbers had reportedly declined. On the unglaciated Allegheny Plateau, Hicks (1937) stated they were rare to uncommon north through Hocking, Athens, and Washington counties, least numerous in Adams and Lawrence counties, but common to abundant elsewhere. Their numbers have generally increased during subsequent decades, particularly in the southern counties. This trend was evident on Breeding Bird Surveys in Ohio and throughout the Great Lakes Region between 1965 and 1979 (Robbins, C. S., et al. 1986).

Suitable nest sites are the most essential component of a House Wren's territory. Near residences, this species eagerly adapts to bird houses provided specifically for wrens or for other species of birds. They have also nested in mailboxes as well as

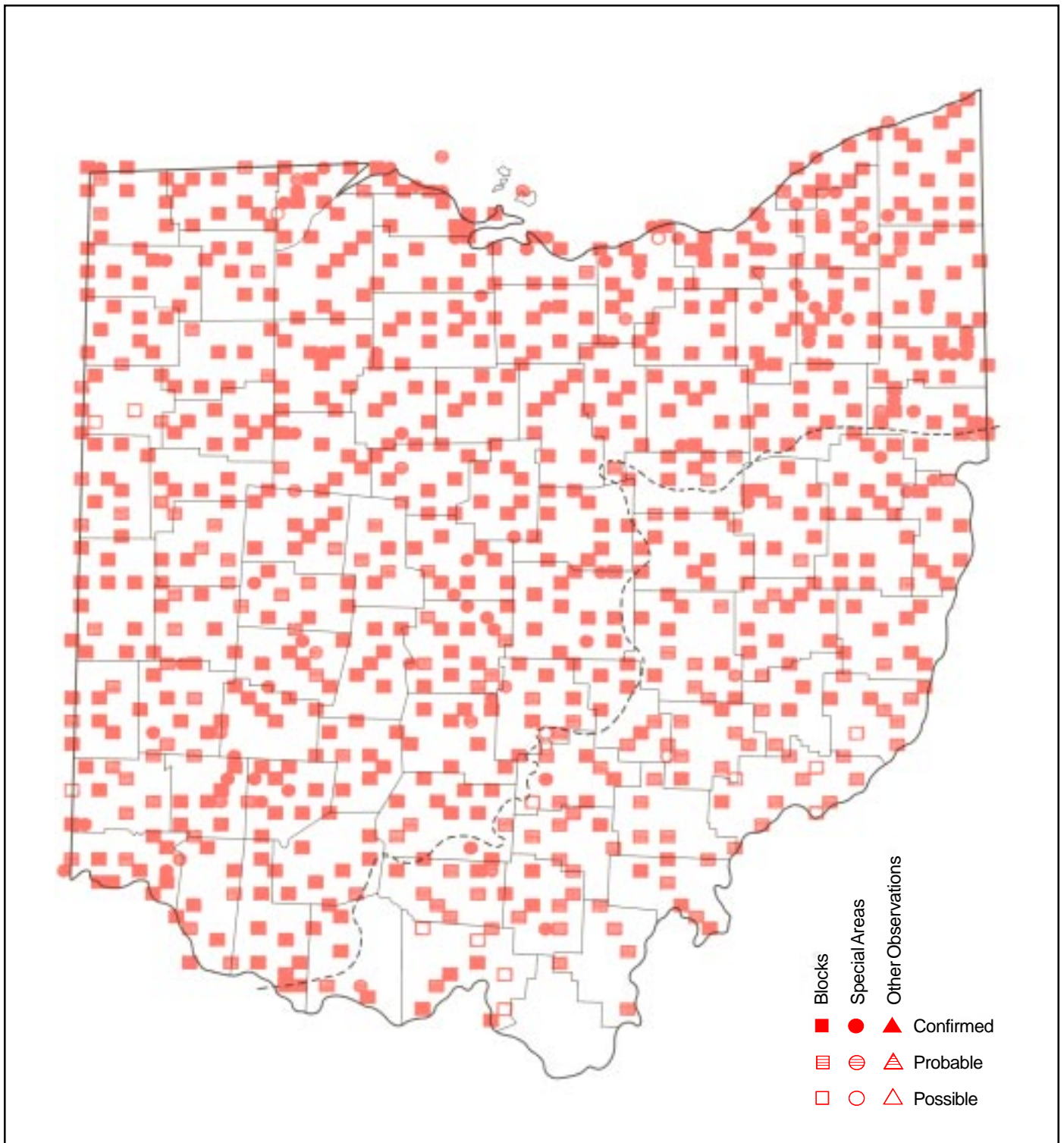


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various objects in undisturbed corners of outbuildings (Campbell 1968, Peck and James 1987). Away from residences, House Wrens normally nest in natural cavities or abandoned woodpecker holes. These nests are normally placed at heights of 4–12 feet, but some may be as high as 75 feet (Peck and James 1987). Male House Wrens regularly build several nests within their territory, although they utilize only one of them to raise their broods.

House Wrens normally raise two broods each summer (Williams 1950). Nest construction has been noted during the last week of April but is most prevalent during May. The first clutches are normally laid in May and these young fledge during June, some as early as June 2 (Trautman 1940). Nest construction for the second brood may commence in late June and early July. Second clutches are normally produced during July, and these young fledge in August (Williams 1950). A few late broods have fledged during the first half of September (Peterjohn 1989a).

Breeding House Wrens proved to be relatively easy to confirm during the Atlas Project. Of 578 confirmed records in priority blocks (79.1% of all records), the "30" code was utilized in 264 blocks, primarily in the Till Plain, Glaciated Plateau, and Lake Plain regions (100, 53, and 52 blocks respectively). Active nests were discovered in 235 blocks, adults carrying food for young were observed in 46 blocks, and recently fledged young were noted in 15 blocks. Most of the remaining records pertained to probable breeders, primarily territorial males.



### Analysis of Block Data by Physiographic Region

Physiographic Region	Total Blocks Surveyed	Blocks with Data	% with Data	Regional % for Ohio	Ave. # Individ per BBS Route (1982–1987)
Lake Plain	95	94	99.0	12.9	10.0
Till Plain	271	271	100.0	37.1	8.4
Ill. Till Plain	46	45	97.8	6.2	12.7
Glaciated Plateau	140	140	100.0	19.2	13.6
Unglaciated Plateau	212	181	85.4	24.8	6.0

### Summary of Breeding Status

No. of Blocks in Which Species Recorded		
<b>Total</b>	<b>731</b>	<b>95.7%</b>
Confirmed	578	79.1%
Probable	141	19.3%
Possible	12	1.6%