

I wish I was better at identifying ducks. There have been some rare ducks coming through where I live. So last summer, my wife and I were going to do a viewing of this house with a realtor. I'm an avid bird watcher, and my wife loves hiking. We wanted a place to pursue our hobbies so before the viewing we went to check out the nearby parks and decide if we liked the location. At the park, I noticed a birdhouse far out in the woods. It was the same shade as the trees, a deep forest green, unnoticeable unless you were looking directly at it. I came close, hoping to see a bird, but there was no nest inside. It was a nice park, though. We walked a short trail to the lake, and at the end of the trail was a bench, so we sat for a bit. My wife pointed out an object out in the lake. I took out my binoculars, and it was another green birdhouse, mounted on a stick in the water. As we headed back, it was like once I started seeing them I couldn't stop noticing them, all that same green shade. But none of them had nests. None had birds. In fact, I hadn't seen a single bird in the park. I wanted to look around more with my binoculars, but my wife said we needed to get on the road to make our showing in time. We stopped at a gas station to swap drivers. I got out and stood by the pump, and across the street was another green birdhouse. Such an odd place for one. A bird, the first I'd seen all day, landed at the lip of it. There was movement inside, and I thought it might have babies. Then something reached out carefully, curling around the bird like tangled fingers, and dragged it into the darkness. I crossed to look closer, but when I peered inside the birdhouse, it was empty. I went back to the car, baffled, and my wife drove. I fell asleep in the passenger seat. I woke to my wife shaking me gently, saying we had arrived. I got out of the car and she was chatting with the estate agent. I looked past them. What I saw made me stop in my tracks. Up the driveway was a house, large open windows facing the front and a modern build to it. It was almost exactly like the other houses in the row. There was only one notable difference. This one was painted a deep, forest green.