

A siege of herons, a skein of geese (in flight), a gaggle of geese (on water), a spring of teal, a badling or a paddling of ducks (on water), a cast of hawks, a rafter of turkeys, an ostentation of peacocks, a covey of partridges, a nye or a bouquet of pheasants, a mustering of storks, a deceit of lapwings, a congregation of plovers, a fall of woodcock, a walk or a wisp of snipe, a pitying of turtledoves, a dule of doves (from the French deuil = mourning), a parliament of owls, a descent of woodpeckers, an exaltation of larks, a flight of swallows, a tidings of magpies, an unkindness of ravens, a murder of crows, a building of rooks, a watch of nightingales, a murmuration of starlings, a charm of finches, a host of sparrows---all of which together would certainly form a dissimulation of birds.

Lipton adds two more examples in his chapter on the more modern formations: a gulp of cormorants and a stand of flamingoes. But this is a game we can all play! I'll start by contributing nine more: a plunge of gannets, a sneeze of flycatchers, a blaze of tanagers, a storm of snow buntings, a quagmire of bitterns, a dump of gulls, a rain of migrants, a complaint of catbirds, and a confusion of warblers. Now let us have your contributions.

J.T.L.

MARbled MURRELET NEST FOUND

On August 8, 1974, a tree trimmer at Big Basin State Park, Santa Cruz, California, solved the mystery of the nesting location of the Marbled Murrelet in the Western Hemisphere, a secret that has eluded ornithologists for more than 100 years. The trimmer, Hoyt Foster, discovered the nest 145 feet high in a redwood tree, while he was lopping a branch that threatened to fall on a campsite. He found the fluffy chick sitting on a nest of sparse moss. He brought the chick, as well as the nest, to the local Fish and Game office. Unfortunately, the chick died, possibly because it was given the wrong food.

The Marbled Murrelet was the last of those bird species breeding regularly in North America whose nest had not been found on this continent. The species is nocturnal in its passage to and from the nest site, making it impossible to follow its flights directly inland from the Pacific Ocean to the nest. Nevertheless, the evidence for the tree nesting of the species was extensive. The first hint came in 1898 when Indians of the Prince of Wales Archipelago reported to Cantwell that the species nests in hollow trees high up in the mountains. In 1953, W. Feyer and another man felled a large hemlock in the Queen Charlotte Islands; from the debris they removed a dazed Marbled Murrelet and some eggshells that contained blood. Unfortunately, it was impossible to determine whether the nest site was actually in the tree or simply in its path as it fell. In 1961 in Russia Kuzyakin found a nest of the race Brachyramphus marmoratus perdix in a taiga larch tree about 20 feet above the ground. The tree was located some 4 miles in from the sea. The search for the Marbled Murrelet's nest was further publicized in Audubon Field Notes 24:654, with a \$100 reward being announced for the first description with photographs. Congratulations to Mr. Foster!

R.H.S. and J.T.L.



THE SANDHILL CRANE
ON CAPE COD (HARWICH)

Photo by Dr. Herbert Whitlock
of Eastham