

THE MISSISSIPPI KITE

fledging, with no ill effects except perhaps for a slight case of dizziness. On 28 April, the female was again seen entering the nest, perhaps in preparation for raising a second brood.

House Sparrows are notorious for building nests in a wide variety of places. In addition to the usual nest-sites (ledges and crevices in buildings, nest boxes, vines, tree cavities, and exposed branches of trees), they have been recorded nesting in hawk nests, Bank Swallow (Riparia riparia) burrows, drawn-up awnings, old American Robin (Turdus migratorius) and Barn Swallow nests, bales of hay, and even an abandoned hornet nest (Bent 1958, Werler and Franks 1975). However, I know of only one previous report of House Sparrows nesting in a moving object: Tatschl (1968) reported several House Sparrow nests on working oil pumps in Kansas. Nevertheless, I feel certain that House Sparrows nest more often in moving objects than these two published reports would suggest. The species' adaptability in terms of nest-sites must surely be one of the major factors permitting its overwhelming success in urban areas. What else but a House Sparrow would nest in a revolving sign?

Thanks are due Jerome A. Jackson for making some of the observations, for photographing the nest-site, and for commenting on the manuscript.

Literature Cited

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Common Flicker Nesting in the Ground

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During April of 1973 E. J. Ganier, Jr. frequently flushed a Common Flicker (Colaptes auratus) from near two utility poles in the middle of a cotton field about three miles south of Hollandale, Washington County, Mississippi. When he investigated the site he found two holes in the ground about six feet apart. Each was about seven inches in diameter and six to eight inches deep. One had been rained on and was partly washed in; the other appeared freshly dug. Around the holes for several feet the ground was completely bare (Fig. 1). Again in 1974 and 1975 a pair of flickers excavated cavities in the ground and as many as two eggs were laid in some of the nests (Fig. 2). However, the first rain following cavity excavation always eroded the walls and partially filled the hole with water. Several times in a season the birds would dig a new cavity, but they were apparently never successful in rearing a

brood. Occasionally Mr. Ganier found a broken egg near the cavities, suggesting that some predator also contributed to the flickers' problems.



Figure 1. Site of repeated nesting attempts in a cotton field by a Common Flicker.

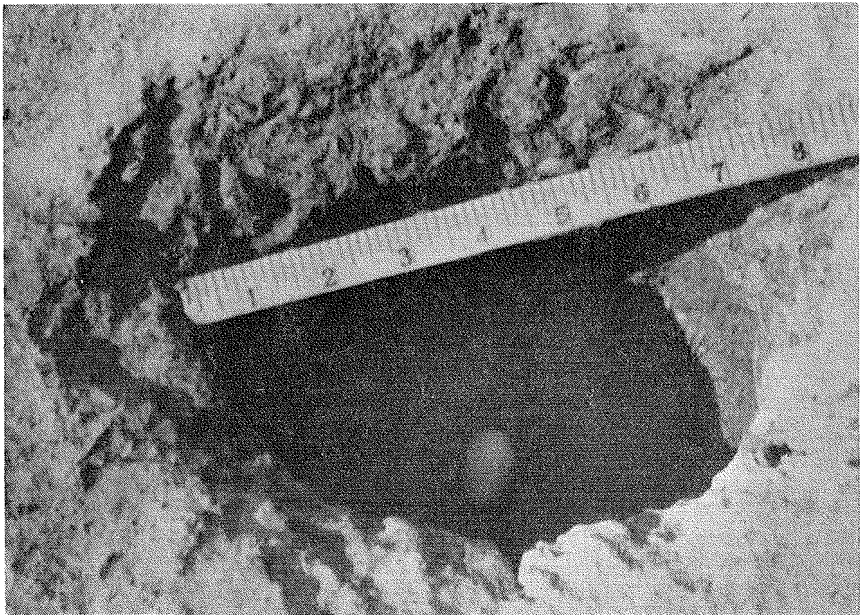


Figure 2. Nest excavation and egg of a Common Flicker.

The Common Flicker is well known for nesting in unusual places, for example, in buildings, in the hub of a wagon wheel, and in kingfisher or swallow burrows in vertical banks (Bent, U.S. Natl. Mus. Bull. 174, 1939). A. F. Ganier (Wilson Bull. 38:116, 1926) once observed a persistent flicker remove over a bushel of sawdust in excavating a cavity in an insulating box around a water pipe. Unlike the persistence of our ground-nesting flickers, the "sawdust" flickers were eventually successful in raising young. Pearson (Birds of America, Part II, Garden City Publ. Co., Inc., p. 165, 1936) published a photograph of a clutch of flicker eggs in a shallow depression on bare ground, and Brown (Iowa Bird Life 42:98-101, 1972) photographed a flicker incubating eggs in a similar situation. Hamilton and Hart (Oriole 34:56-57, 1969) also found flickers attempting to nest on the ground in Georgia. Finally, Hamilton (Oriole 34:56-57, 1969) and Dorsey (Oriole 34:55-56, 1969) both found flicker nests excavated into the ground in the manner that ours was. Hamilton's nest was against a utility pole and was unsuccessful due to rain. Dorsey's nest in a lawn contained young which survived at least one rainstorm.

Reviews

Portraits of Mexican Birds. By George M. Sutton. University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, 1975: 106 pp., 50 full color 12 X 15 inch reproductions of Sutton's paintings of Mexican birds. \$35.

George Sutton began drawing birds about 75 years ago and he is still an active artist. But Doc Sutton is more than an artist; he is a well respected scientist and author as well. As a field biologist Doc has the eye to pick up the nuances of behavior and ecology of a bird that a non-biologist would overlook. As an artist he has developed a sense of perspective and composition that makes his writing, as well as his drawing and painting, a joy to dwell on. Doc Sutton always gives due credit to his mentor, Louis Agassiz Fuertes, and indeed, he dedicates this volume of bird portraits to Fuertes. Though the influence of Fuertes on Sutton is clear, Sutton need not stand in the shadow of his master. Sutton is clearly the dean of contemporary American bird artists. This volume could be used as a standard of excellence by which to measure attempts to combine wildlife art and writing. The paintings and observations in this book were made over a period of 35 years and, as a result, one is able to study and appreciate the maturation of Sutton, the artist and ornithologist.

The format of "Portraits of Mexican Birds" is simple. There is a Foreword by Enrique Beltran, Director of the Institute for Mexican Renewable Natural Resources, University of Mexico. This gives the reader an appreciation for the significance of Sutton's work as it is recognized in Mexico. Next is a brief Preface by Sutton that lets the reader know where, when, and under what general conditions his paintings were made. Then follow the fifty paintings, each preceded by a page of text describing the subject of the painting and the circumstances under which the painting was made. On these pages is a wealth of information presented in a manner that is not only informative, but exciting, clever,