

glottos) and Phainopepla (*Phainopepla nitens*). The cryptic white on the White-necked Raven (*Corvus cryptoleucus*) has not been shown to have a function in the behavior of the species, but it is unlikely that the white is in fact without meaning. The observations below indicate a hostile (more precisely, agonistic) function of the concealed white.

A first-year male White-necked Raven, after having been held captive for about one month while a broken wing was healing, was introduced into an outdoor aviary in Mesilla, New Mexico, in September 1957; there it met five other White-necked Ravens, which had been wing-clipped captives for one to two years. This group of birds had established a working social organization and the introduction of the new bird seemingly disturbed this order. There ensued forceful exhibitions of aggression, both on the part of the original five birds and the newcomer. The typical display of hostility involved a bird assuming a horizontal posture with the neck moderately extended, and with the feathers of the head and neck fully erected. With the feathers so erected a vast area of black-tipped white was exposed; this white area was made clearly evident to an antagonist as the displaying bird posed obliquely to the immediate front of the antagonist. The posture was accompanied by an intermittent, aggressive, low-pitched *caw*.

The dominant member of the original group was the most aggressive bird. However, after this bird had established dominance (over the newcomer) it did not display the cryptic white to the same extent as it had done previously; its associates maintained a full display of the white whenever the newcomer approached them. The newcomer was continually in a state of hostile display and remained so throughout the course of observation. There were a few minor skirmishes and the newcomer was once jostled off its perch while thus engaged.

In the situations just described the display of the cryptic white occurred only in aggressive and defensive behavior. Thus, the white, in conjunction with the horizontal threat posture, may serve as a signal of aggressiveness, and even of willingness to engage in physical contact, as long as an agonistic relationship remains equivocal.

In spring in 1956 and in 1957 I observed wild White-necked Ravens on numerous occasions (they are abundant in the Mesilla Valley). At no time did I see the cryptic white used in a courtship situation. Blake (*Auk*, 74: 95-96, 1957) has postulated such epigamic function of the concealed white, but I was unable to find support for this.—RICHARD F. JOHNSTON, *Museum of Natural History, University of Kansas, Lawrence, March 17, 1958.*

Nest of Mockingbird in Pile of Fence Rails.—On May 20, 1954, a farmer friend showed me an unusual nest of a pair of Mockingbirds (*Mimus polyglottos polyglottos*) near Lexington, Virginia. It was situated in a pile of fence rails in the open and contained three half-grown young. The nest was placed among the ends of the rails, three feet from the ground, and entirely exposed. A thick cedar bush some twenty feet away would have offered a much more normal site. The nest was unusually wide and bulky, made of the usual sticks and rootlets, with some sheep's wool. Alexander Sprunt, in his comprehensive article on the Eastern Mockingbird in Bent (*U. S. Natl. Mus. Bull.*, 195: 295-314, 1948), does not list any such location, although in the same volume (p. 318) the western race (*M. p. leucopterus*) is reported to build in brush piles and in the corners of rail fences in Texas.—J. J. MURRAY, 6 *White Street, Lexington, Virginia.*