

FROM FIELD AND STUDY

Magpie-Jay Robs Mexican Cacique Nests.—On the morning of June 23, 1956, I made the following observation on the edge of the small village of Puerto Arista, Chiapas, which is located on the Pacific coast of southwestern México. As I entered Puerto Arista on the road leading north to Tonalá, I heard a commotion in one of the large, bordering trees. Two male Mexican Caciques (*Cassicus melanicterus*), were attempting to drive a Magpie-Jay (*Calocitta formosa*), from the vicinity of two cacique nests. The two nests, hung about a foot apart, were isolated from the main colony, which was located about seventy-five yards away. The jay appeared to be making an attempt to land on the globular part of one of the nests. About a minute after my arrival, the jay succeeded in perching near the entrance hole of one of the pendant nests. Poking its head into the hole, the jay immediately removed one egg, and then it promptly flew out of sight into a nearby grove. I sat down to watch for a possible repetition of this action, and about five minutes later, a Magpie-Jay, presumably the same bird, returned to the nest area. This bird forced the defending caciques from the nest which had not been robbed, and it promptly removed and flew away with a single egg from this nest. I waited for an additional half hour, but the jay did not return.

When the two male caciques were trying to drive away the jay, they displayed threat behavior while perched on the adjoining nests. Both males gripped the fibers of the globular portion of the nests, held their bodies horizontally, erected their long, black crest plumes fully, and called vigorously. When the jay attempted to dislodge one of them, both caciques flew at the jay's head and attempted to strike it with their bills. However, vigorous as their hostile displays were, both caciques were intimidated by the persistent and extremely intense threat displays of the Magpie-Jay. The latter finally forced one of the males to vacate its perch on the side of one of the nests; from this position, the jay repulsed the combined aerial attacks of the two caciques by swift stabbing movements of its head and bill. The jay held its body horizontally, the crest fully elevated, and the feathers of the head, neck, and back erect. This posture was accompanied by loud, rasping calls. After the jay had removed each egg, the two caciques pursued it for about thirty yards, returning in each case to the nest area. At no time did any female caciques join in the attacks on the jay.

The painting by Andrew Jackson Grayson (Condor, 52, 1950:97) shows beautifully the two-nest condition described above. If the crest of the male Mexican Cacique, shown in the lower right in Grayson's painting, is visualized as being more erect and the bird's body is inclined forward, the attitudes of the threatening caciques as they directed their attacks toward the jay can be more easily understood.

The fact that the two nests were isolated from the rest of the colony probably contributed to their vulnerability to predation by the Magpie-Jay. The exposed nest site and the presence of only two of the many males available for defense may have been additional factors in the success of the jays.—ANDREW J. MEYERRECKS, *Biological Laboratories, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, July 24, 1957.*

Laughing Gull Takes Fish from Black Skimmer.—Various species of gulls are known to take food, usually fish, from other birds such as cormorants, gannets, pelicans, herons, ducks, coots, gulls and terns. The methods employed vary and are adapted to the feeding methods of the other species. Such parasitism of Black Skimmers (*Rynchops nigra*) by gulls is hitherto unrecorded so far as I know. The following observations were made, through the courtesy of Luther Goldman, on the Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge, Cameron County, Texas, in the summer of 1956. My studies during that summer were financed in part by the Mae P. Smith Research Fund of The American Museum of Natural History.

Cayo Atascoso, a sluggish, shallow, meandering arm of water south of Laguna Atascosa, affords excellent feeding ground for Black Skimmers. On the afternoons of June 28 and 29, when these observations were made, the water was muddy and opaque; hence the abundant fish were not visible to birds flying overhead, except when they came to the surface. Black Skimmers, Laughing Gulls (*Larus atricilla*), Caspian Terns (*Hydroprogne caspia*), and Gull-billed Terns (*Gelochelidon nilotica*) stood on a mud bank in the Cayo, while periodically one or several skimmers flew from the bank to skim nearby with the lower mandible deeply immersed. Their rates of catch for the two days averaged one