

raven's nest in a bat cave in Edwards' County (about 50 miles west of the nesting cliff mentioned above). This nesting site proved to be most unusual, and it is believed to be worthy of record. On 5 April 1958, we journeyed along a dim trail in rolling hill country that was covered with clumps of cedar and scattered small live oaks. On a fairly level ridge we suddenly came to what appeared to be a huge sink hole with vertical sides that went down about 60 feet. As our truck neared the edge, a croaking raven flew up out of the hole. Examination of this sink hole disclosed that at some time in the distant past there had been an underground cavern, and at one comparatively small place the entire roof had collapsed. This left a rounded, oval sink hole about 30 feet by 40 feet in diameter. On one side the wall was nearly vertical, but on three sides the wall rapidly arched back under the limestone ledge at the surface. The bottom of the sink was covered with debris and broken slabs that had once supported the roof. By means of an extension ladder and ropes we managed to get down to the bottom. The inside chamber was bell-shaped. Opposite the vertical side wall a dome-shaped cavern extended back into an underground cavity for an unknown distance. On one side wall, back under the surface overhang and about midway from the bottom to the ground surface, there was a small ledge on which the ravens had managed to wedge an accumulation of sticks for their nest. This ledge was 32 feet up from the bottom, and it was estimated to be about 35 feet back from the edge of the opening. A raven when going to the nest had to dive down into the sink hole and then curve up under the overhanging roof to the nesting ledge. The nest was composed of dry sticks and twigs mixed with strips of inner bark from cedars. It measured 32 inches in diameter and averaged about 10 inches in height. The actual nesting depression was 4 inches deep and lined with bits of burlap and wool. It contained six eggs that appeared to be slightly incubated.

Since 1958 I have checked very closely on the ravens in this area. They seem to be increasing. Another pair has been observed in Edwards County (adjacent west) and two pairs in Kimble County (adjacent north). Until this year I knew of four pairs in Kerr County, but on 12 April 1967, I found a fifth pair with well-grown young in a sink hole somewhat similar to the one described above. All are nesting on ledges or in sink holes. They certainly cannot now be considered rare in this area.

I know of only a few published records of the raven nesting in Texas. Lloyd (Auk 4:290, 1887) reported a nest with six eggs in a mesquite found on 15 May 1883. However, this is certainly questionable as the date is far too late for the Common Raven, and both the date and nesting site are typical for the White-necked Raven (*Corvus cryptoleucus*) that is common in that locality. Van Tyne and Sutton (Birds of Brewster County, Texas, 1937, p. 62) reported the observation of two nests but gave no other details. Apparently this extension of the breeding range to Kerr County is more than 250 miles east of any formerly known locality.

While no specimens have been collected, the identification of this species would seem to be unquestionable for several reasons. The only similar species is the White-necked Raven, which is only a very rare winter straggler. However, it does nest some 150 miles north and west of here. The White-necked Raven is well known to be a late breeder, and normally nests in late May or June. The Common Raven normally nests in late March or early April. The White-necked Raven has never been known to build its nest on a cliff or ledge, whereas the Common Raven nests on a cliff or rocky ledge more often than in a tree. Finally, the eggs of the two species are much different in color and can be distinguished at a glance.

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YELLOW-BILLED MAGPIE DROWNS ITS PREY

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At about 13:00, on 3 May 1967, at Hastings Reservation, 2.5 miles east of Jamesburg, northern Monterey County, California, I watched a Yellow-billed Magpie (*Pica nuttalli*) as it foraged near some buildings. The bird was walking rather slowly when it suddenly pounced on an object at the edge of some rocks and prostrate daffodil leaves. Then, carrying a small,

squeaking mouse in its bill, it flew within 10 feet of me to a *Ribes* patch bordering a nearby stream, gliding down out of sight behind the thicket. I followed quietly and found the bird on a rock at the stream edge, holding a limp, dripping-wet mouse in its bill. The magpie became disturbed by my presence and flew to another rock some 20 feet downstream where it dropped the mouse and began to peck at it. Several deer mice (*Peromyscus maniculatus*) and a California vole (*Microtus californicus*) had been trapped three days before in the previously mentioned daffodil patch, and the mouse was the proper size for either an adult deer mouse or a young vole. The capture in daytime suggests the latter. This appears to be an unusual example of a passerine predator drowning its prey.

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