

the August date argues (albeit not strongly) against these adult birds being migrants from the Arctic. The continued occupancy of a cliff top for at least five weeks raises the possibility of breeding. However, Sick (pers. comm.) informed me that peregrines wintering near Rio de Janeiro may frequent one location for weeks at a time. Considering the height of the cliff it is no surprise that such birds would have escaped detection by collectors in the valley, for even identification would have been difficult without a telescope.

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RECENT NESTINGS OF THE MERLIN IN IDAHO

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The Merlin (or Pigeon Hawk, *Falco columbarius*) has been recorded as a nesting species in Idaho three times (Stanley A. Temple, pers. comm.). All three records, based on museum specimens, were prior to 1913 and occurred in southeastern Idaho. Although the Merlin has not been recognized as a breeding bird in Idaho by recent publications (Burleigh, Birds of Idaho, Caxton Printers, Caldwell, Idaho, 1971; Larrison et al., J. Idaho Acad. of Sci. 5:95, 1967), nesting has been assumed by some ornithologists. This paper describes two recent nestings of the Merlin in Idaho.

On 1 June 1973, Renn saw an adult male Merlin catch a female Redwinged Blackbird (*Agelaius phoeniceus*) in a small marsh on the western edge of the Snake River Plain in Blaine Co., Idaho. The Merlin flew from the marsh to a nearby slope where a female Merlin joined him and he passed the prey item to her in the air. The birds then flew to a grove of juniper trees (*Juniperus osteosperma*) on a hillside covered by sagebrush (*Artemisia* spp.). Below this hillside, in a small group of aspen trees (*Populus tremuloides*), Renn found a nest of the Black-billed Magpie (*Pica pica*) that contained four Merlin eggs. The eggs were red-brown with dark blotches. Both adult Merlins vigorously defended this nest by calling and diving at Renn. The nest is near a spring at an elevation of 1,448 m in a cool desert (Odum, Fundamentals of ecology. W. B. Saunders Co., Philadelphia, 1971). At the nearest weather station the average temperature during the

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nesting season is 12°C and the average annual precipitation is 25.4 cm (Natl. Weather Serv., Pocatello Municipal Airport, Pocatello, Idaho).

On 18 April 1975, Craig entered a narrow canyon on the northern edge of the Snake River Plain in Butte Co., Idaho. Within the canyon, where the vegetation was characterized by sagebrush and juniper trees, an adult male and a female Merlin behaved defensively by diving at Craig and calling. We visited the area again on 5 June and flushed a female Merlin from a large magpie nest in a juniper tree. The nest contained five Merlin eggs. The canopy of the nest was intact and no modification of the interior was evident. All five eggs hatched around 20 June; one young Merlin died within the first week, one disappeared at 17 days of age and three fledged about 17 July. On seven of nine visits to the nest, prey remains were found; they included 18 Mourning Doves (*Zenaidura macroura*), three Horned Larks (*Eremophila alpestris*), and two Western Meadowlarks (*Sturnella neglecta*). The nest is at an elevation of 1,890 m and the nearest water is 10 km from the canyon. The average annual precipitation of the area is 20.9 cm at 1,646 m and the average temperature during the nesting season is 13°C (Yanskey, G. R., E. H. Markee, Jr., and A. P. Ritcher. Climatology of the National Reactor Testing Station. IDO-12048. Idaho Operations Off. [A.E.C.], 1966). The area is a cool desert.

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