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Interspecific nest use by aridland birds.—Nest holes drilled by woodpeckers (Picidae) are frequently used by secondary cavity-nesting species, but interspecific use of open and domed nests is less well known. Nests constructed by many southwestern desert birds last longer than one year (pers. obs.) and are consequently reused by the same pair (e.g., Abert's Towhees [*Pipilo aberti*], pers. obs.) or by other birds as suitable nests. I observed several instances of interspecific nest use in honey mesquite (*Prosopis glandulosa*) habitat of the lower Colorado River valley, on the Colorado River Indian Reservation about 10 km north of Ehrenberg, Yuma Co., Arizona.

On 25 March 1980, I discovered a Mourning Dove (*Zenaida macroura*) incubating two eggs in a Crissal Thrasher (*Toxostoma dorsale*) nest built at a height of 130 cm against the main trunk of a 4.6 m honey mesquite. The nest tree was on the border of a thick mesquite woods adjacent to a large opening of bare ground. I had observed a pair of Crissal Thrashers incubating four eggs in this same nest during the summer of 1979. On 5 April 1980, the nest contained one dove egg that had been abandoned. Secondary use by Mourning Doves of nests of other bird species has been reported to be as frequent as 27% in Tennessee (Monk, *Migrant* 20:1–9, 1949) and is common throughout North America (e.g., McClure, *Trans. N. Am. Wildl. Conf.* 15:335–343, 1950; Cowan, *Calif. Fish and Game* 38:505–521, 1952; Nickell, *Wilson Bull.* 66:137, 1954; Hanson and Kossack, *Illinois Dept. Conserv. Tech. Bull.* 2, 1963). Documented use of secondary nests by doves in the southwest is limited. One Mourning Dove nest with two eggs, found by J. C. Barlow (pers. comm.), was built on top of an abandoned Cactus Wren (*Campylorhynchus brunneicapillus*) nest in a cholla (*Opuntia* sp.).

On 16 June 1980, I found a female Abert's Towhee incubating two eggs in the Crissal Thrasher nest mentioned above. I had color banded this towhee in the spring of 1980 and observed four of her previous attempts to nest. Two earlier nests were built in mistletoe (*Phoradendron californicum*) (a parasite of mesquite) and the other two nests were built directly on honey mesquite branches. The nest heights ranged from 0.92–2.3 m. On 10 June 1980, the fourth of these nests, which contained one egg recently laid by the towhee and one egg of a Brown-headed Cowbird (*Molothrus ater obscurus*), fell to the ground. The female towhee laid a fifth clutch of two eggs in the thrasher nest about 90 m south of her fourth nest tree.

During the spring and summer of 1980, I found three additional clutches of Abert's Towhees in old Crissal Thrasher nests. I had observed construction and use of these nests by three pairs of Crissal Thrashers in the spring of 1980. One pair of thrashers fledged three young, but the nests of the other two pairs were depredated, possibly by snakes or Roadrunners (*Geococcyx californianus*) (e.g., Finch, *Condor* 83:389, 1981) without damage to the nests.

In contrast to the large stick nests of thrashers, the towhee nests ($N = 68$) were constructed of fresh mesquite leaves and bark, salt cedar (*Tamarix chinensis*), saltbush (*Atriplex lentiformis*), inkweed (*Suaeda torreyana*), and/or arrowweed (*Tessaria sericia*) leaves, grasses, and even newspaper. The four towhees that used thrasher nests relined the nests with fresh grass and modified the exterior by weaving green leaves into the original stick structure. I followed the nesting histories of 12 color-banded Abert's Towhee females and found that the four towhees mentioned above only laid clutches in thrasher nests after previous nesting attempts in nests that the towhees had built had failed.

Nesting mortality of Abert's Towhees was high in 1980, and towhees that renested after failure reduced the time allocated to construction of second and later nests (Finch, M.Sc. thesis, Arizona State Univ., Tempe, Arizona, 1981). Towhee parents could consequently invest more time directly into offspring care before the favorable period for breeding ended. Towhees that could find and use thrasher nests may have increased their chances of renesting successfully by avoiding delay in nest construction. Towhees may have used only Crissal Thrasher nests because they were the only nests in the area similar in size to towhee nests.

The bulky, stick nests of Crissal Thrashers are durable, highly visible, and probably easily found as are the domed nests built by Cactus Wrens and Verdins (*Auriparus flaviceps*). On 28 May 1980 I discovered three Ash-throated Flycatcher (*Myiarchus cinerascens*) nestlings and one egg in an old Cactus Wren nest. The roof of the nest had partially collapsed. The nest was built near an Emlen line transect (used by personnel of the Center for Environmental Studies, Arizona State University) and three censusers had reported seeing wrens using it in 1977 and 1978. Ash-throated Flycatchers nest in woodpecker holes, nest boxes, and natural tree cavities (Bent, U.S. Natl. Mus. Bull. 179, 1942; Scott et al., Agric. Handbook 511, 1979). Experimental manipulations of the number of nest holes available in honey mesquite habitat indicate that nest-sites may be limiting for secondary-cavity nesting passerines in the Colorado River valley (Brush, M.Sc. thesis, Arizona State Univ., Tempe, Arizona, 1981). Because the large, roofed nests of Cactus Wrens provide enclosed cavities, they may be used as nest-sites by Ash-throated Flycatchers when tree holes are unavailable.

The Black-tailed Gnatcatcher (*Polioptila melanura*) is known strictly as an open-nest species. On 15 April 1980, I was attracted by the activities of a gnatcatcher pair. I found a Verdin nest in a mesquite nearby, but no gnatcatcher nest. The gnatcatchers began "buzzing" loudly, however, and the male scolded me while he was perched on the Verdin nest. Using a mirror mounted on a pole, I examined what should have been the roof of the Verdin nest. I found instead a compact gnatcatcher nest made of spider webs and salt cedar seeds centered within the dry twig shell of the Verdin structure. The nest was empty. Over the following week, the birds completely dismantled their nest, until only the circular casing of the Verdin nest was left. I did not locate the new gnatcatcher nest.

A wide variety of open-nesting species use nests built by other birds (e.g., Parmelee, Loon 51:169-170, 1979; Butler, Can. Field-Nat. 94:197, 1980; Hammerson and Lapin, Wilson Bull. 92:511, 1980; for extensive reviews, see Roberts, Emu 55:110-126, 173-184, 1955; Skutch, Parent Birds and Their Young, Univ. Texas Press, Austin, Texas, 1976:128-129). There are few records, however, of secondary nest use by southwestern desert birds. My observations indicate that open-nesting aridland birds also use the deserted nests of other species. Using secondary nests may save time and energy (e.g., Mourning Doves, Abert's Towhees), occur when nesting material or nest-sites are unavailable or in short supply (e.g., Ash-throated Flycatchers), or possibly serve as an added measure of brood protection against radiant heat, wind, or cold.

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iment Station, Arizona State Univ., Tempe, Arizona 85281. (Present address: Forest, Range and Watershed Laboratory, 222 South 22nd Street, Laramie, Wyoming 82070.) Accepted 2 Jan. 1982.

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An apparent instance of communal nesting by American Oystercatchers.—Communal nesting, as defined by Van Tyne and Berger (Fundamentals of Ornithology, John Wiley and Sons, New York, New York, 1976), is known from a few species in widely divergent orders. I observed a communal American Oystercatcher (*Haematopus palliatus*) nest on the Laguna Madre that represents the first published record of communal nesting for the species.

On 4 June 1977 I found an American Oystercatcher nest on Dimmit Point Island, located at the junction of the Laguna Madre and Corpus Christi Bay, Nueces Co., Texas. The nest, situated atop a shell embankment 1 m high, and on the periphery of a Black Skimmer (*Rynchops niger*) colony, contained six eggs. Four adult oystercatchers flew near me, calling, while I photographed the nest.

The following morning I again visited the island and concealed myself in salt cedar (*Tamarix* sp.) bush 400–600 m from the nest. During the course of the morning, all four oystercatchers remained in the vicinity of the nest, rarely straying more than 100 m away. Three of the oystercatchers entered the nest and sat on or turned the eggs, although none remained in the nest for more than 10 min. The eggs hatched sometime during the following week, for on 15 June I briefly observed four young on the island in the vicinity of the nest. When my presence was detected, the young hid in low vegetation and three adults flew around me calling.

According to Bent (U.S. Natl. Mus. Bull. 142, 1929: 307), the normal clutch-size for American Oystercatchers is three eggs. However, Bent mentions that clutches of five and six eggs have been found. This apparent instance of communal nesting is exceptional among 21 other American Oystercatcher nests that I have located along the Texas coast since 1973, each being an isolated nest with a two- to three-egg clutch.—BRIAN R. CHAPMAN, *Dept. Biology, Corpus Christi State Univ., Corpus Christi, Texas 78412. Accepted 10 Feb. 1982.*

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Song Sparrow pair raise four broods in one year.—Temperate zone passerines are often double-brooded (e.g., Bryant, *J. Anim. Ecol.* 48:655, 1979) and occasionally raise up to three broods per year (e.g., Snow, *A Study of Blackbirds*, George Allen and Unwin, London, England, 1958). Cases where four broods are raised, however, are extremely rare, although there are records of three broods being raised and a fourth clutch being unsuccessful (Weaver, *Auk* 60:62, 1943; Seel, *Ibis* 110:129, 1968). I report here such a case for the Song Sparrow (*Melospiza melodia*).

Song Sparrow breeding was studied on Mandarte Island, British Columbia, Canada, from 1975–1979 (Smith, *Condor* 83:152, 1981) and in 1981, when 20 pairs bred on the 6.3-ha island. All breeding adults were color-banded and almost all young were color-banded as nestlings about 6 days after hatching.

One pair of experienced birds, a 3-year-old female and a 7-year-old male, raised four broods in 1981. Clutches of three, four, four, and three eggs were begun on 18 March, 16 April, 14 May, and 14 June, respectively. The final clutch also contained two Brown-headed Cowbird