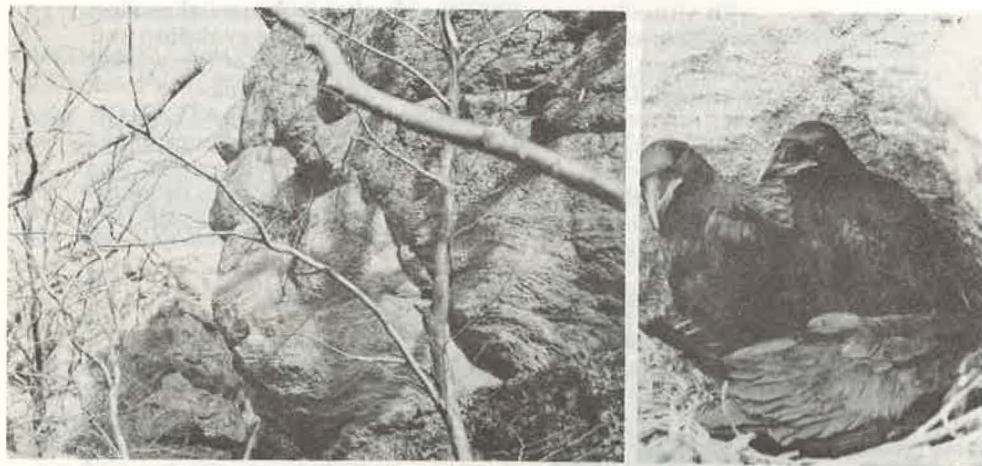




March 1974. Probably the last clutch of eggs. Notice the deer hair.



Left: December 1970. The Nest Site. Right: April 1972. Four ravens, aged 4 weeks. (Photos by: Richard Peiffer).

CUMBERLAND COUNTY RAVENS (CORVUS CORAX)

By Richard Peiffer

I first learned of ravens nesting in southern Pennsylvania from another person, which is how I learn of most of the raptor nesting locations that I work with. This nest is located on the northwest slope of a large rock outcrop on one of the many ridges in South Mountain. This area of Cumberland County, approximately thirty miles from Harrisburg, is as close to a wilderness area as you can find in south-central Pennsylvania.

During the years 1969 through 1972, I banded fourteen ravens, and as far as I know, all fourteen fledged. So far I have received only one recovery. This bird, in its second year, was "found dead" (Probably shot, since it was found during small game season.) about thirteen miles southwest of the nest site.

I made as many trips as possible to the nest during the first year in order to learn as much as possible. However, during the past several years, I visited it only when necessary. Unfortunately, this nest is located near a mountain stream that is only a mile or so from a hard road. This aesthetic area draws quite a large number of "pseudonaturalists," who blindly wander around the area and during the nesting season either knowingly or unknowingly disturb the ravens.

Last year I banded five young ravens during the second week of April. I returned to the nest a week later and found it empty. Below the nest were the smashed remains of at least two young birds plus an empty box of cartridges and quite a number of empty .22 cases. The story was rather easy to piece together. Someone had stood below the nest, shot at least two of the young birds, and smashed their bodies on the rocks. What became of the remaining birds, still too young to fly, and the bands that all five were wearing will probably never be known.

This year the possibility that the ravens would again return to the same nest seemed doubtful. However, when I visited the nest site during late February, I found that a new nest had been built. I returned to the nest during March and found three eggs but no adults. I remained near the nest until dark, but saw no sign of them. During the other years when they had eggs, they would noisily fly around the nest site until I would leave. This, plus the fact that the eggs were very cold to the touch and pushed way down into the nest, led me to believe that the eggs had been abandoned. Three weeks later I again climbed to the nest. This time the three eggs were gone and about eight feet from the nest was a cigarette, crushed into the rock.

The future of the nest site seems very doubtful. For the second year in a row, the pair of ravens has been disturbed to the extent that they have not been able to fledge a single young bird. I feel certain that the pair will move to another nest site, hopefully a more remote one.

Following is a summary of the observations that I made during the five year period:

1. Courting and the reestablishment of the pair bond is completed as well as all repairs to the nest by the middle of February.
2. The nest (about 24 inches across and 18 inches deep with a bowl or central cavity of 12 or 14 inches) is constructed almost entirely of sticks with a diameter of $\frac{1}{2}$ inch or less and from 8 to 18 inches in length. It is usually lined with deer hair and frequently has some type of cloth material.
3. The complete clutch of eggs (3-5) is laid by the end of February.
4. Incubation takes about 21 days.
5. The young are fledged in approximately 4 weeks, and the nest is always vacated by the first week of May.
6. The young are fed almost entirely by regurgitation. (At least I have never observed them eating on their own.)

I feel certain that none of this is new material but merely adds support to what is already known. However, I do think that the fact that these birds successfully managed to raise young in such a highly populated area of Pennsylvania is significant. I know from talking to other people that this was an active nest site as far back as 1956 and possibly as far back as 1900. Even though this nest site will probably not be used again, I feel certain that this pair will remain in the same general area of South Mountain. Hopefully, they will select a site that is more secure from man's intrusion.

--861 Carlwynne Manor, Carlisle, Pa. 17013

BANDING PLIERS

These $6\frac{1}{2}$ " long nose pliers have holes bored in the jaws to fit standard band sizes, so as to make it quite easy to get a perfect fit. This avoids the danger of lapped bands, which may injure the leg if not corrected, and which are troublesome to remove even with good tools. There is a split pin on the top of the plier, which enables the user to open a band evenly with one operation. A spring on the side of the plier provides tension to keep the opened band in the plier while handling the bird. While new banders may welcome such pliers to increase their confidence in attaching the band, many experienced banders have shown interest in the pliers in order to handle birds more rapidly at peak times.

Pliers for band sizes 0, 1, 1B & 1A	\$7.50
Pliers for band sizes 2 & 3	\$7.50
Pliers for band sizes 3A	\$6.50

These prices include postage within the U. S. Orders should be sent to:

Mr. Roger N. MacDonald
850 Main Street
Lynnfield, Massachusetts 01940

REPEATING STRING TRAP

By Fred S. Hill, Jr.

After 6 years of bird banding I have arrived at the firm conclusion that my eyes are not as good as they once were (fault remedied with bifocal glasses), and at the strong belief that I have a trap that should be an asset to most home stations. Although the trap was developed independently, I now realize that the gate principle was published by Mrs. Harvey Shreve, Jr. in an article describing a window feeder trap in EBBA NEWS, Vol. 26, No. 2.

The trap consists of a two ended feeding shelf mounted on a post. The sides are covered with wire attached to a frame, and there is a wire divider across the middle of the shelf. Hinged across each end of the shelf is a wire gate which can be closed from bottom to top by pulling a string, and opened by releasing the string. The top of the frame over the shelf is open, but it is covered by the bottom of a wire holding cage that should extend at least 3 inches beyond the ends and sides of the frame. Two rectangular openings are cut in the bottom of the cage so that when the cage is placed on the frame, the exterior sides of the holes align flush with the inside of the frame at ends and sides. There should be a 3 inch section of wire remaining in the cage bottom between the two openings. The openings are each covered by a wire gate, 1 inch longer and $\frac{1}{2}$ inch wider than the opening, hinged with wire rings to the 3 inch section of wire that divides them so that they can be raised and lowered by pulling and releasing a string. The weight of the cage is enough to hold it in place without a latching device.

Birds trapped by pulling the string to close them into one side of the feeding shelf will usually pass quickly into the holding cage when the string is pulled to open the gate in the bottom of the cage. The strings are released in reverse order to close the cage and open the trap. The main disadvantage is that the trap requires human attention to operate, but it can be left unattended at any time it is empty without fear of inadvertently trapping and injuring a bird. The trap is constantly set and cannot be tripped by common species at the critical moment when another bird is about to enter, and it will continue to operate until it is necessary to empty the holding cage. Birds may be removed directly from the cage though an opening covered with overlapped rubber, or the entire cage can be removed in a matter of seconds by unhooking the cage gate strings, removing the cage, replacing it with a spare cage, and attaching the lines. In bad weather the cage may be covered with plastic to protect the captives, and a small feeding tray in the cage seems to calm them.

Experience and judgement will be quickly learned as to the timing required to close the shelf gates, depending on weather and species. Titmice, chickadees, and nuthatches usually take one seed and depart to return in a few minutes, and it is necessary to close the gates quickly as soon as they enter. Cardinals, towhees, white-throats, song sparrows,