are common. On 5 January 1981, at approximately 15:30, we observed a fire in the scrublands near Immokalee, Florida. Vegetation consisted primarily of grasses .25 to .75 m in height, longleaf pine (*Pinus palustris*) saplings, and scattered clumps of saw-palmetto (*Serenoa repens*). The fire had burned about 1 ha and advanced in a northeast breeze. Cattle Egrets flew through the smoke and foraged on the ground within 1 m of the flames on both the windward and leeward edges of the fire. American Kestrels hunted along the windward edge only.

Because utility lines are the preferred perches for hunting kestrels, densities may be expressed in a linear fashion. The highest density of hunting kestrels observed in the vicinity of Immokalee during the winter of 1980–1981 was .93 per km (15 per 16.15 km), recorded one day prior to the fire. During the fire 15 kestrels hunted along the approximately 150 m windward edge, representing about a hundredfold increase in concentration. Because of the irregular spatial distribution of individuals and flocks of Cattle Egrets, local density fluctuations attributed to the fire were not quantitatively measured.

All foraging by Cattle Egrets occurred on the ground. Although specific prey items were not determined, prey items captured by egrets were apparently small vertebrates and invertebrates which did not fly in response to the approaching flames but remained stationary or attempted escape on the ground. Kestrels preyed exclusively on insects which flew away from the fire into the wind, catching them on the wing by hovering 2 to 4 m about the ground and performing shallow stoops. No interaction between kestrels and egrets was observed and competition for specific prey items was probably negligible.

Cattle Egrets have been reported foraging along a line of flames at grass fires in South Africa and flying in dense smoke from burning cane fields in Puerto Rico, and American Kestrels have been reported to appear at controlled burning operations in the southeastern United States (Komarek, Proc. Tall Timbers Fire Ecol. Conf. 9:161–207, 1969). Komarek (op. cit.) summarized the animal species reportedly attracted to fires.—JOHN A. SMALLWOOD, MARK WOODREY, NATHAN J. SMALLWOOD, AND MARY ANNE KETTLER, *Department of Zoology, Miami University, Oxford, Ohio 45056.* Received 27 May 1981; accepted 7 Dec. 1981.

Further Observations of Predation by Black-billed Magpies on Small Mammals.—Black-billed Magpies (*Pica pica*), permanent residents of the Canadian prairies, feed on a wide range of animal and vegetable matter (Bent, U.S. Natl. Mus. Bull. 191, Part 1, 1946). While small mammals comprise 7–10% of their diet (Linsdale, Pac. Coast Avif. No. 25, 1937), it is not clear if their presence in the diet of magpies is the result of predation or if it reflects the tendency of this species to feed upon road-killed animals or other carrion. This note describes 2 observations of magpies killing or capturing small mammals. The observations were made from a car with a 20× telescope in agricultural land east of Calgary, Alberta.

On 8 February 1977, at 1300 (MST), I observed a magpie attacking a *Microtus pennsylvanicus* which was sitting on top of the snow. The vole was very aggressive and attacked the bird every time it made an attempt to strike with its bill. This "fencing" occurred several times until the magpie was on top of the vole, pecking it several times. At this point, a Snowy Owl (*Nyctea scandiaca*) flew at the 2 animals, causing the magpie to fly rapidly away. The vole remained still (dead?) and the owl landed on it and ate it.

On 16 February 1978, while observing a Snowy Owl, I noticed a magpie land in a roadside ditch and begin pecking vigorously at something in the snow. The bird then flew carrying a small mammal in its bill and landed in a nearby tree. The prey was tentatively identified as *Peromyscus maniculatus* as it had a long tail and light-colored pelage. After perching for several seconds, the bird flew to the ground at the base of the tree. Several minutes later it returned to its original perch with snow covering its bill. I investigated the area and found no signs of the prey. I suspect that the mouse had been ingested.

I have also observed magpies showing interest in owls which had captured and were ingesting small mammals. In addition, J. Keizer, a former employee at the Provincial Museum of Alberta, observed a magpie killing a Little Brown Bat (*Myotis lucifugus*). I observed a magpie attempting unsuccessfully to capture a small bat at Calgary.

Despite the conspicuousness and abundance of magpies in many areas, only Goulden (Auk 92:606, 1975) reports actual predation by Black-billed Magpies upon small mammals. Blackburn (Condor 70:280, 1968) reports a similar observation by a Yellow-billed Magpie (*Pica nuttalli*).

I thank Philip Stepney and Micheal Erpino for commenting on this manuscript.—PETER C. BOXALL, *Alberta Energy and Natural Resources, Fish and Wildlife Division, 8th Floor, South Tower, Petroleum Plaza, 9915 108 St., Edmonton, Alberta T5K 2C9.* Received 10 Oct. 1980; accepted 10 May 1981.

A Simple Egg-Marking Technique.—Studies of avian nesting ecology often require the marking of eggs. Felt-tipped marking pens containing indelible ink are frequently used for this purpose. One problem with this technique, however, is that the ink marks often fade into obscurity before the egg hatches. This problem can result in loss of data or loss of time used for remarking.

In a study of Ring-billed Gulls (*Larus delawarensis*) nesting at Sprague Lake, Washington, I marked eggs with 5 × 5 mm labels cut from Scotch Brand® plastic tape. This tape is inexpensive, readily available, and sold in a variety of colors. It also takes indelible ink well should a numbering system be required. I used white, yellow, and blue tape labels to identify the first, second, and third eggs laid within a clutch. If more than 3 eggs were laid I used a combination of 2 of the 3 colors, though other tape colors are available and could have been used.

Each colored tape label was firmly applied to an egg near its apex. The label's color apparently did not distract the adults, but allowed for quick identification during my daily checks.

Of 493 eggs marked, not one lost its label during the study. Eggs buried by volcanic ash from the 18 May 1980 eruption of Mount St. Helens could be dug up one year after burial and be identified.

My research was funded by the Frank M. Chapman Fund of the American Museum of Natural History, Sigma Xi—The Scientific Research Society, and the Graduate School of Washington State University.—JAMES L. HAYWARD, JR., *Department of Zoology, Washington State University, Pullman, Washington 99164* (present address: *Division of Science and Mathematics, Union College, Lincoln, Nebraska 68506.*) Received 2 Mar. 81; accepted 30 June 81.

On the Status of American Robins at Michigan State University.—During the spring of 1979 Dr. Donald L. Beaver took American Robin (*Turdus migratorius*) counts on the North Campus of Michigan State University in East Lansing and found 12–14 nesting pairs (J. Field Ornithol. 51:220–228, 1980). Using statistical data he concluded that the Robin breeding population before, during, and after the DDT years (mainly 1956–1962) was probably always stable at approximately 25–30 adults. However, in spite of my advice, he failed to consider the vast changes that took place in the 20–30 years before he arrived on campus: the increase in enrollment from fewer than 5000 students to more than 40,000; at least 7 new buildings (on North Campus); a large parking ramp, new and enlarged parking lots, driveways, and sidewalks; and landscape changes unfavorable to Robins (e.g., removal of dead and dying elms and other trees for construction purposes). In short, Robins lost vast areas to the new developments and could not possibly regain their former status which in the early 1950's I had estimated at about a pair per acre or about 185 pairs (compared to Beaver's 12–14 pairs).

Dr. Beaver has made a useful follow-up study of my 20 years of work on American Robins, but, for the reasons stated above, he erred in his conclusion that there never were more than 25 or so breeding robins on campus before DDT.—GEORGE J. WALLACE, *Grayling, Michigan 49738.* Received 14 Jan. 1981; accepted 21 Jan. 1982.