

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.

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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.