



Autumn '83 Schedule of Events

Birding at Autumn's Migration Mainline with people who call Cape May their own backyard.

Birding Weekends

birding for the fun of it.

**The 38th Annual Cape May
Autumn Weekend**

Sept. 30, Oct. 1 and 2

About 190 species and \$130*

Hawk Watch Weekend

October 7 - 10

(Columbus Day Weekend)

About 15,000 hawks,
15 species and \$185*

Birding Workshops

birding to increase your skill in it.

Shorebirds and passerines

August 26 - 30

About 160 species with the accent on shorebirds. \$300*

Passerines and shorebirds

September 2 - 6

(Labor Day Weekend)

About 165 species with the accent on fall warblers. \$300*

Peak Week

September 18 - 23

About 175 species with the accent on variety. \$350*

Prices include meals, leaders, evening programs, and accommodations at beach front Atlas, Colonial, or Golden Eagle Motels in Cape May, New Jersey. We invite you to write for descriptive brochures.

Cape May Bird Observatory

PO Box 3

**Cape May Point, NJ 08212
(609) 884-2736**

A research and education unit of The New Jersey Audubon Society, a nonprofit organization.



*Prices based on current cost estimates, subject to change.

Early nesting of the Roadrunner, *Geococcyx californianus*, in California

James W. Cornett

THE NESTING PERIOD of the Roadrunner (*Geococcyx californianus*) generally occurs during the months of April and May (Bent 1940, U.S. Natl. Mus. Bull. 176:41) and again, at least in southern Arizona, from late July to mid-September (Ohmart 1973, *Condor* 75:140). Early nesting records include March 17 in southeastern Arizona (Scott 1886, *Auk* 3:432) and February 14 in Escondido, California (Sharp 1907, *Condor* 9:87). The latter date was previously the earliest nesting record for this species. Neither of the above dates related the early nesting to environmental conditions.

On February 2, 1977, Brian Edwards and I examined a Roadrunner nest situated in a Washington Fan Palm (*Washingtonia filifera*), approximately 2 km west of Desert Hot Springs, Riverside County, California. The nest was 3 m from ground level and was hidden among the dead, hanging leaves which form the "skirts" of these trees. The nesting tree stood just outside the backyard of a residence. The dead leaves were being trimmed away when the nest was found.

Four eggs were discovered in the nest and measured 30 × 41, 30 × 42, 29 × 39, and 30 × 39 mm, respectively. The tree and nest were not disturbed further, allowing the parents to continue incubation. The adults were observed at or near the nest for at least the next 3 days.

This record marks the earliest known nesting date for the Roadrunner. In addition, as Roadrunner eggs are deposited at intervals of up to 3 days (Ohmart 1973, *Condor* 75:141), it can be assumed that in this instance nest construction and egg deposition were underway by at least late January.

The region of the nest site lies within the confines of the Colorado Desert and has a mean annual precipitation of approximately 13 cm. However, precipita-

tion was nearly twice normal for the 5 months preceding the month of nest discovery—16.7 cm as compared with 8.5 cm. Mean temperature for this same period was slightly above normal—33.7°C as compared with 33.2°C. The unusually large amount of precipitation resulted in a relatively lush appearance of the surrounding perennial vegetation.

It is thought that successful reproduction in desert birds is dependent upon infrequent favorable periods, *i.e.*, periods of abundant precipitation (Noy-Meir 1974, *Ann. Rev. Ecol. Syst.* 5:195-214). Ohmart (1973) has shown this to be true with respect to Roadrunner populations in the desert surrounding Tucson, Arizona. In the latter region, a bimodal nesting pattern is the rule and is associated with precipitation peaks in winter and late summer.

This observation extends Ohmart's findings by suggesting that Roadrunners initiate their first reproductive cycle early in wet years to insure the complete development of the young before the onset of the harsh summer months

—Palm Springs Desert Museum,
Palm Springs, California 92263

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THE BIRD'S NEST

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