

CLARK'S NUTCRACKER CAUGHT ON CHOLLA CACTUS

On 15 October 1972 while driving through Cholla Gardens in Joshua Tree National Monument, Riverside County, California, my Swiss companions, Hans and Verena Schmiedeskamp, asked me to stop and back up as they had seen a large bird. About ten feet off the road we found a dead Clark's Nutcracker (*Nucifraga columbiana*) caught on a cholla (*Opuntia bigelovii*) (Figure 1). As far as we could determine, the bird had landed on top of the cholla and its feet had become caught in the cholla spines, with subsequent death. We were unable to pry its feet loose with a small stick.

Miller and Stebbins (*The Lives of Desert Animals in Joshua Tree National Monument*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1964) cite records of Clark's Nutcrackers in the Monument, but to the west, in the pinyon (*Pinus monophylla*) belt. In the area of the Cholla Gardens there are no pinyons. In October 1972 Clark's Nutcrackers staged an invasion into a number of southern California desert areas (McCaskie, *Am. Birds* 27:122, 1973). Robert R. Delareuelle, 1002 Juanita Drive, Walnut Creek, California 94595.



Figure 1. Clark's Nutcracker (*Nucifraga columbiana*) found dead on cholla, Joshua Tree National Monument, California, on 15 October 1972.

Photo by Robert R. Delareuelle.