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Bird Casualties at a Leon County, Florida Tv Tower: a 25-year Migration Study

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Common Crows and a Florida Red-shouldered Hawk mobbing feathers on the ground.—On 28 January 1981, at 0900 at the Hendrie Ranch, 24 km S of Lake Placid, Highlands County, Florida, I heard cawing as 6-8 Common Crows (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*) suddenly gathered in a small grove of bay trees (*Magnolia virginiana*, *Persea* spp.). The grove was small (about 16 m in breadth) and open, due to the passage of cattle, and the crows were relatively tame. At distances of 15 or more m I saw them perched on open limbs; most were looking at the ground, and some were cawing or giving harsh *grrs*. I saw nothing that might be causing the mobbing.

Two days later, at the same time and place, I witnessed another sudden gathering of crows. This time their caws were mingled with the screams of a Florida Red-shouldered Hawk (*Buteo lineatus alleni*) which, like the crows, was relatively tame. The crows were looking at the same area of ground as on 28 January. I noted that the hawk, perched 3 m up, was doing so likewise. Again I saw no cause of the mobbing and the crows and hawk left after about 5 min. When I reached the spot, I found three large piles of feathers, from body, wings and tail, where some predator had plucked a Turkey (*Meleagris gallopavo*). With an absence of the usual iridescence, the feathers looked a dull, dark brown.

Similar situations have been described for other corvids. Verbeek (1972, J. Ornithol. 113: 297-314) once found Yellow-billed Magpies (*Pica nuttalli*) mobbing a mummified magpie and, on three occasions, three black tail feathers on the ground. He noted that the mobbing was as intense as to a predator, such as a bobcat (*Lynx rufus*). In fact he believed that a group of feathers is mobbed as if it were a predator, the selective advantage being "that it reinforces the members of the colony to take communal action." Whereas Verbeek found that at least three feathers were needed and that magpies would not react to a single feather, Lorenz (1970, Contributions to the study of the ethology of social Corvidae. Pp. 1-56 in Studies in animal and human behavior I, Cambridge, Harvard Univ. Press) found that his Jackdaws (*C. monedula*) reacted to a single large black feather with angry rattling cries. The subject is one that could stand more study. The large piles of Turkey feathers at the ranch may have provided a supernormal stimulus to the crows. Earlier (Kilham 1964, Condor 66: 247-248) I described a number of instances of joint mobbing of owls by Common Crows and Red-shouldered Hawks in Maryland and New Hampshire.—LAWRENCE KILHAM, Department of Microbiology, Dartmouth Medical School, Hanover, New Hampshire 03755.

BOOK REVIEW

Bird casualties at a Leon County, Florida TV tower: A 25-year migration study.—Robert L. Crawford. 1981. Bull. Tall Timbers Res. Sta. 22: 1-30. Available from Tall Timbers Res. Sta., Rt 1, Box 160, Tallahassee, FL 32312 for \$1.25 + .75 postage.—The letters WCTV are as familiar to students of bird migration as are the letters ATP to cell-biologists. Every day since October 1955 biologists at Tall Timbers Research Station have conducted a dawn search for migrant birds killed by nocturnal collision with the 308 m (204 m before 1960) WCTV tower 24 km N of Tallahassee near the Georgia border. The carcasses are identified, tabulated, and frozen for later use. Many

museums have specimens made from these tower kills and many biologists have investigated the physiology and demography of migration using these tower kills.

This publication summarizes 25 years of records and corrects errors in three summaries published earlier. Information for each of the 189 species lists the number of individuals found dead by 10-day periods with monthly, seasonal, and grand totals and extreme dates. The 42,384 birds killed by the tower represent primarily nocturnal migrants with 69% from the fall and 22% from the spring. Bird-banders and field observers in the region will want to compare their own data or the records in *Audubon Field Notes/American Birds* with this sample of migration in terms of temporal occurrence, relative abundance, and routes of migration. I was interested to learn that some presumed sedentary species such as the White-eyed Vireo, House Sparrow, and Cardinal are killed by the tower but not the Carolina Chickadee or Tufted Titmouse. Also, there are no Bachman's Warbler records for the tower which is consistent with the general view that this endangered species is in decline.

This is a valuable publication for students of distribution and occurrence of birds in southeastern United States because of the extensive data it contains. Although there is no discussion of the factors causing birds to collide with the tower, the introduction lists some scientific publications based on WCTV tower data including those on the influence of weather on bird migration and tower kills (see also: Avise and Crawford 1981, *Natural History* 90(9): 6-14).

It is difficult to imagine a continuing, long-term study like this being conducted at any place other than a field station with a permanent, dedicated staff. Ornithologists are indebted to the vision of Herbert L. Stoddard, Sr., for initiating this study, and to Tall Timbers Research Station for continuing it. Remember, each morning at dawn, Robert L. Crawford (or another biologist) will be stalking across the lawn at the foot of the WCTV tower looking for the previous night's kill. What will be find?—FRED E. LOHRER.

Editor's swan song.—For nearly 6 years my on-the-job training as editor of the *FFN* has been generously supported by the membership of the FOS and to them I am grateful. Editing the *FFN* has been a cooperative effort. The members of the editorial advisory board; David W. Johnston, Oscar T. Owre, William B. Robertson, Jr., Henry M. Stevenson, and Glen E. Woolfenden, have given me thoughtful advice on various matters relating to the *FFN*, and they and at least 60 other people (listed at the end of each volume) have refereed the more than 170 manuscripts submitted to the *FFN* during my term as editor. The authors, essential to the existence our journal, have patiently endured my chronic case of new-editor syndrome. We have been well-served by managing editor, Karen G. Harrod, and Florida Audubon Society, in the early days, and by three printers; Sharp Offset Co., Storter Printing Co., and E. O. Painter Printing Co. The Archbold Biological Station provided a well-equipped office and a well-stocked library. Two Archbold secretaries, D. Jane Thomason and Dorothy Carter, did pinch-hit typing. Thomason, and Joey Sacco, who did our cover illustration, provided artistic help. My wife, Charlotte, offered much helpful advice, usually after a long day with two small children. To all I offer my sincere thanks.—FRED E. LOHRER.