

## ROADSIDE DISTRIBUTION OF THE COMMON RAVEN IN THE MOHAVE DESERT

Common Ravens *Corvus corax* are familiar roadside birds in much of the southwestern United States. I counted ravens during nearly 5500 miles of travel through the Mohave Desert of southern Nevada (Clark County) and adjacent California (San Bernardino County) in 1967-1969. Observations were limited to areas below 4500 feet in Lower Sonoran desert away from major waterways and irrigated land. Data were divided into four time periods (table 1) and into those obtained along major routes and those along lightly used roads.

Raven density along roads is greatest during winter and least in summer (table 1). More than twice as many ravens were found along major routes than along comparable secondary roads. Thus, major highways may strongly influence raven distribution in this area since they provide an easily found, and relatively dependable, food supply of road-killed animals. There is less animal mortality along secondary roads, and this is reflected by raven density. The following road-killed animals were observed being consumed (number of observations in parentheses): large Orthoptera (1), *Crotalus* sp. (2), unidentified snakes (3), *Citellus leucurus* (2), *Sylvilagus* sp. (3), and *Lepus californicus* (1). The species' habits of scavenging are well known (Bent, U. S. Nat'l. Mus. Bull. 191, 1946).

TABLE 1. Roadside distribution of the Common Raven in the Mohave Desert.

Season	Number of Ravens	Number of Miles	Miles per Raven	x no. of Ravens per 100 miles
<b>MAIN ROADS</b>				
November-February	38	1125	29.6	3.38
March-April	13	862	66.3	1.51
May-August	11	1463	133.0	0.75
September-October	17	870	51.2	1.95
total	79	4320	54.7	1.83
<b>SECONDARY ROADS</b>				
total	9	1132	125.8	0.79

There is an indication that summer distribution is limited to areas near water. Between Las Vegas, Nevada, and Baker, California, all my summer observations are less than 15 miles from available water, while observations at other seasons are more evenly distributed. Also of interest is a flock of 40 ravens (not included in table 1) near Baker, California, on 27 February 1968 at 0615. Five hours later they were gone. This is an unusually large flock for this species which, unlike the White-necked Raven *Corvus cryptoleucus*, tends to be found in pairs throughout the year (Bent, *op. cit.*). Field work was supported in part by National Park Service contract number 14-10-0434-1989 to J. E. Deacon.

George T. Austin, Department of Biological Sciences, University of Arizona, Tucson, Arizona 85721.