

NESTING DOVES AND THRASHERS SHARE CLOSE QUARTERS

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A pair of Mourning Doves (*Zenaida macroura*) and a pair of Curve-billed Thrashers (*Toxostoma curvirostre*) built their nests in the same 1.8 m Jumping Cholla (*Opuntia fulgida*) in a dry wash near River Rd., Tucson, Arizona, in May 1983. Unfortunately we have no observations of their behavioral interactions, but the doves were apparently there first and had two eggs in an advanced stage of incubation when the thrashers moved in, building up an old thrasher nest and depositing three eggs about 15 May just 0.5 m below the doves. Thus on 27 May when we found them, the doves' brood was about 8 days old and the thrashers were sitting on eggs. When we returned on 8 June both pairs were still in residence; the doves had fledged their brood and were now sitting on two new eggs while the thrashers downstairs were busily tending the young that had hatched during our absence.

Two other instances in which doves and thrashers nested as close neighbors were found in this same 75-ha area in 1983, but in both cases the doves fared less well. In one of these the doves built and laid on 20-22 February on a low Littleleaf Palo Verde (*Cercidium microphyllum*) branch just 1 m from and slightly higher than a bulky, 1.3 m high cholla-supported thrasher nest containing three eggs. The dove eggs hatched 6-7 March, and 2 days later their nest was empty and abandoned. The young thrashers were by that time nearly ready to fledge, and whether or not their parents played some role in the demise of the doves we will never know. In any event the doves, or at least a pair of doves, were back and incubating eggs on 14 April when the thrashers were gone.

In the other case both nests were in a 1.8 m Jumping Cholla, the doves 0.3 m higher and 0.9 m away from the bulky thrasher structure. Birds were flushed from both nests on 10 February, but thereafter the doves were not seen for over a month, while the thrashers laid eggs and raised a brood that fledged about 24 March. Meantime the doves had returned and were incubating two eggs on 22 March, having reoccupied their old nest while the young thrashers were still present. Predators destroyed this clutch 10 days later before hatching occurred, and a few days later the thrashers were back with a new clutch of eggs in their nest. Again we wondered whether the thrashers were guilty, but the evidence was limited to the chronology of events.

With an apparent abundance of good nesting sites we wonder why doves should, on occasion, choose to build as close to thrashers as they did in two of the instances described. Thrashers, on the other hand, may be pressed by a shortage of adequate sites and forced to share when sites are already occupied as in the first case.

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