Mante turn ea t on highway 80 towards do to ob er e ne ting Mexican crow, Tampico and proceed until you reach a
July of 1984, I decided to gi e Edwards’
big steel-framed bridge over the Rio
of Mante. At the’ ‘southern edge of
Although it ha a rather re tricted range,
Finding Bird in Mexico’ all one mu t
junction: During the latter part of
bridge framework. Having made
Guayalejo, about 17 miles from the road
(once in a while it i ob er ed in the §
Corvus imparatus)

Adult perched in treetop.

Continued on page 6

Range of Mexican Crow
(Corvus imparatus)

In terms of conservation and avicul-
ture species versus subspecies differenti-
ation is of varying importance. With
limited funds for conservation efforts, the
cpecies approach (if not a total
ecosystem approach) is most frequently
taken. Except in rare situations specific
action will not be taken specifically for
subspecies preservation especially if the
cpecies, in total, is not endangered. In
the eyes of conservationists being
labeled a species is of great importance.
In aviculture more attention is often
given to subspecies than species. The
various parrots in the genus Amazona,
for example, often have numerous sub-
cpecies of strikingly different color-
ation. The various subspecies of
Amazona ochrocephala are often thought,
by the novice aviculturist, to
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- Amazona Society
- Southeastern Aviculturists Association
- National Cage Bird Show, Inc.
- Avicultural Society of America
- Asian Parakeet Society
- Society of Parrot Breeders and Exhibitors

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Now back to Corvus. Where do the various crow species and subspecies fit into this? Unfortunately, not only do the various subspecies of crows differ little (in terms of coloration) but most species are usually quite similar as well. Since most of us want something exotic and colorful it is not surprising that few aviculturists have worked with crows.

This is not to say that we have not had experience with them. As Sheldon Dingle said, "I raise a good, healthy flock of crows every year... in my back yard!" So with over 9000 species of birds to work with (in theory anyway) why should we work with crows? For a number of reasons! Since you can often observe a species of crow in your back yard they would be a good species to develop avicultural "experience" with. Crows from all over the world exhibit behavioral traits similar to the one in your back yard. Finally, and most importantly, if aviculture is to be included in species survival strategies then we must develop the techniques needed to maintain and propagate them.

To my knowledge, no species of Corvus is consistently bred by anyone in the United States. We are, however, currently faced with the development of a captive breeding program on both the Hawaiian, C. tropicus, and Guam, C. kubaryi, crows. At least six other species occur on islands that tend to be prone to drastic rapid habitat alterations as well as frequent problems with the introduction of exotic species and excessive human shooting. If aviculture is to make a lasting contribution to bird conservation, private aviculturists will have to expand their interest from the frequently maintained colorful species to include some less colorful, possibly more aviculturally challenging ones. If the techniques are not developed for species care and propagation then it is doubtful that aviculture can be realistically considered in the species' conservation strategy. If it is attempted, it is often a sad, last ditch effort. Having to be separate species. The captive survival of a species is therefore greatly enhanced if it is wide ranging with several subspecies that differ in coloration. It is therefore doubtful that much effort will be made to improve the Central American population of the scarlet macaw since the species is doing fairly well in Amazonia. If we could make the Central American population a separate species or, at least, change its coloration its future survival would be greatly enhanced.
tragic event.

After passing hundreds of Mexican crows, while en route to Mante, we finally arrived at the highway junction and turned towards Tampico. Soon within view was the bridge over the Rio Guayalejo. We pulled our Jeep off the roadway and started walking down the bridge. Soon dark shadows appeared and unmusical cow-rah, cow-rah’s filled the air. Within only a few minutes we located over a dozen nests lodged in the steel bridge frame.

Crows in general start breeding in their third year, thus large flocks of sub-adults can often be observed during the breeding season. Being omnivorous they eat a large number of insects as well as carrion and vegetative matter. While being generally quite social, during the breeding season they often become territorial, with the amount of territoriality depending upon the species. The common raven appears to be very territorial but Mexican crows nest within ten feet of one another. I noted no aggression between the various pairs observed, for several hours, on the bridge. Both sexes generally build the nest and the male feeds the female while she incubates. Both sexes feed the young which often remain in the nest 30-35 days and consume their weight in food daily. With a 60-70 percent mortality rate often only one in the 3-4 egg clutch survive until the following year. It is interesting to note that island species often lay fewer eggs, a population stabilizing method no doubt. Being monogamous they usually return to the same area the following year to begin the cycle with the male’s bowing to the female with wings spread and tail fanned.

In the first ark, Noah maintained a raven which was later released to determine if the waters were subsiding. If we are to build an effective avicultural “ark” we, too, cannot only collect parrots, pigeons and peafowl but also must not forget the raven or possibly a pair of Mexican crows.

Further Reading