

NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS

More Common Ravens (*Corvus corax*) Nesting in NYS Department of Transportation's Salt Barns

The North American Breeding Bird Survey shows an increasing trend for Common Raven (*Corvus corax*) in New York State (Pardieck *et al.* 2020). Additionally, eBird also shows an increase in the number of Common Ravens being reported in New York State (Fink *et al.* 2020). These resources in addition to the documented southward expansion of Common Raven in Ontario (Peck 2005), suggest the species is expanding its breeding range in New York State and nesting occurrences are likely to become more common on the Lake Plain (Lazazzero and Adams 2018). Lazazzero and Adams (2018) reported nesting sites during 2017 on or within several types of man-made structures in western New York, including a New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) Salt Storage Barn in Sodus, Wayne County, NY.

There were no reports of Common Ravens using any NYSDOT facilities in 2018, 2019, or 2020. Then in the Spring of 2021, two new Common Raven nests were discovered at NYSDOT salt barns in Batavia, Genesee County and Newark, Wayne County (Figs. 1 & 2, p. 372). At both locations, the ravens built their nests in the roofing frames of the salt barn structures. The Batavia pair was observed actively building a nest on 29 March 2021. However, as of 14 April, all activity ceased for unknown reasons at this location. Four adults were observed in the area on 17 December 2021. Two of the birds perched inside the salt barn, while the two others remained outside.

On 29 March 2021 the Newark pair was on eggs. On 14 April 2021, lots of feces and rabbit fur were found on the salt barn floor under the nest. Feathers from a Yellow-shafted Flicker (*Colaptes auratus*) were also found under the nest. On 3 May 2021, three nestlings were observed in the nest. By 12 May, one of the three nestlings had fledged the nest and was seen flying amongst the roofing beams. A second nestling fledged on 13 May, and the last one fledged on 14 May.

These new nest locations support published accounts that Common Ravens are adaptable, use a diversity of nest substrates, and benefit from resources provided by human activities (Boarman and Heinrich 1999). Range expansion into more densely human populated areas, along the Lake Plain but also other parts of New York State, will likely lead to more opportunities for raven-human interactions, and possibly potential conflicts. But for now, NYSDOT's salt barns have proven to be suitable nesting locations for Common Ravens, with no unmanageable conflicts with the Department's maintenance activities. In fact, they provide a benefit in the form of pigeon deterrents.

Literature Cited

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Figure 1. Common Raven nests at two New York State Department of Transportation salt storage barns in western NYS: Batavia, *Genesee* (left), April 2021, photo courtesy of MaryEllen Papin; and Newark, *Wayne* (right), May 2021, photo courtesy of Sarah Lazazzero. Arrows indicate the approximate locations of the nest sites. See Notes and Observations, pp. 332-333.



Figure 2. Common Raven nests at two New York State Department of Transportation salt storage barns in western NYS: Batavia, *Genesee* (left), April 2021, photo courtesy of MaryEllen Papin; and Newark, *Wayne* (right), May 2021, photo courtesy of Sarah Lazazzero. See Notes and Observations, pp. 332-333.