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300

Activity of Common Ravens in Relation to a California Least Tern Colony on Camp Pendleton, California

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The common raven (*Corvus corax*) has been identified as a possible avian predator on the eggs of the endangered California least terns (*Sterna antillarum brownii*) nesting on Camp Pendleton, San Diego County, California. In May and June 1989, we captured 21 common ravens within 6.5 km of the Aliso Creek least tern colony (ACLTC) on Camp Pendleton and fitted them with radio transmitters to determine if their home-ranges overlapped the ACLTC. Home-ranges of 13 nesting adults and 5 non-nesting adults were estimated using the 95% harmonic-mean activity area, minimum convex polygon, and 95% ellipse calculation methods. Nesting males and females differed in median size of home-range ($P = 0.0001$; males - median = 7.6 km², SD = 13.9; females - median = 1.2 km², SD = 1.1). Home-ranges of 2 pairs of ravens, nesting within 1.5 km of the ACLTC, overlapped the colony. Median home-range of the non-nesting ravens was 19.5 km² (SD = 17.3) and none overlapped the tern colony. We observed the ACLTC for 77 one-hour periods over 43 days and found that ravens approached within 250 m of the colony on 50 occasions. However, none were seen landing in the colony. All of the observations were attributed to 2 families of ravens nesting within 1.5 km of the colony. No other ravens were seen in the vicinity of the tern colony suggesting that these birds may have been defending the tern colony as part of their territory. If this is true, teaching the territorial ravens not to eat eggs through behavioral modification (e.g., taste aversion) may be a viable method of protecting the colony.