

# A Roller *Coracias garrulus* presumably nesting in a White Stork *Ciconia ciconia* nest

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*Places selected for nest location by the Roller Coracias garrulus are very diverse and are related to different availability. Here we present an observation of a Roller presumably nesting in the nest of a White Stork Ciconia ciconia in a wooded dehesa in Badajoz Province, where nest-site availability is not a limiting factor for breeding. An adult Roller was seen carrying a grasshopper in its bill and going into a hole between branches at the base of the Stork nest. This presumed nesting could be explained by the nest defence of the much larger Stork, which would give a similar advantage of nest protection to the Roller.*

Key words: Roller, *Coracias garrulus*, White Stork, *Ciconia ciconia*, nest.

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In the forests of central Europe, the Roller *Coracias garrulus* mainly nests in tree holes abandoned by woodpeckers in pines and oaks (Glutz von Blotzheim & Bauer 1980, Cramp 1985). However, in southern latitudes the nesting of Rollers in man's buildings is common (Noval 1975, Aixalà 1991); Aguilar (1980) recorded Rollers nesting in holes in bridges in Extremadura. Pleguezuelos (1992) pointed out their preference for banks in the province of Granada, arguing that it could be an adaptation of the species to the absence of trees in the area. Nest-box occupation by

Rollers is also variable in different habitats. While in the forests of central Europe the use of nest-boxes by Rollers is very scarce (Sosnowski & Chmielewski 1996), in open areas of Extremadura they constitute the site most used for nesting (Avilés 1997).

Here we describe the only known record from Spain of a Roller presumed to have been nesting in the nest of another bird species. On 5th July 1995, at 10:00 hours (GMT) at the River Pedruéganos (Badajoz Province, SW Spain), we saw an adult Roller carrying a grasshopper in its bill. The bird flew to a White Stork *Ciconia*

ciconia colony of 12 nests situated on a eucalyptus tree (*Eucalyptus* sp.), and went into a hole between the branches at the base of one of these occupied nests. After five minutes of observation we had still not detected the bird again.

Cramp (1985) pointed out the sporadic nesting of Rollers in nests of raptor species but not in those of White Storks. However, other bird species of small size, like the House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*, Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus*, Spanish Sparrow *Passer hispaniolensis* and Spotless Starling *Sturnus unicolor*, commonly use nests of large bird species (Cramp & Perrins 1994). This observation can not be associated with a scarcity of potential nest-sites in the area, an open wooded *dehesa* with many natural holes and a large number of old cottages and bridges that offer many cavities for nesting (pers. obs.). The occupation of this nest by the Roller could be related to the nest defence of the larger species which would give a similar advantage of nest protection to the smaller species. •

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## RESUM

*Un Gaig Blau Coracias garrulus presumiblement criant en un niu de Cigonya Blanca Ciconia ciconia*

*Els llocs escollits per a la instal·lació del niu del Gaig Blau són molt diversos i estan relacionats amb la seva distinta disponibilitat. Aquí es presenta una observació d'un Gaig Blau que presumiblement criava en un niu de Cigonya Blanca Ciconia*

*ciconia en una dehesa boscosa de la província de Badajoz on la disponibilitat de nius no era un factor limitant per a la reproducció. Un Gaig Blau adult va ser observat mentre portava una llagosta al bec en el moment que entrava en un forat entre les branques situades a la base del niu. Aquest comportament es podria explicar per la major defensa que les espècies grans fan del seu niu, cosa que donaria al Gaig Blau un avantatge en la defensa del seu propi niu.*

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