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PROBABLE DOUBLE-BROODING BY BLACK KITES IN GHANA - In the breeding season 1976-77 at Cape Coast, Ghana, I noticed that at each of two nests of the Black Kite Milvus migrans on the campus of University of Cape Coast (both of which had fledged young in 1975-76) two broods were successfully hatched. Because I had not expected such an event, the second broods were found almost by accident, but sufficient observations were available to construct an approximate time-table of events at each.

At nest (1) an adult was incubating on 29 November 1976, young were in the nest on (2) and 13 December, and a fledgling was at the nest on 16 February 1977. On 1 April 1977 an adult with pale head-plumage very like that which was incubating on 29 November was again incubating. On 26 April and 2 May a chick was in the nest and on 9 May an adult was feeding a single well-feathered chick.

At nest (2) a newly-fledged chick was present on 19 February 1977, and on 26 March two adults were seen at the nest which contained small young. The chick or chicks failed to fledge.

Brown & Amadon (1968, 'Eagles, Hawks and Falcons of the World', Hamlyn, London) give the incubation and fledging periods of the Black Kite as 38 and 42 days respectively, with the total period from laying to fledging being 80-85 days. Using these figures the timing at nest (1) could be estimated thus: first clutch laid late October 1976, hatched early December, chick flew mid-January 1977; second clutch laid late February, hatched early April, chick flew mid-May. At nest (2) the estimated schedule is: first clutch laid late November 1976, hatched early January 1977 chick flew mid-February; second clutch laid mid-February, hatched mid-late March.

Although in neither case has it been proven that the parents of the late and early clutches were the same, some circumstantial evidence does point to this (the use of the same nest for both clutches; the presence of a fairly distinct pale-headed adult throughout the period at nest (1); and the very short interval which must have elapsed between fledging and re-laying at nest (2)).

Double-brooding (as opposed to replacement of a failed first clutch) is apparently rare in raptors, and I have found no reference to its occurrence in the Black Kite (but see Eisenmann 1971, American birds 25: 529-36 for Elanus leucurus; Mader 1977, Auk 94: 370-71 for Parabuteo unicintus; and Macdonald & Taylor in press, Bull. Br. Orn. Club for Cassinaetus africanus). In seasonally breeding raptors the relatively long incubation and fledging periods tend to deny the possibility of raising more than one brood in a season. The first Black Kites arrive in the Cape Coast area in mid-September and the last leave in mid-June, although all my records of nesting activities in 1975-77 fell between early October (nest-building) and mid-May (records above), and active nests were rare after March. In order to fledge two broods, therefore, the adults would require to begin nesting rather earlier than normal and to continue rather later. The environmental factors and physiological responses necessary for this are, of course, unknown.

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