

The Eurasian Magpie (*Pica pica*) caught and killed an adult Common Swift (*Apus apus*)

Straka obecná (Pica pica) ulovila a zabila dospělého rorýse obecného (Apus apus)

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On 24 May 2024, I observed an adult Eurasian Magpie (*Pica pica*) catching and killing an adult Common Swift (*Apus apus*) directly from its nesting hole in an urban building in central Prague, Czechia. The Magpie pulled the Swift from the hole and, despite several escape attempts, repeatedly recaptured it mid-air before ultimately subduing and killing it on the ground. This observation presents a rare predation event with a previously undocumented hunting method, differing from earlier reports where Swifts were caught in flight or from a building wall.

Dne 24. května 2024 jsem v centru Prahy pozoroval dospělou straku obecnou (Pica pica), jak ulovila a zabila dospělého rorýse obecného (Apus apus), kterého vytáhla přímo z hnízdní dutiny v městské budově. Straka rorýse vytáhla z dutiny a navzdory několika pokusům o útěk ho opakovaně chytala ve vzduchu, než ho nakonec na zemi přemohla a usmrtila. Toto pozorování představuje vzácný případ predace s dosud nezaznamenaným způsobem metody lovu, který se liší od dřívějších zpráv, v nichž byli rorýsi uloveni za letu nebo ze stěny budovy.

Keywords: Common Swift, Eurasian Magpie, predation, urban environment

The Eurasian Magpie (*Pica pica*) is an omnivorous and opportunistic feeder. Its diet varies depending on the local environments and primarily consists of invertebrates, particularly beetles (Coleoptera), as well as small mammals, lizards, frogs, birds, and carrions (Madge et al. 2020). For example, a study examining the diet of the Magpie nestlings in urban and rural areas in Czech Republic found notable differences between the two environments; nevertheless, invertebrates, especially beetles, were the most frequently consumed prey in both habitats (Kryštofková et al. 2011). Magpies are also known to raid nests of oth-

er bird species, particularly passerines (Passeriformes), including their eggs and nestlings (Groom 1993), but successful predation on adult birds is considered rare (Madge et al. 2020).

On 24 May 2024 (4:56–5:02 a.m.), I observed an adult Eurasian Magpie that caught and killed an adult Common Swift (*Apus apus*) in the core urban environment of Prague, Czechia (50°04'32.1"N, 14°24'27.8"E; Fig. 1). The Magpie was resting on the ledge of the building when a Swift arrived to its nesting hole under this ledge. The Magpie then approached the hole from the ledge above and started to inspect it. After a few

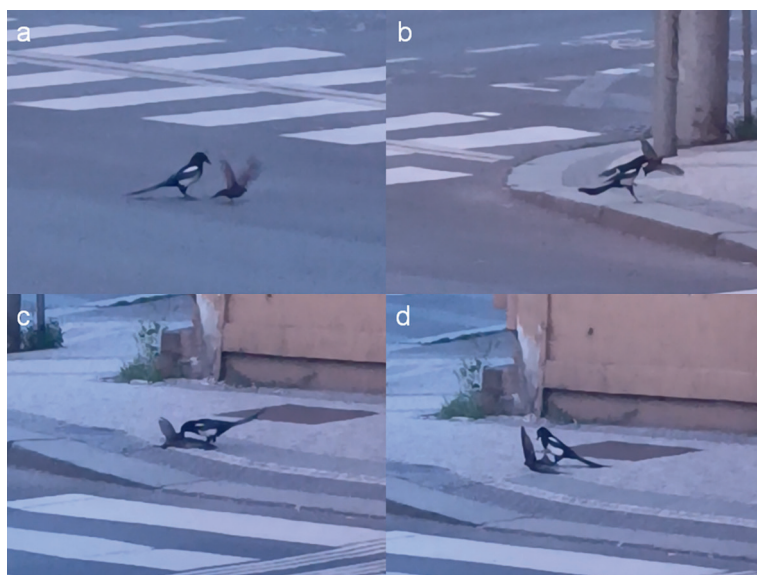


Fig. 1. A Eurasian Magpie (*Pica pica*) attacking and killing an adult Common Swift (*Apus apus*) in Prague, Czechia. (a–b) The swift managed to escape from the attacking Magpie for a few seconds but was quickly caught. (c–d) The Magpie is pecking the Swift while holding it with a foot. Photos by Peter Mikula.

Obr. 1. Straka obecná (*Pica pica*) útočí na dospělé rorýse obecného (*Apus apus*) a zabíjí ho, v Praze, Česko. (a–b) Rorýs se na několik sekund dokázal vytrhnout z útoku straky, ale byl rychle znovu chycen. (c–d) Straka klove rorýse, zatímco ho drží pařátem. Foto Peter Mikula.

seconds, the Magpie flew down from the ledge, hanged on the hole, and pulled out the Swift from the hole after short pecking. With the Swift in the beak, the Magpie then flew to the roof of the opposite building, where it pecked the Swift several times while holding it with the foot. The Swift managed to escape twice, but the Magpie always caught it mid-air after flying a few meters when the Swift was trying to gain speed by diving and flapping wings. After the last mid-air capture, the Magpie flew with the Swift in its beak to the asphalt road ca. 20 meters from me where the fight continued for another two minutes. The Swift again managed to escape a couple of times for a short distance but was always caught again by the Magpie. After the last caught, the Magpie numerous pecked the Swift with occasional

plucking. Then the Swift stopped showing signs of life and the Magpie took it into the bill and flew to the roof of the nearby building out of my sight.

I found two previous notes on a Eurasian Magpie attacking and killing a Common Swift but with a different modus operandi. Lilley (2009) and Pulman (1978) observed a Magpie taking a Swift in flight and from the wall, respectively, whereas I observed a Magpie pulling a Swift out of nesting hole.

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