

FALL NESTING BARN OWLS IN UTAH

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Two active Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*) nests were discovered on 4 October 1968 in Springville, Utah County, Utah. The nests were located among the buildings of an abandoned steel mill complex which is now being dismantled. The first nest, visible from below, was located about 35 m above ground level on an open exposed platform on the coal storage tower. This nest held two young, judged to be one week old, and one egg, apparently infertile. The nesting platform, 0.75 × 1.1 m, was covered with pigeon waste and pellet fragments, the whole forming a rudimentary nest. The second nest, which also contained two young aged approximately one week, was located inside a large storage warehouse only 40 m from the first nest and about 8 m from the floor. This site was located in one corner of the interior on a roof support beam and was approximately 0.3 × 0.3 m. The nest consisted of a mixture of pellet fragments and pigeon waste material. Both sets of young fledged in early December. They remained in the company of the adults until three of the four young died, two by drowning in a small pond below the original nest site and one as the victim of indiscriminate shooting.

There is little published information on Barn Owls in Utah. Tanner (1927), Behle (1941), and others have recorded Barn Owls in the southwestern portion of the state (Virgin River Valley and Kanab) and presumed them to be nesting there. Woodbury et al. (1949) considered them to be residents of the lower valleys of the state, occurring from Box Elder to Kane and Washington Counties. Hayward (unpubl.) notes a set of fresh eggs taken from an old farm near Brigham City, Box Elder County, in May; a set of fresh eggs taken from a barn near Provo, Utah

County in the middle of May; and a nest with a brood of young located 3 mi. SE of St. George, Washington County, about 15 July 1938. These unpublished data and the late nesting records at Springville, Utah County, appear to be the only positive accounts of Barn Owls nesting in Utah.

Fall nesting Barn Owls have been recorded by Bendire (1895), Goetz (1932), and others. Late nesting is considered to be an uncommon but not unusual habit of these irregularly breeding owls, but the problem of double-brooded owls is intriguing. Wallace (1948:16-17) suggests that Barn Owls breed continuously during periods of abundant prey. The breeding period of these owls coincided with an irruptive increase in the meadow mice (*Microtus*) population in the area. *Microtus* was found to comprise over 95 per cent of the prey stockpiled at the nest sites, with Starlings (*Sturnis vulgaris*) and House Sparrows (*Passer domesticus*) making up the remaining 5 per cent of the prey species.

Both broods were much smaller than the normal broods associated with Barn Owls. A review of the literature seems to indicate that Barn Owl winter broods are, on the average, smaller than spring and summer broods, but it is by no means certain that this is the actual case.

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FEEDING TERRITORIES IN THE EVERGLADE KITE

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The gregarious nature of the Everglade Kite (*Rostrhamus sociabilis*) is well known. The kites generally forage in loose flocks and capture their only known food—fresh water snails of the genus *Pomacea*—in communal feeding areas. Snails are caught near the water surface and are carried to feeding perches to be extracted from their shells. Feeding perches are often close together and it is not uncommon to see several kites simultaneously working on snails just a few meters from one another.

On 2 November 1969 we observed a number of brown-plumaged kites (females or immatures) feeding

along a canal in the eastern Everglades of Florida. Surprisingly, some of the birds were defending feeding territories. We had not previously noted such behavior in Everglade Kites observed at various seasons in southern Florida and coastal Guyana. The territorial birds did not appear to be nesting, although nesting has been known to occur in November in Florida (Sprunt, *Auk* 59:585-586, 1942).

We watched one bird in particular from about noon until shortly before sunset. The entire feeding range for this individual was a section of the canal about 30 m wide and 75 m long. The bird remained perched on cattails during most of the afternoon, flying only to procure snails (about every 10-20 min) or to chase off other kites intruding on its feeding area (fig. 1). Similar behavior was noted in three other kites defending similar-sized feeding territories adjacent to that of the bird we were watching closely. Some kites in the area did not appear to be defending territories and these were successively harassed by the territorial individuals as they attempted to forage along the canal. *Pomacea paludosa* was extremely abundant in the canal, an abundance far surpassing anything we had seen in several years observation of