

WESTERN BIRD PHOTOGRAPHERS

ARNOLD SMALL, 608 N. Camden Drive, Beverly Hills, California 90210

Having repeatedly attempted in vain to study and photograph Golden Eagles at their eyries in California, I can well appreciate the time, effort, patience, and technical skill that went into the production of Don Hoechlin's photographic essay of these marvelous birds. Golden Eagles, like other raptors, have exceptionally keen vision, are wary of man, and are extremely shy at the eyrie. Fortunate indeed for them that this is so; otherwise, their numbers would long ago have been depleted by shooters and nest-robbers.

Don R. Hoechlin, a medical student, has taken precious time from his academic studies to provide us with an intimate look at the home life of a pair of young Golden Eagles.

DEVELOPMENT OF GOLDEN EAGLETS IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

DON R. HOECHLIN, 34454 Avenue G, Yucaida, California 92399

The sight of an adult Golden Eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*) soaring in the afternoon sun gives one a feeling of freedom, but to watch the development of a pair of Golden Eaglets is a rare and thrilling experience.

The nesting cycle begins in early January when the adult birds commence their spectacular courtship displays and the nest site selection process. In southern California the nest locations are about equally divided between tree and cliff sites. The eagle nest, called an eyrie, is composed of branches and twigs ranging in size from 2.56 to 0.64 cm in diameter. From mid-February to mid-March one to three eggs, but usually two, are deposited in the nest. After an incubation period of 42 to 45 days, the first eaglet hatches. The second eaglet hatches three or four days later. Incubation is shared by both adults, but the majority is done by the female.

During the first three weeks of development the eaglets are covered with a dual layer of down—a dense, short white down and a fine, long white down. Most of their first week of life is spent lying quietly in the nest. At this point in development they showed no fear of humans and actually moved toward them. At first they accepted food from the