SCREECH OWL TRAPPED INSIDE FALLEN ROOST TREE

by
Daniel T. Walsh[1]
and
Dwight G. Smith
Biology Department
Southern Connecticut State University
New Haven, Connecticut 06515

Although the Screech Owl (*Otus asio*) habitually roosts in cavities in dead or partially dead trees, little information is available on mortality related to the felling of roost trees; e.g. Sutton (*Auk* 44:563-564) reported only one of 111 cases of known mortality due to felling of a tree (apparently by man). Sixteen of 82 (19.5%) Screech Owl tree cavity roost sites we located during an 8 year study in southern Connecticut were in dead snags or partially dead trees. Eight of these have since been destroyed by storms or as a consequence of natural decay. A known cavity roost in East Haven, Connecticut was visited on 19 December 1979. The cavity opening was about 0.1 m from the top of a 3.5 m dead pignut hickory (*Carya glabra*) trunk. A subsequent visit on 27 December at 1620 EST showed that the trunk had fallen with the cavity opening face down, leaving an owl trapped inside. During an effort to roll the trunk, the back wall of the cavity collapsed, allowing the owl to escape. The owl appeared uninjured, judging from its unhindered flight.

Prior to this incident, an owl at this station had regularly responded to playback of tape-recorded Screech Owl calls. Following this incident, all attempts to elicit responses were unsuccessful and we suspect that the owl had abandoned that territory.

We thank Richard J. Clark for suggestions regarding this note.

Present Address: Zoology Department, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah 84602.

JUNE RECORD FOR GYRFALCON IN SOUTH DAKOTA

by
L. Scott Johnson[1]
Department of Biology
St. Olaf College
Northfield, Minnesota 55057

On 10 June 1979, I was observing the Black-billed Magpie (*Pica pica*) as part of a long-term study in Wind Cave National Park of the Black Hills, Custer Co., South Dakota. At 2:07 PM, I was alerted by the alarm cries of several magpies at a nest approximately 200 m away. I observed a large, light colored raptor flying directly towards me at a rapid, steady speed, 10-15 m above the ground. I knew immediately that it was neither a Prairie Falcon (*Falco mexicanus*) nor a Red-tailed Hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*), two raptors I had observed in the park during the study. It was uniformly whitish in color with black speckling and lacked the black axillars of a Prairie Falcon. The wing span was approximately the same as a large buteo. The body was strikingly stout and the tail wide but tapered in slightly towards the end. The wingbeat was slower than that of the low-flying Prairie Falcon. I identified it as a Gyrfalcon (*Falco rusticolus*).

Whitney et. al. (The Birds of South Dakota, Buteo Books, Vermillion, SD, 1978) list the status of the Gyrfalcon in South Dakota as an "irregular, rare to uncommon winter visitant". The latest recorded spring date for South Dakota was 23 April 1955 at Wall Lake by Krause (*South Dak. Bird Notes* 7:48, 1955).

[1]Present Address: Dept. of Biological Sciences, Box 5640, Northern Arizona University, Flagstaff, AZ, 86011.