

FIRST RECORD OF THE WHISKERED OWL IN NEW MEXICO

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At about 20:00 on 19 April 1974, in Clanton Gulch, Peloncillo Mountains, Hidalgo County, New Mexico, we heard a strange call that only vaguely resembled the song of the Whiskered Owl (*Otus trichopsis*). As we played tapes of typical song of that species, the calls changed and became clearly recognizable as those of a Whiskered Owl. Subsequently, the bird was collected (male, left testis 6.7×5.5 mm, No. 3936, Museum of Southwestern Biology, University

of New Mexico). Efforts to locate other individuals on this and the next night were unsuccessful.

Joe T. Marshall, a renowned "owler," did not record Whiskered Owls on any of his numerous avifaunal censuses of Clanton Gulch (Marshall, *Birds of pine-oak woodland in southern Arizona and adjacent México, Pacific Coast Avifauna* 32, 1957). Likewise, one of us (JDL) has played taped calls of various owl species, including those of *O. trichopsis*, here annually in the spring since 1969 and has not previously recorded Whiskered Owls. Thus we conclude that this individual probably was a vagrant, although Whiskered Owls are common in the nearby Chiricahua Mountains of Arizona.

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FIRST BREEDING RECORDS OF THE BARN OWL IN IDAHO

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The Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*) in Idaho is said to be known from one specimen recorded in Latah County, and its status in the State is yet to be determined (Burleigh, *Birds of Idaho*, Caxton Printers Ltd., Caldwell, Idaho, p. 647, 1972). Our records of these owls in Idaho may help to resolve that question.

In November 1969, we discovered the nest of a pair of Barn Owls and their brood of six young approximately 10.5 miles S of Nampa near Highway 45. The nest was situated in a shallow cavity near the top of a large stack of hay bales. Subsequent checks revealed that all six young fledged in early December.

On 5 June 1972, we found a Barn Owl nest in a crevice in a shallow ravine approximately 3 miles N of Holbrook and 1 mile W of Highway 37. The nest

contained two nearly full-grown young. When checked 2 weeks later, both young had left the nest. A search of the vicinity revealed three Barn Owls—two recently fledged juveniles and one adult. This nest was located only a few miles north of Snowville, Utah, near where Platt (*Great Basin Nat.* 31:51, 1971) flushed three immature Barn Owls from along the high dirt banks of Deep Creek in late July 1969.

On 21 December 1973, a dead juvenile (sex undetermined) was found in a barnyard south of Nampa near the site of the 1969 nest. Its state of decomposition indicated a spring or summer fledging time.

Stewart (*Wilson Bull.* 64:164, 1952) summarized the information which suggested that the northern range of Barn Owls may be limited by difficulties in procuring food during severe winter conditions. We believe that these breeding records may help establish the northern limit of the range of this species in the intermountain region.

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FIRST BREEDING RECORDS OF MERLINS IN MONTANA

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Temple (1972a) included Montana within the breeding range of two subspecies of Merlins (*Falco columbarius columbarius* and *F. c. richardsoni*), but to date there has been no published record of eggs or young of either of these races for Montana. In this paper I report eight positive Merlin breeding attempts and additional observations on four probable attempts. Also included are notes on the nesting ecology of the species and organochlorine residues in three addled eggs.

Silloway (1903:302) was first to report seeing Merlins summering in Montana. He collected an adult male at Flathead Lake on 19 July (U.M. No. 15675) and an immature male ("young of the year") at Swan Lake on 26 July (U.M. No. 1617). He iden-

tified the adult as *columbarius* and the immature as *richardsoni*. Saunders (1921:66) listed each race as a "rare summer resident."

During the breeding season in 1970, I first noted adult Merlins on the plains in central Montana. On 17 June 1972, I observed a male calling and apparently defending a territory, but on subsequent visits I found neither the bird nor its nest. In 1973, I located two active nests, and in 1974 three were found. I learned from qualified observers that Merlins were breeding in other counties in Montana. In 1970, P. Byrne (pers. comm.) located four recently fledged young and their parents in Missoula County. According to Temple's (1972a) maps and habitat descriptions, these birds were probably *columbarius*. In 1973 C. Carlson (pers. comm.) found a pair with three young in Valley County. In 1974 M. Arnold (pers. comm.) found a nest with two young in Toole County.

In addition to these positive nesting records (for which eggs or young were observed), several prob-