

FIRST NESTING RECORD FOR BOREAL OWL IN IDAHO

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The Boreal Owl (*Aegolius funereus*) has been reported breeding south of Canada on only four occasions (Baldwin and Koplin 1966, Skaar 1975, Eckert and Savaloja 1979, Batey et al. 1980). Eckert and Savaloja's (1979) record conclusively established the species as a breeding resident south of Canada but did not substantially extend the established breeding range (A.O.U. 1957), since the observation was made in northern Minnesota. Sightings of fledged juveniles or family groups in Colorado, Montana, and Washington reported by Baldwin and Koplin (1966), Skaar (1975), and Batey et al. (1980), respectively, indicate that the species' breeding range extends south of Canada along the Rockies to central Colorado. Baldwin and Koplin (1966) hypothesized that a breeding population of Boreal Owls occurs in Colorado as a relict of a more widespread mid-latitude Pleistocene population. Breeding status was confirmed by R. A. Ryder and D. Palmer (both at Colorado State University, Fort Collins, Colorado) in 1982 (pers. comm.) after they found several calling males and a successful nest near Cameron Pass in north-central Colorado. Previous reports of Boreal Owls in Idaho were limited to non-breeders for the extreme northern part of the state (Merrill 1897, Rust 1915).

Our observations of Boreal Owls from 1980–1982 indicate that a resident population is established in the mountains of central Idaho. In late February, 1980, while censusing owls by playback of tape-recorded calls, we located at least four calling males within a 2,100-ha study area near Chamberlain Basin Ranger Station, River of No Return Wilderness (45°22'N, 115°07'W, elevation 1,710 m). Each owl was heard during at least two censuses between 26 February and 9 March and three Boreal Owls were heard again on 1 April when the study area was recensused. In addition to Boreal Owls, we also found Flammulated (*Otus flammeolus*), Northern Pygmy (*Glauucidium gnoma*), Saw-whet (*A. acadicus*), and Great Horned (*Bubo virginianus*) owls in the Chamberlain Basin area.

On 24 January 1981 we captured and radio-tagged a female Boreal Owl. On 2 June we found the bird brooding two young in a cavity 27 m high in a ponderosa pine (*Pinus ponderosa*) 460 m from the original capture site. The young fledged in early July. This nest was placed on a site where a male Boreal Owl had called consistently during spring, 1980. We captured a male within the territory in 1981, but heard no calling in response to taped calls on nine censuses. The absence of calling and the presence of a female in January imply that a pair-bond was formed before the typical spring courting period, possibly the pre-

vious year. Bondrup-Nielsen (1978) noted cessation of male calling after pair formation in spring.

Two Boreal Owls responded to taped calls in the study area during 25 February–2 March 1982. Thus, the species was documented in the area three consecutive years.

The presence of a resident population of Boreal Owls in the mountains of central Idaho supports Baldwin and Koplin's (1966) hypothesis that the breeding range of this species extends southward along the continental divide. Inventories throughout the Rockies will be required to determine whether southern Boreal Owl populations represent isolated relicts scattered along the mountains between Canada and Colorado or a loosely connected gamodeme. Late winter and spring surveys throughout the Rockies north of Colorado would be instructive. High-elevation habitats along the continental divide should receive immediate attention in light of recent reports of these owls near Togwotee Pass and the Jackson Hole areas of Wyoming (Steve Weiss, U.S. Forest Service, Bridger-Teton Natl. Forest and Burt Raynas, Jackson Hole, WY; pers. comm.). Efforts should concentrate on stands of large timber interspersed with openings of meadow or shrub cover, the typical habitat in central Idaho, and on mature aspen stands (Bondrup-Nielsen 1978).

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