

SHORT COMMUNICATIONS

The Condor 91:711-712
© The Cooper Ornithological Society 1989

PRAIRIE FALCON NESTING ON TRANSMISSION TOWERS¹

JERRY A. ROPPE

Environmental Services Department, Pacific Power and Light Company, Portland, OR 97204

STEVEN M. SIEGEL

Environmental Affairs, Sierra Pacific Power Company, Reno, NV 89511

STEVEN E. WILDER

Environmental Services Department, Pacific Power and Light Company, Portland, OR 97204

Key words: Prairie Falcon; transmission line; nesting.

This note documents the successful breeding of Prairie Falcons (*Falco mexicanus*) on high voltage transmission lines. Power poles or transmission towers are frequently used by raptors as nesting sites (Olenдорff et al. 1981). We could find no published account of Prairie Falcon nesting on transmission towers; however, falcon nesting occurs in abandoned stick nests of Common Ravens (*Corvus corax*) and other species on cliffs (Bent 1938, Odgen and Hornocker 1977, Cade 1982, Palmer 1988) and in trees (MacLaren et al. 1984). Excluding man-made excavations or modifications to cliffs, use of man-made structures is rare. One unsuccessful attempt to nest on a building occurred in Calgary (Cade 1982, Palmer 1988). A pair of falcons accepted relocation of its brood from a high-wall eyrie to a nest box on a wooden pole (Postovit and Postovit 1987).

On 13 May 1985, a ground survey for nesting raptors and ravens was conducted along the Tracy-Valmy 345-kV transmission line in north-central Nevada near Lovelock. Upon our approach to tower no. 322, a Prairie Falcon flushed from a stick nest in the tower. This site had been occupied by ravens in 1984. The falcon circled while an observer climbed the tower to inspect the nest contents and status. Five eggs were in the nest. The nest was approximately 30 m above the ground at the intersection of metal latticework for the crossarm and center bridge of a guyed-delta tower (Fig. 1). Upon departure from the site, the adult bird returned to the nest.

On a subsequent visit to the site on 20 June 1985, five young birds (30-35 days old) were in the nest (Fig. 2). No adults were present. On 28 June 1985, observers conducted an aerial survey of the line. The nest was vacant; the young birds presumably had fledged.

During a ground survey on 12 May 1986, the nest at tower no. 322 was found to be vacant. At tower no. 295, a Prairie Falcon was perched adjacent to a nest that had been occupied by ravens in 1985. The falcon flushed on approach, but remained in the area. In-

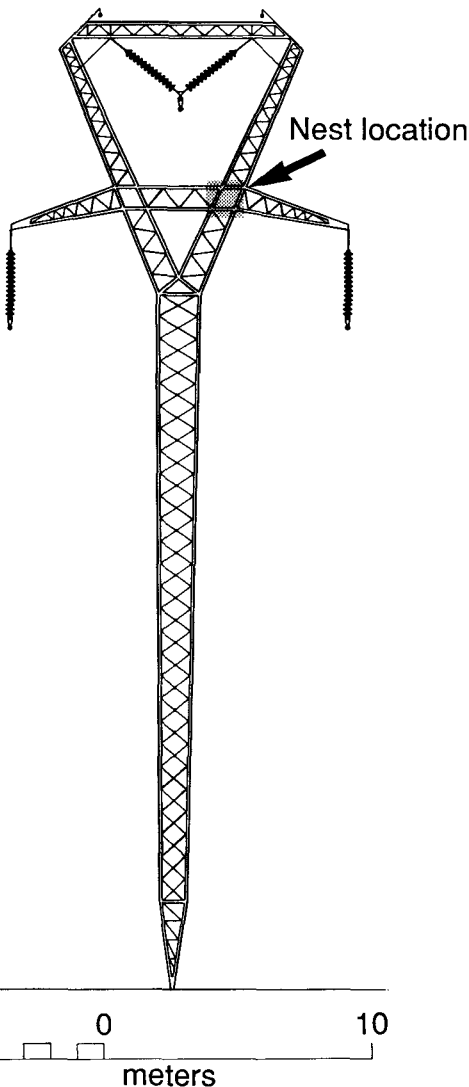


FIGURE 1. Nest location on 345-kV transmission tower.

¹ Received 30 June 1988. Final acceptance 16 February 1989.

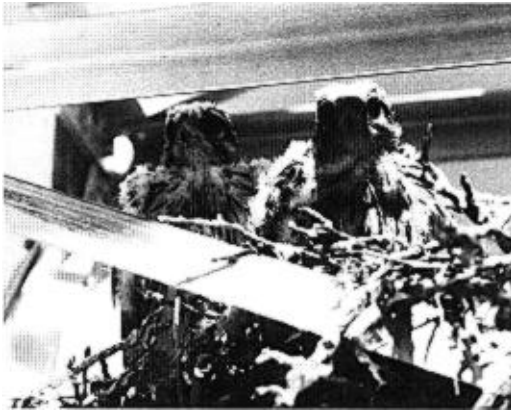


FIGURE 2. Young Prairie Falcons in abandoned raven nest on a transmission tower.

spection of the nest indicated that it was unoccupied. On tower no. 294, a Prairie Falcon was observed incubating on a stick nest. This site was in the same tower position as the 1985 nest, but was approximately 4.8 km southwest of tower no. 322. On 17 June 1986, observers climbed the tower and found two young birds (30–35 days old) in the nest. Both adults were present.

The typical falcon nest is on a cliff with some degree of overhead protection and shading (Cade 1982, Palmer 1988). The falcons found in abandoned raven nests were surrounded by the metal lattice of the tower (Fig. 2). The latticework provided shading, allowed air

movement for cooling, and was a suitable substrate for nest construction for ravens and other birds.

Both nest sites were in flat to rolling terrain of desert-shrub habitat. No suitable natural nesting sites (cliffs) were within a 5- to 10-km radius of the nesting towers. Thus, abandoned raven nests in towers have provided suitable nesting sites for Prairie Falcons where a natural site was lacking.

LITERATURE CITED

- BENT, A. C. 1938. Life histories of North American birds of prey. Part 2. Dover Publications, New York.
- CADE, T. J. 1982. The falcons of the world. Comstock/Cornell Univ. Press, Ithaca, NY.
- MACLAREN, P. A., D. E. RUNDE, AND S. H. ANDERSON. 1984. A record of tree-nesting Prairie Falcons in Wyoming. *Condor* 86:487–488.
- ODGEN, V. T., AND M. G. HORNOCKER. 1977. Nesting density and success of Prairie Falcons in southwestern Idaho. *J. Wildl. Manage.* 41:1–11.
- OLENDORFF, R. R., A. D. MILLER, AND R. N. LEHMAN. 1981. Suggested practices for raptor protection on power lines; the state of the art in 1981. *Raptor Research Report* 4:1–111.
- PALMER, R. S. [ED.] 1988. Handbook of North American birds. Vol. 5. Diurnal raptors (Part 2). Yale Univ. Press, New Haven, CT.
- POSTOVIT, H. R., AND B. C. POSTOVIT. 1987. Impact and mitigation techniques, p. 183–213. *In* B.A.G. Pendleton, B. A. Millsap, K. W. Cline, and D. M. Bird [eds.], Raptor management techniques manual. Natl. Wildl. Fed., Scientific and Technical Series No. 10.

The Condor 91:712–716
© The Cooper Ornithological Society 1989

DISTRIBUTION OF THE BOREAL OWL IN EASTERN WASHINGTON AND OREGON¹

BARTLETT D. WHELTON

Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry, Eastern Washington University, Cheney, WA 99004

Key words: *Aegolius funereus*; *Boreal Owl*; *distribution*; *western North America*.

In its description of the southern distributional limit for the Boreal Owl (*Aegolius funereus*) in North America, the AOU (1983) noted continuous populations across southern Canada and isolated ones from northwestern Wyoming and north-central Colorado. Until the 1970s the species was singularly known in Washington State from a now misplaced specimen collected

in Whatcom County during January 1905 (Dawson 1908). Since that time the owl's presence has been verified by a specimen taken during January 1974 in Whitman County, paradoxically the heart of Washington's wheat land (Johnson and Hudson 1976). To date records from Oregon have included a number of references describing its presence during the 1800s as "not rare" in the Oregon Territory and a single specimen taken in Klamath County during March 1902 (Gabrielson and Jewett 1940). More recently Boreal Owl surveys in states along the Rocky Mountain corridor from northern New Mexico to northern Idaho and Montana have revealed a not so discontinuous pattern of breeding populations (Palmer and Ryder

¹ Received 12 August 1988. Final acceptance 30 March 1989.