

NOTES ON A KANSAS GREAT HORNED OWL POPULATION

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This is a report of data from spring, 1968 studies of nesting Great Horned Owls. These studies were all conducted within a 35 mile radius of Lawrence, Kansas (NE corner of Kansas). The studies spanned a period from the end of January when the first birds were found incubating to the end of May when the last young bird was banded and had been fledged. Nine nests were kept under observation as frequently as possible. Anyone desiring more detailed information on these nest studies can write to the author.

I don't think the Horned Owls in this area were as successful as they were the last two years (spring 1966 and 1967). No three-egg clutches were found this year compared to the two found last year and there was one incidence each of an infertile egg and of a partially developed egg failing to hatch. The majority of the young owls were banded in the nest or several days after fledging (10 of 13 fledged). The data in tabular form are as follows:

<u>Nest #</u>	<u># eggs per clutch</u>	<u>Approx. date of hatching</u>	<u>Approx. date of fledging</u>	<u># fledged</u>
1	2	24 March	?*	2
2	2	2 March	30 March	1**
3	1	(Nest abandoned--egg failed to hatch)		
4	2	5 April	20 May	1
5	2	9 March	8 April	1
6	2	3 March	16 April	2
7	2	18 Feb.	7 April	2
8	2	?***	27 April	2
9	2	28 March	15 May	2
				13

\*Unable to locate young in area

\*\*One young bird was removed at age 2 wks. to be hand raised

\*\*\*Ca. last week in February by counting back

Data Interpretation. Using 30-32 days (majority of the literature seems to substantiate this incubation period in horned owls) and counting back from the hatching dates, we find that laying occurred from the 2nd or 3rd week of January through the 1st week of March. There seems to be a strong median period of egg-laying around the second week of February. The average number of eggs per clutch was 1.88. Thirteen young owls were fledged from sixteen eggs (81% fledging success not counting young bird taken from nest #2). Mortality was not due to any one predominant factor and the three deaths recorded were due to the following causes: 1) infertile egg; 2) punctured egg--embryo partially developed; 3) 4 week old young bird caught and strangled in a knot-hole of the nest cavity.