

GREAT HORNED OWL PREDATION ON CAVE SWALLOWS

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Both Great Horned Owls (*Bubo virginianus*) and Cave Swallows (*Hirundo fulva*) occur in the caves of southeastern New Mexico, but no interaction between the two species has been recorded. On 1 June 1984, Tom and Bobbie Bemis, Ron Kerbo, and I visited Ogle Cave, Slaughter Canyon, Carlsbad Caverns National Park, Eddy County, New Mexico, to check on the approximately 100 Cave Swallows nesting there. As we rappelled into the cave, we flushed a Great Horned Owl, which was mobbed by Cave Swallows as it left the cave. Beneath a Great Horned Owl nest I found a pellet containing bird bones and a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service band. The band (number 970-75444) was from a Cave Swallow that had been banded in the entrance of Carlsbad Cavern, about 13 km northeast of Ogle Cave, on 3 August 1983. Our banding studies suggest that Cave Swallows move among the caves after their nesting season. The pellet contained 313 bones representing at least four individual swallows, as well as insect parts. It is now in the collection of the Carlsbad Caverns National Park museum.

On several occasions since 1978 I have banded Cave Swallows at Swallow Sinkhole, Glass Mountains, Brewster County, Texas; usually Great Horned Owls are present at this site too. On 9 June 1984, when Orlando Ornelas and I visited Swallow Sinkhole, we flushed from its nest a Great Horned Owl, which was then vigorously mobbed by Cave Swallows. An owl pellet found in the sinkhole entrance also contained bones the size of a Cave Swallow's.

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