



Tree Life Program

WHAT TO DO IF YOU COME UPON A FALLEN NEST OR NESTLING

If you find a nestling raptor on the ground and feel it is in danger please contact your local wildlife rehabilitation facility. In Marin County, CA contact the Hungry Owl Project hotline at **415-518-9670**, or WildCare at **415-453-1000**, or the Marin Humane Society at **415-883-4621**. For other areas, please check this site <http://www.tc.umn.edu/~devo0028/contact.htm>

Please provide as much information as possible about the location of the found nestlings, including landmarks. In order to reunite the owlets, or hawks, with their parents, we must place the new nest as close as possible to the original location and we must do so as quickly as possible. **Removing a nestling from its family is an absolute last resort** and should only be done if the bird is in grave danger. Many nestlings will be on the ground during the fledging period and are still cared for by their parents. If you feel the nestling is in danger from ground predators, you can place a cardboard box over the bird until professional help arrives.

Wild animals require *specialized* care and diets that can only be provided by licensed wildlife rehabilitation facilities. **It is a violation of federal law to keep wildlife - however well intentioned.**

WHAT WILL HUNGRY OWL DO FOR YOU? The Hungry Owl Project will help assess the situation with knowledgeable information of the raptor's breeding habits. In the San Francisco Bay Area we use pole cameras to inspect cavities and nests; we can help determine the stage of breeding. We can estimate the fledge time and then block the hole once the birds have fledged. We can erect nest boxes in nearby locations that can replace the fallen tree or trees in question. Our goal is to work with you and come up with win/win solutions for the tree professional, the tree owner, and the nesting birds.

HOW TO ASSESS IF A TREE IS INHABITED

Look for signs: Raptors leave obvious signs around their roosting and breeding sites:

- 1) Large amounts of "white wash" at base of tree (bird poop)
- 2) Owl pellets on ground surrounding tree (an owl pellet is a dry pellet consisting of fur and bones from the prey of owls/raptors), hawks also produce pellets, but without bones.
- 3) Vocalization. Ask tree owners and neighbors if they have heard loud hooting, whistling, calling, hissing or screeching in neighborhood.

BREEDING OWLS OF THE SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA

Barn Owl

HABITAT – widespread in open country; forages in suburban parklands & residential areas; prefers edges of woodlands & forests opening up onto open space

NESTING – holes in trees, silos, barns, derelict buildings & unused structures. Can be found nesting in caves and cliffs. Accepts nest box.

BREEDING PERIOD - Most eggs are laid between March - June, but can be almost year-round; “double-clutches” in warmer parts of range if food supply is abundant.

EGG INCUBATION – 32-34 days

FLEDGE – 60 days after hatching

TOTAL BREEDING TIME = 3 months



Photo: Eddie Bartley



Photo: Eddie Bartley

Great Horned Owl

HABITAT – Wide variety of environments, often in Eucalyptus Trees

NESTING – nest in old hawks, herons, eagles or crows nests - also on ledges and in crevices. Uses abandoned nests of Red-tailed Hawks or usurps active nests.

BREEDING PERIOD – January - February through March - April

EGG INCUBATION PERIOD – 30 days

FLEDGE – 9 to 10 weeks after hatching. Young spend up to 2 weeks on ground before fully fledged. Young will be fed and defended by parents before fully flight capable.

TOTAL BREEDING TIME = 3 ½ months

Northern Pygmy-Owl

HABITAT –Open coniferous forests; open oak, pine-oak, & stream bank woodlands. Favors forest edges & other open spots with nearby trees.

NESTING - Abandoned holes of Northern Flickers, Woodpeckers and natural tree cavities.

BREEDING PERIOD – Anytime between March - May

EGG INCUBATION – 28 days

FLEDGE – 1 month

TOTAL BREEDING TIME = 2 months

Northern Saw-whet Owl

HABITAT – Coniferous forest bordering wetlands with lush deciduous growth; also mixed wood stands, swamps, woodlots.

NESTING – Typically cavities in dead snags, mostly old flicker or other woodpecker cavities; accepts nest boxes. Most nest sites are close to water or swampy area.

BREEDING PERIOD – Anytime March - July (April to May most common)

EGG INCUBATION – 25 to 30 days

FLEDGE – 4 to 5 weeks after hatching

TOTAL BREEDING TIME = 2 months



Photo: Phil Johnson



Spotted Owl

HABITAT – Dense forests, mostly coniferous; requires groves of mature trees. (Douglas Firs, Ponderosa Pines, Oaks, Redwoods, Sycamores)

NESTING – Crevices, potholes, caves, abandoned nest of crows, ravens or hawks, cavities in trees, stump end of sycamores, oaks.

BREEDING PERIOD – Anytime between March and May

EGG INCUBATION – 1 month

FLEDGE – Young drop out of nest 5 weeks after hatching. Fledge at 6 weeks.

TOTAL BREEDING TIME – 2 ½ months

Photo: Sue Eban

Western Screech-Owl

HABITAT - Open woodlands, forest clearings, old orchards, suburban parks. Fond of old trees with knotholes.

NESTING – nest in old woodpecker holes, natural cavities, and nest box

BREEDING PERIOD – Anytime between February and July

EGG INCUBATION – 28 days

FLEDGE – 4 weeks after hatching

TOTAL BREEDING TIME = 2 months.



Photo: Eddie Bartley



Tree Life Program Resources

To report a bird or mammal, please be prepared to provide information including the address, home owner's name, details on the location and type of bird or mammal to one of these resources below:

In Marin County call **Marin Humane Society** at (415)883-4621
171 Bel Marin Keys, Novato, CA 94949 www.marinhumanesociety.org

For Owls or Hawks, call the Hungry Owl Project at (415)454-4587
179 the Alameda, San Anselmo, CA 94960 www.hungryowl.org

Or call **WildCare** or **Baskets for Birds** at
(415)456-7283 from 9AM-5PM or (415)300-6359 after hours
76 Albert Park Lane, San Rafael, CA 94901 www.wildcarebayarea.org

In Sonoma County call **Sonoma County Wildlife Rescue** at (707) 526-wild
403 Meacham Road, Petaluma, CA 94952 www.scwildliferescue.org

In the East Bay call **Lindsay Wildlife** at (925)935-1978
1931 First Ave, Walnut Creek, CA 94597 www.wildlife-museum.org

In San Francisco and San Mateo County:
For Birds call **Peninsula Humane Society** call (650)340-7022
12 Airport Blvd, San Mateo, CA 94401 www.peninsulahumanesociety.org

For Mammals call **SFROMP** (415) 221-3498 www.sfromp.org

For additional information on birds and mammals:
Golden Gate Raptor Observatory www.ggro.org
California Department of Fish & Game www.dfg.ca.gov
United States Fish & Wildlife www.fws.gov

For additional information on wildlife rehabilitators:
California Department of Fish & Game www.dfg.ca.gov/wmd/rehab/facilities



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Washington, Washington, D.C. 20240

MBPM-2
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MIGRATORY BIRD PERMIT MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Nest Destruction

PURPOSE: The purpose of the memorandum is to clarify the application of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) to migratory bird nest destruction, and to provide guidance for advising the public regarding this issue.

POLICY: The MBTA does not contain any prohibition that applies to the destruction of a migratory bird nest alone (without birds or eggs), provided that no possession occurs during the destruction. To minimize MBTA violations, Service employees should make every effort to inform the public of how to minimize the risk of taking migratory bird species whose nesting behaviors make it difficult to determine occupancy status or continuing nest dependency.

The MBTA specifically protects migratory bird nests from *possession, sale, purchase, barter, transport, import, and export, and take*. The other prohibitions of the MBTA – *capture, pursue, hunt, and kill* – are inapplicable to nests. The regulatory definition of *take*, as defined by 50 CFR 10.12, *means to pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or collect, or attempt to pursue hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or collect*. Only *collect* applies to nests.

While it is illegal to collect, possess, and by any means transfer possession of any migratory bird nest, the MBTA does not contain any prohibition that applies to the destruction of a bird nest alone (without birds or eggs), provided that no possession occurs during the destruction. The MBTA does not authorize the Service to issue permits in situations in which the prohibitions of the Act do not apply, such as the destruction of unoccupied nests. (Some unoccupied nests are legally protected by statutes other than the MBTA, including nests of threatened and endangered migratory bird species and bald and golden eagles, within certain parameters.)

However, the public should be made aware that, while destruction of a nest by itself is not prohibited under the MBTA, nest destruction that results in the unpermitted take of migratory birds or their eggs, is illegal and fully prosecutable under the MBTA.

Due to the biological and behavioral characteristics of some migratory bird species, destruction of their nests entails an elevated degree of risk of violating the MBTA. For example, colonial nesting birds are highly vulnerable to disturbance; the destruction of unoccupied nests during or near the nesting season could result in a significant level of take. Another example involves

ground nesting species such as burrowing owls and bank swallows, which nest in cavities in the ground, making it difficult to detect whether or not their nests are occupied by eggs or nestlings or are otherwise still essential to the survival of the juvenile birds. The Service should make every effort to raise public awareness regarding the possible presence of birds and the risk of violating the MBTA, the Endangered Species Act (ESA), and the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (BGEPA), and should inform the public of factors that will help minimize the likelihood that take would occur should nests be destroyed (i.e., when active nesting season normally occurs).

The Service should also take care to discern that persons who request MBTA permits for nest destruction are not targeting nests of endangered or threatened species or bald or golden eagles, so that the public can be made aware of the prohibitions of the ESA and the BGEPA against nest destruction.

In situations where it is necessary (i.e., for public safety) to remove (destroy) a nest that is occupied by eggs or nestlings or is otherwise still essential to the survival of a juvenile bird, and a permit is available pursuant to 50 CFR parts 13 and 21, the Service may issue a permit to take individual birds.



Director