

# UNUSUAL GREAT HORNED OWL NEST

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Martin Gerard, Sig Jordheim and I, went out to visit a few Great Horned Owl nests. One of the nests was particularly interesting.

At dusk on March 31, 2014, I caught a Snowy Owl NE of Elrose which, to get out of the wind, I banded in a large farm yard. As I banded the Snowy Owl, I could hear a pair of Great Horned Owls calling to each other, somewhere in the yard. Around 1 May 2014, Martin, Marten Stoffel and Brent Terry stopped at that same yard and asked if they could look through the trees of the shelterbelts to see if there were owls nesting. "Oh, you mean the owls in the bin?"

Sometime in February/March, the inspection hatch on a 10,000 bu. hopper bin (fourth from the north in a row of ten bins and full to the hatch with canola) had blown open. And, for just the second time I can remember, we had owls nesting in the product in a steel bin. What impressed me was that the farmers were willing to leave the hatch open on a bin of canola worth \$100,000 just because there were owls in the bin.

Two weeks ago, when Martin

climbed the 35 feet to the hatch, he found four little owlets just a few feet from hatch, comfortably nestled in a depression in the canola. Two were large enough to band, but two were too small.

So, today (15 May 2014) we went back to see how the owls were doing. I climbed first and saw three little owls just inside the hatch. It was still lightly raining so I got some moisture on the lens of the camera. The fourth owlet was no longer there, but the remaining three looked healthy. In front of the left owlet there is a Lapland Longspur and off to the side were two headless Norway Rats. On top and half buried in the canola were many little regurgitated pellets as well as some big ones, such as the one in front of the middle owlet. The rats were a surprise, as we seldom see them in owl nests, but one of the employees said the local pest control officer had suspected rats in a nearby abandoned yard.

It will be interesting in another couple of weeks to see whether the owlets survive their first flights from the top of a 35' high bin to the ground.









*Great horned owl*

*-Lowell Strauss*