

RED-TAILED HAWK NESTING SUCCESS, 1971

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The nesting success of the Red-tailed Hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*) in an area around Raymore, Saskatchewan decreased tremendously in 1971. Only 37.5 percent of the nests under observation were successful, and the number of young fledged from these successful nests also dropped considerably compared to previous years (see Table 1). Only one of six successful nests this year raised two young, as compared to 1970 when four nests fledged three young each, 12 nests raised two young, and two raised one young. Although the sample is small for 1966 to 1969, there were only three nests throughout the four years which raised one young only.

The nests counted as being active were those which contained incubating females from late April to the end of May. None of the nests in question this year was climbed to check contents until late June. All of the nests in the years 1966 to 1970 were climbed while eggs were still being incubated; thus, desertion due to human disturbance can be ruled out for 1971 (except for one nest which showed signs of someone attempting to cut down the tree).

Fifteen nests located south of Kelliher by Ian Lochtre also showed poor success. Of these nests, five failed, three raised two young to banding size, and seven raised one to this age. This represents an average of 1.30 young per active nest.

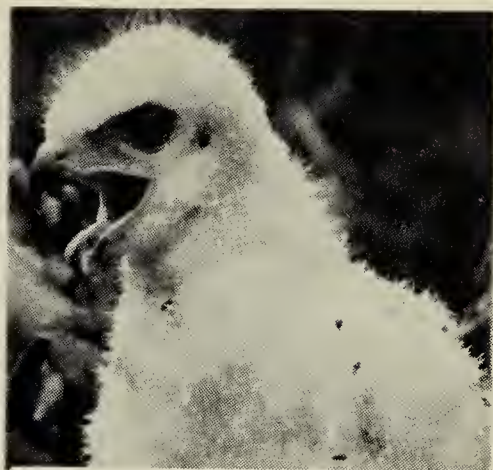


Photo by Wayne Gemmell

Also, two nests which were found by Bob Robinson northwest of Simpson failed.

A high incidence of Red-tailed Hawk nest failure and low fledgling success was noted by Dr. Stuart Houston (*Blue Jay*, 24:143) in 1966 in the Saskatoon area; five nests each raised one young, and six nests were unsuccessful. In that year, Great Horned Owl (*Bubo virginianus*) nest success was high, a situation which was not evident in the Raymore area in 1971 when five out of 12 nests failed.

A factor which may have accounted for this decline in success of Red-tails is the heavy rain which occurred throughout the first two weeks of June, for during this period young birds would still be susceptible to the cool, damp weather. Prey populations did not appear to have decreased in 1971 relative to previous years; this was verified by food remains in nests.

Table 1. Summary of nesting data.

Year	Total number of nests	Number successful	Number of young fledged	Average no. of young fledged per successful nest
1966	4	4	9	2.25
1967	6	6	12	2.00
1968	6	6	11	1.81
1969	7	6	13	2.16
1970	22	18	38*	2.11
1971	16	6	7	1.17

* Count for young when $\frac{3}{4}$ grown (number of young fledged unknown)