

A LATE NESTING OF THE GREAT GRAY OWL

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On 14 August 1991, Howard Giles was hiking in Crimson Lake Provincial Park in west central Alberta when he heard the squawking of a young owl. Upon investigation, a downy chick was located on an abandoned Northern Goshawk nest \pm 12 m up in an aspen. Nearby was an adult Great Gray Owl.

Table 1 details all subsequent visits to the nest by Howard Giles and Eloise McDonald (Crimson Lake Pro-

vincial Park naturalist) and her staff.

Based on a survey of the literature, this appears to be an unusually late nesting record for the Great Gray Owl. Karalus and Eckhart indicate a latest egg-laying date for the Great Gray Owl of 19 July, with the norm being 9 April through 1 May.² Jim Duncan, a doctoral candidate working on Great Gray Owls under Dr. Robert Nero in Manitoba, indicated that as of 1991 he was unaware of



Great Gray Owl at nest.

Doug Collister

Table 1. OBSERVATIONS OF GREAT GRAY OWL NEST AT CRIMSON LAKE PROVINCIAL PARK, 1991

Date	Observations
15 August	2 adults, 2 chicks on nest
16 August	2 adults, 2 chicks on nest
17 August	2 adults, 2 chicks on nest
19 August	2 adults, 2 chicks on nest
22 August	1 adult, 1 chick on nest
24 August	1 adult, 1 chick on nest
26 August	1 chick near nest
30 August	no birds detected

any Great Gray Owl nest in south-eastern Manitoba containing young past mid-July. Osborne felt that the Great Gray Owl nests he found with young on 5 July 1987 were very late.⁴ Terres suggests eggs can be laid in Alberta from 23 March to mid-May and in Arctic Canada from mid-May to July.⁵

We were unable to find any reference to double brooding by the Great Gray Owl but replacement breeding has been recorded in Sweden. Høglund and Lansgren (in Mikkola 1983) found a nest with eggs at the beginning of May.³ Later, on 28 May, the nest was empty but on 4 June it contained two eggs and by 19 June the clutch numbered four.³

Incubation period for the Great Gray Owl is 28-30 days and nestlings leave the nest at 21-28 days of age.^{2,1} Using the approximate time of

leaving the nest as 21 August from Table 1, the Crimson Lake owls hatched somewhere around 1 August while the eggs were laid approximately 1 July. Thus, this nesting is one of the latest on record.

1. HARRISON, C. 1978. A field guide to the nests, eggs and nestlings of North American birds. Collins. 416 pp.
2. KARALUS, K.E. and E.W. ECKHART. 1987. The owls of North America (North of Mexico). Weathervane Books, New York. 278 pp.
3. MIKKOLA, H. 1983. The owls of Europe. T&AD Poyser, Calton, England. 397 pp.
4. OSBORNE, T.O. 1987. Biology of the Great Gray Owl in interior Alaska. Pp. 91-95 in Biology and conservation of northern forest owls; symposium proceedings. USDA Forest Service General Technical Report RM-142, Fort Collins, CO.
5. TERRES, J.K. 1980. The Audubon encyclopedia of North American birds. Alfred A. Knopf, New York. 1109 pp.

