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# Ground nesting of the Ferruginous Hawk in west-central Utah

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## NOTE

### GROUND NESTING OF THE FERRUGINOUS HAWK IN WEST-CENTRAL UTAH

On 8 April 1967 a ground nest of the Ferruginous Hawk (*Buteo regalis*) was found 9.6 miles south of Fairfield, Utah County, Utah. It had been constructed atop the 30 cm. high roadbank of a well-traveled, improved gravel road. The nest itself was 25 cm. thick, giving it a total height of 55 cm. above the valley floor. The surrounding area is essentially a level plain at 1640 m. elevation surrounded by mountains ranging up to 2433 m. in elevation. Vegetation in the immediate vicinity of the nest was sparse, and consisted mainly of Russian thistle (*Salsola kali*).

When first observed, the female hawk protested vocally and assumed a defense posture with wings spread and body feathers erect. She remained in this position as our vehicle passed within 5 m. of the nest. The female remained at the nest until we walked to within 15 m. of her. She then flew a short distance away, realighted on the ground, and continued screaming. Throughout our visit her mate remained perched on a telephone pole several hundred meters from the nest site.

The nest contained two eggs and was composed of a horsebrush (*Tetradymia glabrata*) and Russian thistle (*Salsola kali*) base with an Indian ricegrass (*Oryzopsis hymenoides*) lining. A 40 cm. section of rope, a large scrap of paper, and several pieces of dried manure had also been incorporated into the nest.

Bent (Bull. U. S. Natl. Mus. 167:286,1937) and Peterson (A Field Guide to Western Birds, p. 71, 1961) state that the Ferruginous Hawk prefers to nest in trees where trees are available but may also nest on hillsides, cutbanks, buttes, cliffs, or rocky pinnacles. A study presently being conducted by the senior author concerning the nesting ecology of the Ferruginous Hawk in Utah has revealed several active nests and numerous potential nest sites on terrain described as typical by Bent and Peterson (*op. cit.*). Instead of using one of these more typical sites, this pair chose to nest upon the level valley floor beside a well-traveled road. To our knowledge, this is the first recorded Ferruginous Hawk nest located on essentially level terrain.

When we visited the nest again on 16 April 1967 we found that the female hawk has been shot and killed at the nest site. Both of her legs and 5 left rectrices had been removed. Helpmate was not seen. The female specimen measured 65 cm. in length and had a wingspread of 151 cm. (unstretched) which is 9 cm. in excess of the maximum wingspread of this species as indicated by Peterson (*op. cit.*).

Appreciation is extended to Dr. J. R. Murphy for assistance in the course of our studies.—J. Bradford Weston and David H. Ellis, Department of Zoology and Entomology, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah 84601.