

PEREGRINE FALCONS AND GOLDEN EAGLES USE SWALLOW GUANO TO SUPPORT NESTS  
ON THE SAME CLIFF LEDGE IN INTERIOR ALASKA

KEY WORDS: *Peregrine Falcon*; *Falco peregrinus*; *Golden Eagle*; *Aquila chrysaetos*; *Alaska*; *guano*; *nesting*; *nest modification*.

Many raptors regularly nest in structures of other birds. In addition, many raptors also use human-made structures as nest platforms (e.g., Bird et al. 1996). Peregrine Falcons (*Falco peregrinus*), for example, regularly use nests of Common Ravens (*Corvus corax*), hawks, and eagles (Cade 1960, Hickey and Anderson 1969, Ratcliffe 1993), and also nest on buildings, bridges, roadways, quarries, and towers (e.g., Bird et al. 1996, Ritchie et al. 1998). Golden Eagles (*Aquila chrysaetos*) have built their nests on top of nests of other raptors, albeit rarely (e.g., Murphy et al. 1969; M. Kochert, USGS unpubl. data; D. Ellis pers. comm.), and regularly build nests on artificial supports (e.g., transmission line towers; Steenhof et al. 1993). Finally, some species have used unusual materials to build nests (e.g., the incorporation of

bones and trash into nest structures of Golden Eagles and Steppe Eagles [*Aquila nipalensis*]; Ellis et al. 2009).

Along the Porcupine River in Alaska (66°59'N, 142°39'W), we found Peregrine Falcons and Golden Eagles nesting amid large piles of guano produced by a Cliff Swallow (*Petrochelidon pyrrhonota*) colony on a narrow (>0.25 m), strongly sloping (ca. 15°) ledge (Fig. 1). The ledge was located approximately halfway up the face of a 25-m cliff that faced the river. These piles of guano appeared to allow both species to nest in an otherwise unsuitable location.

In 1980, Peregrine Falcons nested on the ledge, behind the guano pillars (Fig. 1a). We believe that the guano held back some debris and eroding rock on the ledge, forming a usable scrape. Importantly, the guano provided some

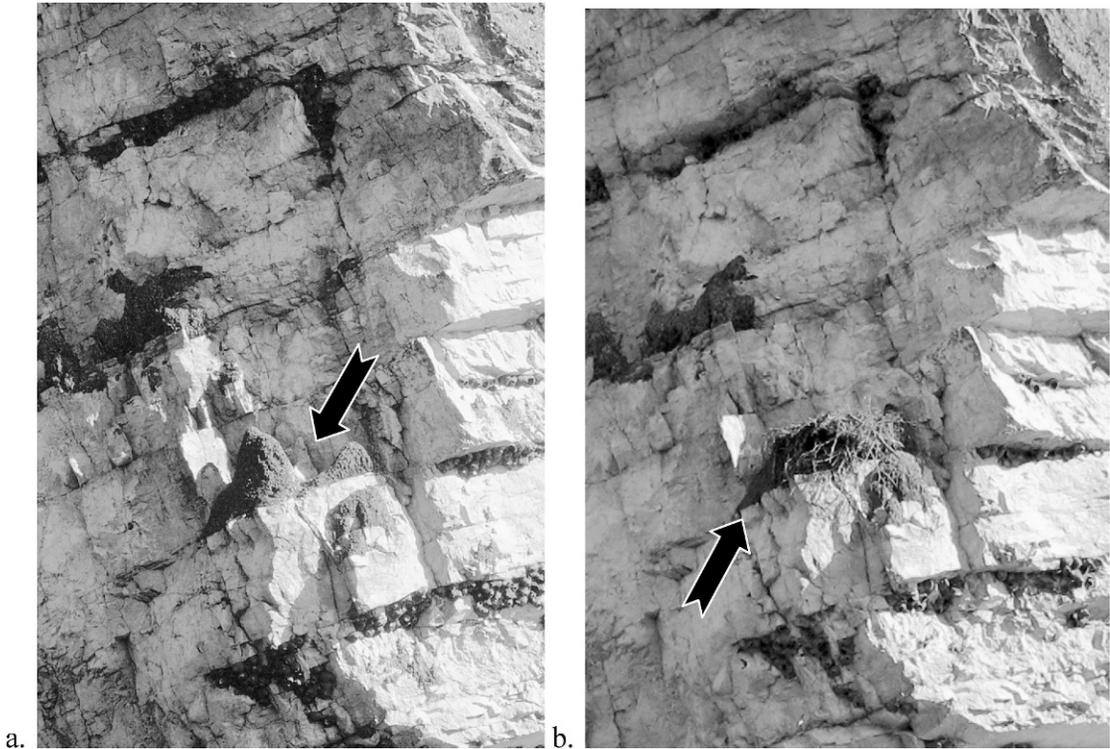


Figure 1. (a) Peregrine Falcons nested between and behind columns of Cliff Swallow guano in 1980; arrow points to nest location; (b) Golden Eagle nest placed on same ledge 2007; arrow points to base of left guano pillar from 1980 photo and now partially buried under edge of eagle nest.