

25

Nests and breeding habitat

As mentioned above, owls build no nest. Owls in Europe often use nest boxes, but Australian owls seldom do. Australia still has many large trees and most Australian owls, except Grass Owls, choose a nest hollow in the trunk or limb of a tree. They seldom use nest boxes except in places such as Melbourne or King Island, Tasmania, where Powerful Owls and Southern Boobooks respectively do use them. In Europe, where forests were long ago felled, entire populations of owls breed in nest boxes nailed or wired to trees, giving easy access for study. Researchers do not search for these nests because the researchers put the nests there in the first place. Not in Australia.

North American owls such as Great Grey Owls or Great Horned Owls often take over the nest of a hawk or raven, a nest clearly visible from above or below. In places like the dry eastern border of Washington State, you can find Great Horned Owls in the abandoned stick nests of Red-tailed Hawks in Ponderosa Pines, easily seen from the ground. Brooding or incubating females are conspicuous to observers and the adults stand in bright sunlight next to their open nest and young. Australian owls incubate and brood in deep hollows or caves, often in dark forest; they almost never use stick nests. Compared with owls in Europe and North America, Australian owls are invisible.

Powerful Owls

Tall, shaded forest is typical Powerful Owl country. They are said to hunt in open eucalypt, or 'sclerophyll', forests in particular. Like Powerful Owls, sclerophyll