

2

Comparing Australian raptors to their Northern Hemisphere counterparts

Many of the protocols used to study Australian raptors, and the principles used to analyse Australian raptor studies, are drawn from North America and Europe, though our raptors and their prey differ in significant ways from Northern Hemisphere raptors and their prey. Sometimes we fail to understand the adaptive behaviours of Australian raptors because we're myopic, confined and limited by overseas studies and trying to fit our species to patterns found overseas. However, contrasting our raptors with their closest relatives overseas can be helpful. Throughout the text I'll point to certain similarities and differences between Northern Hemisphere raptors and their congeners in Australia at similar latitudes, around 36° north and south of the equator. We can start with two interesting contrasts that involve habitat: **1) Cliff nesting** and **2) Upper altitudinal breeding limit**.

What do Australian raptors and corvids have against cliffs?

Travelling through the Sierra Nevada mountains of southern Spain with the raptor expert Marcos Moleón, over winding dirt lanes through lovely grassland country scarred with bare rock, we stopped and walked up a gully to a short cliff. Through binoculars we examined a stick nest ~10 m up on a rock face. This nest could have