The Western Screech-Owl (Megascops kennicottii) is a small cavity-nesting owl of woodlands in the western United States, Canada, and Mexico (Cannings and Angell 2001). Western Screech-Owls typically nest in abandoned woodpecker holes or natural cavities at least 3–4 m off the ground (Cannings and Angell 2001, Hardy and Morrison 2003). However, alternate sites are used when tree cavities are absent or in short supply (Marks 1983). The closely related Eastern Screech-Owl (Megascops asio) has been reported to nest on the ground (Clemmer and Jackson 1982) and, on at least one occasion, below ground level in a stump (Bent 1938). Bent (1938) further noted that the nesting habitats of the Western Screech-Owl were no different than those of other screech-owls. Screech-owls readily accept human presence, with nests often located in residential areas. Although the Western Screech-Owl is not currently a species of concern in the United States (NatureServe 2015), populations are declining in some portions of its range. Western Screech-Owls are the most common owl species detected during Northern Spotted Owl (Strix occidentalis) surveys on Weyerhaeuser’s Millicoma Tree Farm in the central Coast Range of Oregon (M. Hane unpubl. data). Here, I report on a Western Screech-Owl nest found in an active clearcut harvest unit on the Millicoma Tree Farm. Nestling age at discovery suggests that the owls initiated nesting while the harvest unit was being cut and maintained the nest throughout the entire logging operation.

On 26 June 2014, while setting up logging equipment, a Weyerhaeuser Company crew observed an adult owl carrying a mouse fly into a stump (Fig. 1) and then emerge shortly thereafter without the mouse. The crew observed this behavior several times over the next two days. I identified the owl as an adult Western Screech-Owl based on pictures provided by the area engineer. The nest was located in a new clear-cut on a 39% northwest-facing slope at 395 m elevation (43°29.67′N, 123°40.85′W). The harvest unit was a 40-yr-old second-rotation stand dominated by Douglas-fir (Pseudotsuga menziesii), with a minor component of western hemlock (Tsuga heterophylla). Diameter at breast height (DBH) of trees ranged from 15 cm to 56 cm and tree height ranged from 12 m to 35 m. The nearest perennial stream was 150 m north-northwest of the stump. Based on inventory data, the stands surrounding this stream did not differ from the nest area. An unnamed medium-sized, perennial fish-bearing stream was 415 m west-northwest, with a canopy dominated by 80+ yr-old Douglas-fir and western hemlock, and a minor component of younger red alder (Alnus rubra) and bigleaf maple (Acer macrophyllum). Trees in this stand ranged from 10 cm to 97 cm DBH and heights ranged from 9 m to 50 m. In a circular plot around the nest equivalent to the average home-range size, 84 ha (Davis and Weir 2010), 5% of the surrounding area was <10 yr old, 3% was 80+ yr old and the remainder (92%) was 25–45 yr old. After harvest, the nearest standing trees were 35 m northwest of the nest.

I made an initial visit on 2 July 2014 and identified at least one nestling, approximately 3 wk old. I made a second visit on 31 July and found the nest empty but intact. The nest bottom was dirt, with a few downy feathers in the bottom. Given the condition of the stump and lack of evidence of predation at or surrounding the nest, it seems possible that nestling(s) fledged. The uphill side of the cavity was hollow, forming a boot-like shape. Maximum height of the stump was 0.7 m on the uphill side and 1.2 m on the downhill side. A notch occurred on the west side and a scrap of bark formed a partial roof to the cavity. The minimum interior depth from the notch to the soil was 0.6 m, with the “toe” portion slightly deeper. The exterior diameter was 38 cm and the interior diameter was 20 cm. The bark walls were cracked and shifted, such that the outer dimensions exceeded the tree diameter when it was alive.

Based on the breeding chronology outlined in Cannings and Angell (2001), Western Screech-Owls typically incubate for about 4 wk, with the nestling stage lasting another 4–5 wk. Using this timeline and assuming the estimated age of the owlet was correct, egg-laying commenced around the week of 19 May 2014 and hatching occurred around the week of 9 June. Tree harvesting in that unit started the week of 19 May and cutting around the nest occurred sometime during the week of 9 June or 16 June. A mechanized tracked harvester cut and stacked logs in the area around the nest. A site-specific management plan detailed protection measures for the nest: all logs were stacked at least 11 m from the stump and tracked equipment avoided working in a circle of similar radius. The crew inspected all stacked logs for roosting owls in the morning prior to

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