

## LETTERS

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### OBSERVATIONS OF A TREE-CAVITY NEST OF THE RUFIOUS-LEGGED OWL AND PREDATION OF AN OWL NESTLING BY A CHIMANGO CARACARA IN ANDEAN TEMPERATE FORESTS

JOSÉ TOMÁS IBARRA<sup>1</sup>

*Department of Forest and Conservation Sciences, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, BC, Canada*  
and

*Centre for Local Development (CEDEL), Villarrica Campus, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, Villarrica, Chile*

TOMÁS A. ALTAMIRANO

*Fauna Australis Wildlife Laboratory, Department of Ecosystems and Environment, School of Agriculture and Forestry Sciences, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, Santiago, Chile*

and

*Department of Forest and Conservation Sciences, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, BC, Canada*

ALEJANDRA VERMEHREN

*Fauna Australis Wildlife Laboratory, Department of Ecosystems and Environment, School of Agriculture and Forestry Sciences, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, Santiago, Chile*

F. HERNÁN VARGAS

*The Peregrine Fund, 5668 West Flying Hawk Lane, Boise, ID U.S.A.*

KATHY MARTIN

*Department of Forest and Conservation Sciences, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, BC, Canada*  
and

*Environment and Climate Change Canada, Pacific Wildlife Research Centre, Delta, BC, Canada*

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Andean temperate ecosystems have lower avian species richness than other temperate, subtropical, and Andean forest types, but they contain many endemic species (e.g., 41% for birds; Vuilleumier 1985). Because of its high concentration of endemism and exceptional loss of native forest habitat (approximately 70%), the Andean temperate ecosystem is classified as a Global Biodiversity Hotspot (Myers et al. 2000). The Rufous-legged Owl (*Strix rufipes*) is an endemic forest-specialist raptor once considered one of the least-known owls in South America; this species has declining populations because of increasing habitat loss (Martínez and Jaksic 1996). Recent studies have shown that this species tolerates some habitat disturbance, but still requires a complex forest-stand structure comprising large,

decaying trees, dead standing trees (snags), and a dense understory (Ibarra et al. 2014b, Ibarra and Martin 2015). Rufous-legged Owls in temperate forests are sit-and-wait predators with a diet composed mainly of arboreal and scansorial small mammals, but also smaller proportions of forest passerines and invertebrates (Martínez 1993, Martínez and Jaksic 1997, Figueroa et al. 2006, 2016). The few reported nests described for Rufous-legged Owls include one likely unusual nest on the ground in a pine (*Pinus radiata*) plantation (Estades 1998), and six cavity nests in large, decaying native trees (Vukasovic et al. 2006, Wallace 2010, Beaudoin and Ojeda 2011). In all these cases, however, information on Rufous-legged Owl nesting activity (e.g., incubation period, adult parental behavior, prey consumption) and nest fate was lacking.

Secondary Andean temperate forests and open areas are readily utilized by the Chimango Caracara (*Milvago chimango*), a common, yet poorly studied raptor (Figueroa 2015). This habitat generalist raptor feeds on carrion, human rubbish, invertebrates, lizards, small mammals, and

<sup>1</sup> Email address: jtibarra@uc.cl