

LETTERS

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MEXICAN SPOTTED OWLS (*STRIX OCCIDENTALIS LUCIDA*) ROOSTING IN AN URBAN SETTING IN DURANGO, MEXICO

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The threatened Mexican Spotted Owl (*Strix occidentalis lucida*) occurs in the southwestern United States and in northern and central Mexico (Secretaría de Medio Ambiente y Recursos Naturales [SEMARNAT] 2010, US Fish and Wildlife Service [USFWS] 2012). In Mexico, the species is found in the Sierra Madre Occidental, Sierra Madre Oriental, and Neovolcanic Transverse Belt (Enriquez et al. 1993, USFWS 2012). In these regions, spotted owls occur mainly in pine (*Pinus* spp.), oak (*Quercus* spp.), and mixed pine-oak forests, where they prefer cool environments on north-, northeast-, and northwest-facing slopes with high canopy closure (Ganey and Balda 1989, Tarango et al. 1997, Palma-Cancino et al. 2014). We report the first sighting of Mexican Spotted Owls roosting in an urban area of Mexico, in a downtown hotel garden area in the city of Durango.

Durango City is located in the state of Durango in north-central Mexico (24° 01.604'N; 104° 39.7153'W) at an elevation of 1880 masl. The mean annual precipitation is 529 mm (Servicio Meteorológico Nacional 2016). The mean annual temperature over the past 30 yr was 16.9°C, with an average minimum temperature of 8.5°C and an

average maximum temperature of 25.5°C. June is the warmest month, with a mean temperature of 30.5°C, and January the coldest month, with a mean temperature of 1.3°C. Because of the moderately high elevation of Durango City, the monthly average temperatures were within the range expected for the widely distributed Mexican Spotted Owl (Gutiérrez et al. 1995).

The two owls roosted in the gardens of Hotel Gobernador in downtown Durango City. The two-story hotel building, parking area, and gardens occupy 14,100 m² and are located in an area of high traffic, noise, and air pollution. Three main gardens are located in the front, center, and back of the hotel complex, and occupy 32% of the total hotel area. Four tree species predominate in these gardens, including ash (*Fraxinus* sp.; *n* = 6 trees), weeping willow (*Salix babylonica*; *n* = 4 trees), chinaberry (*Melia zedarach*; *n* = 5 trees), and Aleppo pine (*Pinus halepensis*; *n* = 98 trees around the periphery of the hotel and gardens).

On the morning of 16 February 2016, two hotel gardeners first spotted two Mexican Spotted Owls perched in the central garden in an Aleppo pine. We began monitoring the owls that day. Sometime during the first week of March 2016, one of the owls left the hotel grounds, but we continued monitoring the remaining owl through 8 September 2016, after which it too left the area. We confirmed that the second owl was a subadult based on the shape and color of the tail feathers (Fig. 1), and we used

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