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Evidence for breeding of the Lanner Falcon *Falco biarmicus erlangeri* in Spain in the 19th Century

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Arevalo y Baca (1887) reports the breeding of the Lanner Falcon *Falco biarmicus* in old nests of kites *Milvus* sp. on Coto Doñana and quotes observations by Lord Lilford on its nesting. Irby (1895) writes that Lanners “were found nesting on pine-trees in the Coto del Rey, near Seville”. He found one nest (3 years previously used by a Buzzard *Buteo buteo*) containing eggs at the end of March. Coltart (1952) also describes Lanner Falcon clutches from Coto del Rey, a C/3 from the Dalglish collection and a C/2 in the collection of Lord Lilford. Valverde (1960) concedes that some Lanners were shot from time to time in this region, but nonetheless does not accept these earlier breeding records. Cramp & Simmons (1980) do not mention Spain in the breeding range of this Falcon.

There exists in the collections of the National Museums of Scotland (NMS) some material which we believe indicates that Lanners did, indeed, breed in Spain during the latter part of last century. One C/3 of *Falco biarmicus erlangeri* is preserved in the collection of Hugh M. S. Blair (NMSZ 1981.061). This clutch was collected on 12 April 1879 at Coto del Rey by Manuel Llanos for Alberto Ruiz. Blair's clutch card reads:

“In a tree. Incubation apparently advanced. Manuel Llanos was a well-known and trustworthy collector, who, at one time or another, furnished Lord Lilford with specimens, amongst them skins and eggs of the Lanner. There are frequent references to him in the Lilford diaries (see *Lord Lilford on Birds* pp. 146, 196–200, 212, 216 and 298). Alberto Ruiz, of Seville, was a dealer of good repute. He too figures in Lord Lilford's diaries. As mentioned by Irby (. . .) the few Lanners known to breed in Spain appropriated old nests of other raptors, generally in stone-pines. They were recorded from Coto del Rey and Coto Doñana. These very interesting eggs were sent by Ruiz to J. J. Dalglish, who received them on 14.11.1879. They later passed into the collection of C. R. Wood, and when this was

dispersed by C. H. Gowland, they were purchased by N. B. Coltart on 10.12.1939. Coltart sold them to T. R. N. Crafts in 1942, but re-acquired them from the latter's executor (J. Harwood) on 12.1.1951. In 1960 he most generously presented them to me, and I received them on the 19 March, that year, together with the original data ticket."

The eggs measure: 51.40×40.35 ; 50.40×39.80 ; 52.15×39.50 .

In addition there are 4 Spanish skins of *F. b. erlangeri* from the J. I. S. Whitaker collection (NMSZ 1956.003), as follows:

1. no. 2229, ♀, 3 May 1882, Coto de Doñana. The label states: "shot on the nest with 3 juv + 1 egg, then reared by male only";

2. no. 2301, ♀, 29 March 1873, Coto del Rey;

3. no. 2297, immature ♀, [taken from nest] April 1879, Corio del Rio. Kept in captivity at Whitmoor until its death the following year. The label states: "taken from nest near Corio del Rio, S. Spain. D.D. [= discovered dead?] May 1880 at Whitmoor, Guildford";

4. no. 2306, immature, unsexed, [assumed taken from nest April 1879, Corio del Rio]. The label states: "Lanner F. from Spain deposited by Lord Lilford with F. H. Salvin Esq. Whitmoor House, Guildford where it died August 1879."

The heavily abraded wings and tails and general dirty appearance of the latter 2 skins seem to confirm that they had been kept in captivity for a period. From these birds' relative sizes and dates of death it seems reasonable to conclude that they were siblings which had been acquired from the same nest.

A third piece of evidence is supplied in a manuscript held in the Library of the NMS. A notebook entitled "*Catalogue of the birds of South of Spain* by Howard Saunders, communicated to the Zoological Society of France 1876-77" contains the following section on Lanner Falcons:

"Rare. Nevertheless it has been dislodged and killed in the forests south of Seville, and, to all appearance, it has been obtained in Grenada and Murcia; but I have not been able to examine these last two examples. The first mentioned, with their eggs, form part of Lord Lilford's collection, where I have seen them."

We believe that the existence of this material lends veracity to the views of earlier authors and provides conclusive proof that the North African form of the Lanner Falcon *F. biarmicus erlangeri* did breed, though probably irregularly, in a limited area of southern Spain.

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