

# CHARACTERISTICS OF NEST SITES USED BY CRESTED CARACARAS IN SOUTH-CENTRAL FLORIDA

JOAN L. MORRISON

ABSTRACT – Understanding habitat needs of nesting Crested Caracaras (*Caracara cheriway*) requires knowledge about nest trees and nest sites, particularly when surveying areas targeted for conversion projects and planning for habitat restoration. Here, I describe nest sites of breeding pairs of caracaras from 76 different breeding areas in south-central Florida. Most nest sites found were on privately owned cattle ranches. Most nests were built in cabbage palms, and nest trees typically occurred in short-stature pasture or grassland habitat. Nests were generally oriented in a south-southeast direction within the nest tree, and all nest sites had cover (vegetation suitable to hide a fledgling on the ground) within 100 m of the nest tree. Differences in vegetation structure on private and public lands may result from differences in management activities conducted on these lands. Further study to understand how these structural differences influence selection of a nest site by breeding caracaras, their nesting success, and post-fledgling survival, is recommended.