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HAWK CLIFF RAPTOR BANDING STATION
FIRST ANNUAL REPORT, 1971

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HAWK CLIFF RAPTOR BANDING STATION

FIRST ANNUAL REPORT, 1971

Marshall Field

This report covers the activities of the Hawk Cliff Raptor Banding Station during the period from early September, 1971 until the end of January, 1972. Actually, January 1 was the last date that the station was in operation but one or two individuals carried on with some road trapping using Bal-Chatrri traps on suitable weekends during the remainder of January. The total number of birds banded more than doubled that of 1970 and this increase in numbers reflects in part the addition of three new stations, improved trapping equipment, and numbers of persons participating. Cooper's Hawks and Red-Tails particularly showed a significant increase in numbers trapped as did the Marsh Hawk.

Despite our apparent success, however, the 1971 season was another of trial and error with many bugs still to be ironed out. Many of our new trappers learned very quickly and were a real asset to the operation. Providing sufficient lure birds was still a concern at times. This, we feel, can be improved considerably by next season. In desperation we discovered that Red-Tails can be caught using House Sparrows as lures! They would, therefore, conceivably attract any hawk ranging in size from the Kestrel up to and including the Red-Tail.

We were encouraged by the increase in catches of Marsh Hawks. Early migrating immatures seemed to be responding well to our lures and after a few successful catches, all passing Marsh Hawks were worked

on with a more confident feeling of a possible catch. It is hard to explain the increase in Cooper's Hawks banded except to note that there was an apparent increase in numbers passing through and we managed to catch a reasonable percentage of them. One new species to be taken this year was the Rough-legged Hawk (5). Some were caught on a pigeon but a smaller lure seems to be preferred.

The real surprise was our total number of Red-tailed Hawks banded. A catch of 25 on November 8 was considered to be the seasonal peak flight. Consequently, the big day of November 13 was not anticipated. Despite a rather late start at most of the four stations that were in operation, a total of 59 Red-Tails and 1 Goshawk were banded that day, plus 3 repeats on the Red-tails. The # 1 station caught the most Red-tails, 24 with 3 repeats. Two persons operating here were almost snowed under at times by the stooping hawks. Seldom would they leave the station to remove only 1 Red-tail, but would repeatedly wait for a second bird to be caught and then go out and remove both of them at the same time, causing a minimum amount of disruption. During the height of the migration at this station, four persons could have been very busy keeping abreast of the situation.

The catch of four Peregrine Falcons is also noteworthy. Possibly more could have been taken if back-up nets had been put in place sooner. Peregrines seem reluctant to take a pinned pigeon but will stoop at it repeatedly. Although the occasional Merlin has been sighted, we have not caught one during the three years of operation. Kestrel bandings have declined since the first year of our operation, (See Table #5), and the main reason for this, we feel, is the discontinued use of Bal-Chatri traps along the O.W.R.C. roadway.

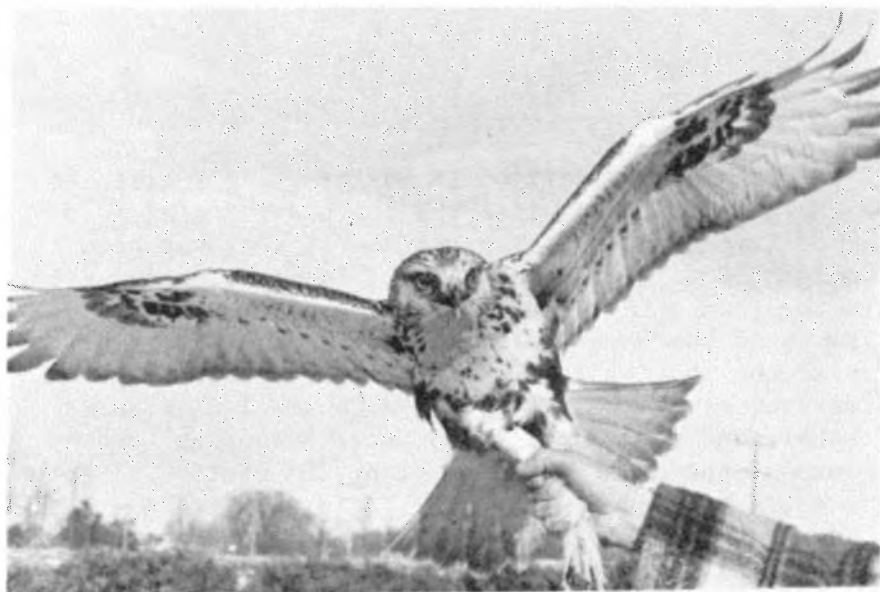


Fig. I. Rough-legged Hawk

It is felt that by using smaller lure birds such as House Sparrows, our catches of this species could increase considerably. A Broad-winged Hawk was brought into a trappable position within the bownet using a Cowbird as the lure bird. Unfortunately, the trip cord broke, leaving the trapper in a rather helpless situation. With the many thousands of this species passing through each fall, it may be possible to trap some on a day when they are temporarily grounded in the area due to unfavourable migration weather.

There appears to be a good possibility of catching some migrating owls at this location for anyone particularly interested in this phase of raptor banding. A few nets were strung on three nights in early November with the result that 6 Long-eared Owls and 3 Saw-whet Owls were caught. A bothersome Great Horned Owl removed 2 of each species out of the nets and consumed a portion of each victim.

IMPROVEMENTS

The major addition to the trapping facilities at Hawk Cliff during 1971 was the provision of a combined living and trapping station at what has been designated as #2 location. This facility, originally in the form of a 12' x 20' garage, was moved from St. Thomas to the Hawk Cliff site and remodelled to better serve the station requirements. In addition to the improvement at the # 2 location, a small station was established near the Ontario Water Resources roadway, south of the new filtration plant (#3 station). With more trapping equipment being employed at this location, it would appear to have good possibilities. A fourth station established north of the first concession road, approximately one and a half miles inland from the lake bank, also appears to have good potential, especially for the large buteos. It was here at #4 station on November 13 that Craig Brown executed a triple header - 1 Red-tail in a bownet and two in a mist net all at the same time. Due to extremely late harvesting of the potato crop in the field adjacent to this station, it was not possible to begin operations until November 7. Later, with mud problems developing, it was extremely difficult and sometimes impossible to keep the station in operation.

A fifth station was located near the cliff edge, directly south of #1. Due mainly to the lack of personnel, this station was manned for rather short periods on only four days. This could be a prime location for catching Peregrines, and if the correct weather conditions could be anticipated slightly in advance, there are some terrific Kestrel flights along this cliff edge.



Fig. II. #2 Station: Living and Trapping Facilities

Telephone communications were established between stations 1 and 2. This was a talk direct system using two sound-powered telephones and a buried cable that proved to be very helpful. Two portable walkie-talkie sets were used to reach other stations. These were somewhat less effective due to interference, presumably from marine craft short-wave sets.

Another significant improvement in the Hawk Cliff operation was the setting up of a local committee whose members meet when required in order to better administer the growing number of details which accompany such a venture. Mrs. D. Fowler, in her capacity of Secretary-Treasurer, will be responsible for such things as correspondence, various records and station reservations. Appointments to fill other administrative functions will be made by the Committee as the needs arise.

The financial burden of running the station should decline somewhat in 1972. There was a balance of about \$25.00 at the completion of the 1971 season out of a total grant of \$500.00 from the Ontario Bird Banding Association through the Point Pelee Bird Observatory. This Committee would like to try and partially relieve the Ontario Bird Banding Association of some of this financial responsibility of operating the station and therefore have established some fund-raising policies. Persons using the station's trapping facilities, or anyone just interested in assisting the station financially, will be invited to become an associate member at a fee of \$5.00. Anyone requiring overnight accommodations will be charged at the rate of \$1.50 per night. All reservation requests are to be directed to the Secretary, Mrs. D. Fowler, 17 Fifth Avenue, St. Thomas, Ontario, Canada. Anyone wishing to trap and band hawks at this station must possess a banding permit accompanied by a special Provincial authorization to band raptors, or be in the company of someone who is a licensed raptor bander.

1972

A small station will be located on a trial basis, just south and east of the #1 location. This area should be good for Kestrels as they have the habit of congregating on, and hunting from, the hydro and telephone wires along the O.W.R.C. roadway. This station will be within 150 feet of these wires. An effort will be made to relocate station #4 to try and alleviate the problem of having to work in a sometimes muddy field. There appears to be a suitable location in the same general line of flight, just east of County Road #22.



Fig. III. A very dark Red-tailed Hawk probably attributable to the race Buteo jamaicensis calurus.

Well-marked approach lanes that will allow additional banders or assistants to approach the station while trapping is in progress, thus causing a minimum amount of disturbance, will be established where necessary. Additional bownets and other necessary equipment will be supplied as station funds permit. Some improvements are still required at #2, #3 and #5 stations.

RESEARCH

Some thought has been directed toward a worthwhile research project for the 1972 banding season. At present, we are exploring the possibility of a project involving the Red-tailed Hawk. We do catch considerable numbers of this species and may be able to contribute some worthwhile data relating to the Great Lakes Flyway. Our contact with Bill Clark, co-ordinator of the Cape May Point Raptor Banding Station in New Jersey, will no doubt result in an exchange of ideas beneficial to the operation of both stations. Our facilities were made available to David Pass, Dept. of Pathology, Ontario Veterinary College, Guelph, for his raptor blood-sampling studies being made in connection with the possible presence of mercury contamination. He managed to take samples from 31 wild-caught hawks and plans to continue these studies in 1972, hoping to sample nestling Red-tails in this area, as well as the migrating hawks in the fall.

SUMMARY SHEETS

A new summary sheet has been designed, hopefully to meet the needs of the Hawk Cliff Station. All banders will be instructed to fill out this form for all of, or any portion of, the day that they may be operating a station. These forms, when completed

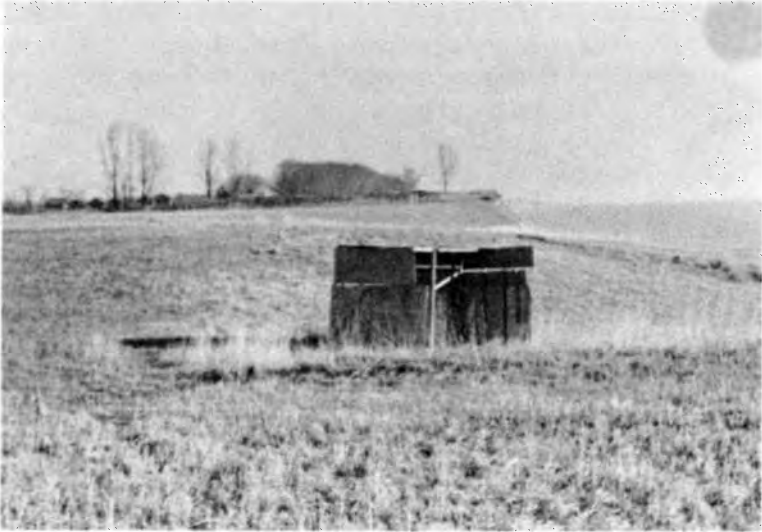


Fig. IV. Station # 5

properly, are very helpful and necessary in compiling seasonal or other reports. Pertinent weather details have been purposely omitted from the summary sheets as this data will be readily available from the O.W.R.C. meteorological station which is very close to our operation.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The degree of success we have achieved at the Raptor Banding Station can be attributed to the people who have cooperated and assisted in so many ways. This report is an example of the assistance from several people. I would like to make mention of and express appreciation for special contributions by Doug Tarry, Al Cahill and Bill Wasserfall. The continued support

and cooperation from the property owner Steve Ivan is also very much appreciated. For me, it has been most gratifying to have been a part of this development, and I sincerely hope that all of the people that have become involved with the station have derived a feeling of satisfaction and personal enjoyment, regardless of how large or small their contribution may have been.

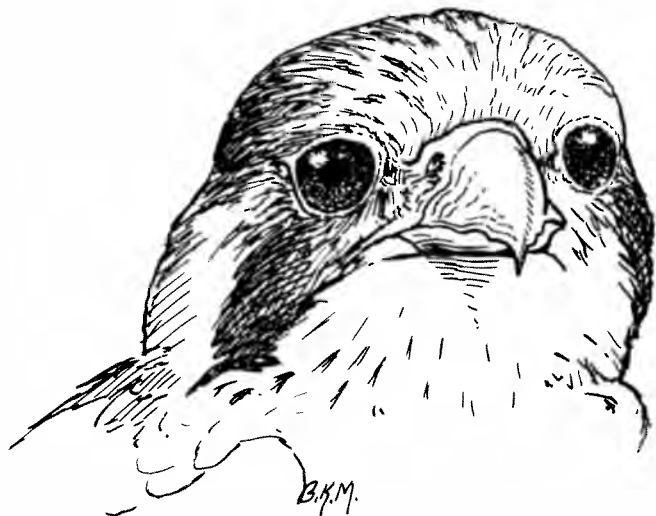


TABLE #1

MONTHLY TOTALS FOR ALL STATIONS INCLUDING ROADTRAPS AND NESTLINGS

	<u>SEPT</u>	<u>OCT</u>	<u>NOV</u>	<u>DEC</u>	<u>JAN</u>	<u>OTHER</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
GOSHAWK		1	2				3
SHARP-SHINNED	89	131	2	1			223
COOPERS	8	39	1	2			50
RED-TAIL	8	51	209	30	1+17*	29	345
RED-SHOULDERED		2	2	1			5
ROUGH-LEGGED			1	3	1		5
MARSH	15	7	1	5			28
PEREGRINE	2	2					4
KESTREL	38	13	1	2*	2*		56
LONG-EARED OWL			4				4
SAW-WHET OWL			1				1
SCREECH OWL					2		2
GREAT HORNED OWL						7	7
TOTALS	160	246	224	44	23	36	733

* - Road Trapped

TABLE #2

STATION #1 - MONTHLY STATION TOTALS

	<u>SEPT</u>	<u>OCT</u>	<u>NOV</u>	<u>DEC</u>
SHARP-SHINNED	26	39	1	
COOPERS	3	8	1	1
RED-TAIL	3	27	59	3
RED-SHOULDERED			1	
ROUGH-LEGGED				2
MARSH	8	2	1	
PEREGRINE		1		
KESTREL	21	6		
TOTAL HAWKS CAUGHT	<u>61</u>	<u>83</u>	<u>63</u>	<u>6</u>
DAYS IN OPERATION	12	22	17	8

TABLE #3

STATION #3 - MONTHLY STATION TOTALS

	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN
SHARP-SHINNED	62	89		1	
COOPERS	5	25			
GOSHAWK			1		
RED-TAIL	5	18	74	16	1
RED-SHOULDERED		2	1	1	
ROUGH-LEGGED				1	1
MARSH	7	4		4	
PEREGRINE	2	1			
KESTREL	18	6			
TOTAL HAWKS CAUGHT	<u>97</u>	<u>146</u>	<u>76</u>	<u>23</u>	<u>1</u>
DAYS IN OPERATION	8	21	18	10	1

TABLE #4

STATION #3 - MONTHLY STATION TOTALS

	<u>OCT</u>	<u>NOV</u>	<u>DEC</u>
SHARP-SHINNED	3	1	
COOPERS	6		
GOSHAWK		1	
RED-TAIL	7	36	6
ROUGH-LEGGED		1	
KESTREL		1	
TOTAL HAWKS CAUGHT	16	39	5
DAYS IN OPERATION	8	14	9
			69

TABLE #5

STATIONS #4 AND #5 - MONTHLY STATION TOTALS

<u>STATION #4</u>	<u>SEPT</u>	<u>OCT</u>	<u>NOV</u>	<u>DEC</u>
RED-TAIL			41	5
MARSH				1
TOTAL HAWKS CAUGHT			<u>41</u>	<u>6</u>
DAYS IN OPERATION			7	7

STATION #5

SHARP-SHINNED	1			
MARSH		1		
KESTREL	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>		
TOTAL HAWKS CAUGHT	2	2		
DAYS IN OPERATION	2	2		

TABLE #6

SPECIES CAPTURE RESULTS BY ALL METHODS EMPLOYED

	MIST NET	BOW NET	BAL- CHATRI	NESTLING	NEST BOX	SWEDISH COS TRAP	OTHER	TOTAL
SHARP-SHINNED	209	14						223
COOPERS	30	20						50
GOSHAWK	2	1						3
RED-TAIL	37	255	21*	29 ^o		2 ^x		345
RED-SHOULDERED	2	3						5
ROUGH-LEGGED	12	15		1 ^o				5
MARSH	4							4
PEREGRINE	50	1	5*					56
KESTREL					2			2
SCREECH OWL							4	7
GREAT HORNED OWL				3 ^o				4
LONG-EARED OWL	4							4
SAW-WHET OWL	1							1
TOTAL	349	315	27	33	2	2	4	733

* - Includes roadtraps away from station

o - Nestlings banded in Elgin and Middlesex Counties

x - Gos. trap operated during January at St. Thomas

TABLE #7

STATION COMPARISONS FOR TRAPPING RESULTS

	<u>TOTAL NEW BANDING</u>	<u>TOTAL DAYS OPERATING</u>	<u>AVERAGE BIRDS PER DAY</u>
STATION #1	213	59	3.6
STATION #2	334	58	5.6
STATION #3	60	31	1.9
STATION #4	47	9	5.2
STATION #5	4	4	1.0

APPENDIX IRAPTORS BANDED FROM HAWK CLIFF STATION

	<u>1969</u>	<u>1970-71</u>	<u>1971-72</u>
GOSHAWK		5	3
SHARP-SHINNED HAWK	40	166	223
COOPER'S HAWK	9	10	50
RED-TAILED HAWK	4	71	345
RED-SHOULDERED HAWK		3	5
ROUGH-LEGGED HAWK			5
MARSH HAWK	1	2	28
PEREGRINE FALCON	1	1	4
KESTREL	143	85	56
SCREECH OWL	2		2
GREAT HORNED OWL		1	7
LONG-EARED OWL			4
SAW-WHET OWL	1		1
	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
TOTALS	202	344	733

APPENDIX IISTATION REPEATS

There were 10 Red-tail repeats recorded, which were the first of any raptor species since the station was established in 1969. Most often the repeater, usually an immature, would travel a short distance to another station and be caught again in exactly the same manner. All of the repeats except one occurred on the same day as the original capture. The one immature in question was originally captured in a pigeon-lured bownet at #1 Station on October 30. It repeated once on a noose mat wrapped around a dead rabbit on the side of the road, in the vicinity of #3 Station on December 5. The second repeat for this individual came at #3 Station on December 23, when it was taken in the same manner as the original capture at #1 Station.

There was one repeat of a Sharp-shinned Hawk; first banded on 8-10-71, it was recaptured on 11-10-71.

FOREIGN RECOVERIES

Our first station foreign recovery was a rather interesting one. It was a second year female Cooper's Hawk caught and banded by Chris Holdsworth at Area 1 (near the tip of Long Point) Long Point Bird Observatory on 6-10-71. It was released at 10.20 and weighed 547.2 grams at the time of release. It was recaptured by Craig Brown at Hawk Cliff, approximately 65 miles to the west on 07-10-71. The time of recapture was 15.30 and the weight of the bird was 522.5 grams. The original capture at Long Point was made in a mist net while the recapture at Hawk Cliff was in a bownet.

FOREIGN RECOVERIES FROM HAWK CLIFF

Red-tailed Hawk HY U banded at Hawk Cliff 07-11-70
Shot at Holston River, Tennessee 09-01-71 (382-0821)

Red-tailed Hawk HY U banded at Hawk Cliff 07-11-70
Found dead near Fenton, Michigan ?-01-71 (424-0834)

Red-tailed Hawk HY U banded at Hawk Cliff 07-11-70
Found dead near Chatham, Ontario 23-11-70 (422-0821)

Kestrel (Sparrow Hawk) U M banded at Hawk Cliff
18-09-69
Captured and released near Wexford, Pennsylvania
14-03-71 (403-0800)

Kestrel U M banded at Hawk Cliff 30-09-69
Sick when captured at Berlin, Georgia 11-03-71
(310-0833)

Kestrel U M banded at Hawk Cliff 27-09-70
Found dead near Pensacola, Florida 15-11-70.





ONTARIO BIRD BANDING

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