THE PACIFIC RAPTOR REPORT SUMMER 2009 NUMBER THIRTY



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PACIFIC RAPTOR REPORT #30



Pacific Raptor Report

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE GOLDEN GATE RAPTOR OBSERVATORY

GGRO banders trapped more than 500 Cooper's Hawks in 2008. Lynn Bantley releases a camera-shy adult male. (Photos: Neal Johannsen)

Cover: Adult female
Cooper's Hawk above,
adult male Sharp-shinned
Hawk below. These busts
show the contrasts between the two species'
characteristics. Cooper's
have a heavy brow, a
small eye, and strong
cere and bill. Sharpies
have more rounded bugeyes, and proportionally
smaller bills. (Photos:
Siobhan Ruck)







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The Golden Gate Raptor Observatory is a program of the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy in cooperation with the National Park Service

Why Watching Raptors Saves the Planet

So here we are in 2009, a year of widespread recognition of ecological loss. As a primate species relying on the many fruits and services of a healthy planet, we've never needed to realize our biological connections so quickly and completely. The poet Gary Snyder pokes readers with this question, "Do you really believe you are an animal?" I don't think there's a more important query. If you are an animal and you believe it, you need clean and healthy natural habitats like every other animal, and you better get busy.

But what I really mean to talk about is how to be optimistic—how to be an upbeat, forward-thinking agent for change. I mean, here we are at the GGRO, counting and banding autumn raptors flying over the Marin Headlands. Some years, we've tallied 23,000 hawk-sightings, some years we've tallied 36,000. Some years, we've banded 449 Cooper's Hawks, other years it's been more than twice that. And so what? CO₂ is increasing, coral reefs are turning bone white, summer permafrost is thawing, and the waters of the Golden Gate just rose 0.2 mm in the last week. Aren't slightly shifting bird numbers negligible against this backdrop of catastrophes?

Well, no, they're not. Counting hawks, banding hawks, tracking hawks—they're all critical for turning the tide of environmental catastrophe, and here are three reasons why.

1) Someday, we are going to need all the data we can get our hands on to best understand the ecological relationships that we have undermined. For example, Rachel Carson studied a 25-year set of Bald Eagle count data from Hawk Mountain, Pennsylvania, and from it, forged a hammer to smash the widespread use of DDT. And she didn't even have a grant. The bottom line is that we need to keep

track of the earth's changes, wherever and whenever we can afford to. Why? First, to define the basic patterns and connections that make up our ecological systems; and secondly, to document how those systems are responding to climate change, and other forms of human overuse.

2) Part of our environmental predicament has come from losing track of our place in the biological world. We don't watch the sunrise; we flip the lights on. We don't cook food over a fire pit; we nuke it in the microwave. We don't play music; we upload songs and jam plastic in our ears. As creative as we humans are, we have an uncanny ability to act as if the earth's cycles were not meant for us.

My point? Counting hawks brings us back down to earth, and the pace is slower here. We tune into the lives of hawks, of hawk prey, of hawk prey's prey. We pay more attention to weather, wind, and temperature. We hypothesize connections between all these things, often without even trying. Time in the field, focusing on another species, forces us to think of how much bigger these ecological systems are than we are, and how we must fit into them, rather than the other way around.

Why should this be important? Psychologist Chellis Glendinning has written that we

humans evolved over a million-plus years in a state of continuous association with the wild world and all its elements. It is only in the last few hundred years, with the advent of industry and electricity, that we've learned the clever trick of dissociating from the out-of-doors. Yes, the thermostat looks pretty good on a frosty February morning, but do such separations have an effect on us? Can our genetics keep up? Glendinning suspects not, and believes that we individually and collectively suffer from a real form of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. The stress? Being disconnected from natural environments.

Almost 20 years ago, I heard Dr. Glendinning explain this hypothesis to a group of a hundred or so doctors and internists at the California Pacific Medical Center in San Francisco. After she finished her hour-long lecture, there were a few moments of dead silence. Then someone in a white lab coat raised his hand and asked, "What do we do for our patients now?" Glendinning smiled and offered this prescription: "Tell them to go learn the plants and animals in their neighborhood."

Now, I can be as cynical as the next guy about such ethereal, new-age, bunny-hugging advice. But think about it. Why do we watch birds? It makes us feel good. Is that an accident? Or is being outside a behavior that we're accustomed to? Of course it is. Right down to our genes. We've been hanging out in forests for well over a million years.

3) This may be the biggest stretch, but bear with me. When we are in the act of watching hawks, we are doing very little harm to the planet. When standing on Hawk Hill, binoculars at the ready, scanning the horizon to see a Prairie Falcon before Steve does, I am taking pretty good care of the planet. Granted, I could be taking a nap, or flying a kite, but then I wouldn't be collecting the critical data that I mentioned in Reason #1.

In other words, while hawk watching, we are not at that moment using electricity, driving cars, watching TV, playing Wii, reading e-mail, texting, phoning, making or spending money, or buying or selling stuff. And yet, we are happy. Happiness without expense? Happiness while supporting the earth's systems? How great is that? Unless of course, it's a bitter, windy day on Hawk Hill with no sun whatsoever, and you haven't seen so much as a juvenile Turkey Vulture for three hours, and it's maybe 25 degrees thanks to the wind chill and you forgot your long johns. OK, maybe then it's just work. But at least it's work for the planet.

GGRO TURNS 25

A QUARTER-CENTURY OF RAPTOR STUDY



In autumn 2009, we're marking our 25th anniversary, a milestone made possible by the kindness and courage of our sponsoring or-

ganizations, the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy and the National Park Service, and by the hard work and creative force of more than 1,600 volunteers and interns. To celebrate, we're planning an **AUTUMN RAPTOR LECTURE SERIES** in cooperation with the California Academy of Science, San Francisco Zoo and Institute at the Golden Gate. Expect to hear from such notable raptor scientists as geneticist David Mindell, falcon expert Bud Anderson, and *Peterson Guide to Hawks* author William S. Clark.

Also remember OCTOBER 24-25, when we'll hold a GGRO OPEN HOUSE AND RAPTOR FEST to celebrate the anniversary. The Raptor Fest will take place at Fort Cronkhite near Rodeo Beach in the Marin Headlands and will feature family activities, art, mini-lectures, demonstrations, 25th Anniversary T-shirts and caps, and live raptors from the good people at Native Bird Connections. Stay tuned at www.ggro.org or e-mail us at ggro@parksconservancy.org for current information.

RESEARCH NOTE Suzz Hull

Merlins: Excitement on the Wing

Y LOVE AFFAIR WITH THESE DASHING LITTLE falcons began in 1985 when I visited Hawk Hill on my lunch break from my laboratory job at the Letterman Army Medical Center. When I arrived at this migration concentration point, I joined a small group eagerly spotting and tracking the raptor movement across the sky.

I was intently watching a group of five Sharp-shinned Hawks circling above me when Herb Brandt suggested that I take a closer look at the highest Sharpie in the

group, "...the one that is stooping on the other four." That was my first sighting of a Merlin. I've never lost the excitement and pleasure I get from seeing these dynamic small falcons.

My conversations with both banders and hawkwatchers at the GGRO convince me that most of my associates in this mad endeavor share my fascination with Merlins, whether snatching insects out of the sky and eating them on the wing, chasing small passerines into the next county, or even biting the bander extracting them from a net—all while scolding that impudent human at a volume that belies their small size.

According to the *Birds of North America* chapter, "There are three American subspecies: the Black Merlin (*Falco columbarius suckleyi*), from the Pacific Northwest, the Taiga (or better-named Boreal) Merlin (*F. c. columbarius*) of northern forests, and the Prairie Merlin (*F. c. richardsonii*), a pale-colored form that breeds in northern prairies and aspen parklands of the U.S. and southern Canada" (Warkentin et al. 2005). The different forms show different migration patterns, but at least some migrate in the leapfrog pattern, with the more northern nesting birds moving further south and the southern breeders wintering in the U.S. and northern Mexico. Will we see some changes in the numbers and timing as the climate warms, making it perhaps possible for the species to shorten its migration, both in time and distance? Although we are not

able to answer this question at present, our current data do give us a starting point for future analyses.

From 1986 through the early '90s, our typical season-long Merlin tallies were modest, ranging from a handful to just less than 100 sightings. From the mid-1990s through the present, the rise in Merlins counted has been consistent, reaching a high of 250 in 1998, and continuing to hover around 200 per season since then. This dramatic population recovery, shown throughout the North American



This juvenile female Merlin is about to be released after banding and measurements. (Photo: Siobhan Ruck)

range, is thought to be at least partially due to the ban on DDT (Warkentin et al. 2005).

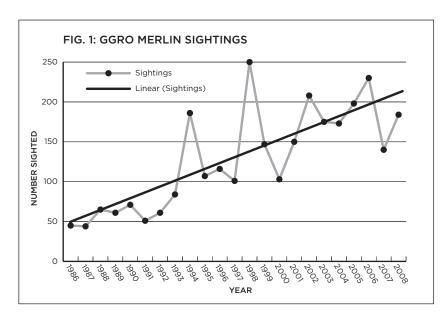
We have sighted all three North American subspecies from Hawk Hill, and have banded mostly the taiga subspecies (F. c. columbarius) and a few very dark birds, probably F. c. sucklyei.

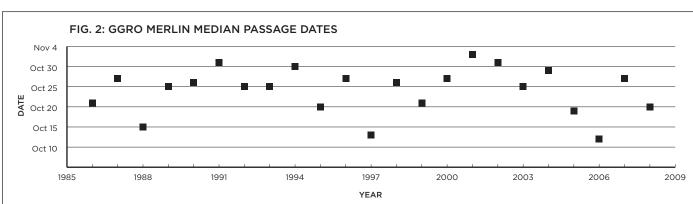
I have recently begun to look at the data we have acquired over the past 23(!) years of hawk counting and banding. The numbers of Merlins passing the Golden Gate have increased over these years, raising several questions for me:

• Has there been a change in the seasonal timing in their flight?

- If they are passing the Golden Gate at a different time, is it earlier or later, and can we relate this somehow to global warming?
- Are the banding numbers correlated to the hawkwatch count, and if so, how?
- There is a common perception among the banders that Merlins are seen more frequently in the late afternoons. Does this just mean that the banders catch more at that time of day when, perhaps, Merlins are more likely to be attracted to the nets?

FIGURE 1 shows the sightings per year for Merlins from 1986 through 2008, with an increase from season totals of less than a hundred per year in the 1980s to a high of

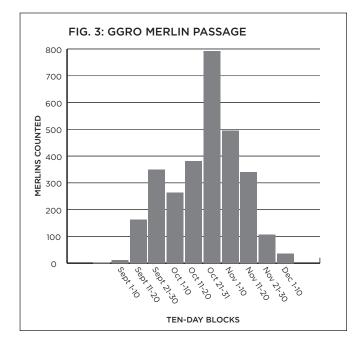


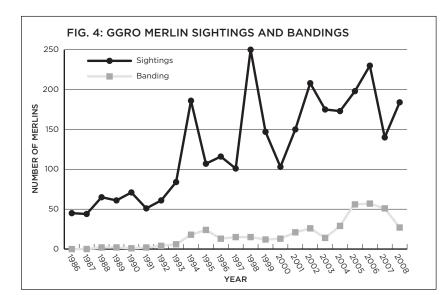


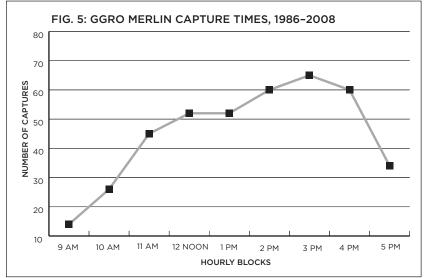
250 in 1998. Recent season totals have varied between 150 and 200 sightings.

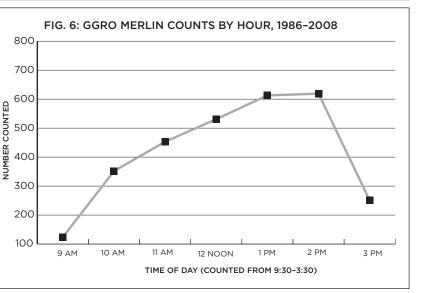
FIGURE 2 is a look at median passage dates by year, in an attempt to see if there is a consistent change in median date from 1986 through 2008. (Median passage date for each season is the day on which half of the total Merlins have passed, calculated at the end of the season.) Early median dates occur throughout the 23-year period, later dates are well-distributed throughout the period, and the most commonly occurring median dates are also scattered throughout the study period. (The most common median dates from 1986 to 2008 were October 25, 26, and 27. These three dates represent median passage in 10 of the 23 years.) This strongly suggests that there has been no change in the timing of Merlin flights over the 23 years of the GGRO count.

An interesting pattern appeared when I charted totals for









the 10-day blocks throughout the period (FIGURE 3). It appears that there is a modest increase in sightings in the 10-day block from September 21 through September 30, and then a substantial peak in sightings for the block from October 21 through October 31. This parallels the pattern seen in juvenile Red-tailed Hawks. So far, we have no explanation for this pattern.

to determine the relationship between the two study methods. Even though both numbers have increased over the years, there is no consistent relationship. For instance, in the highest count year of 1998 when 250 Merlins were sighted, the banding total stayed relatively level at 15 birds banded. Again in 2007 and 2008, when the count went from 140 to 184, the number banded showed an opposite tendency, declining from 51 to just 27.

Finally, is it true that most of the Merlins are captured late in the day? FIGURE 5 shows that half of the Merlins are caught by 2:20 pm, in the first five hours and twenty minutes of trapping time. The second half of the total captures are caught in the final three hours and 40 minutes, showing a bias toward later captures.

FIGURE 6 graphs the daily Merlin count by hour, also with an increase in numbers in the afternoon. However, since the count spans only 9:30 AM to 3:30 PM daily, and banders may continue in the field until 5 or 6 PM, the sighting times cannot be directly compared to capture times.

REFERENCE:

Warkentin, I. G., N.S. Sodhi, R.H.M. Espie, A.F. Poole, L.W. Oliphant and P.C. James. 2005. Merlin (Falco columbarius), The Birds of North America Online (A. Poole, Ed.). Ithaca: Cornell Lab of Ornithology; Retrieved from the Birds of North America Online: http://bna.birds.cornell.edu/-bna/species/044

Buzz Hull starts his 26th banding season in 2009 and is still waiting for a Richardson's Merlin to find his nets.

GGRO HAWKWATCH 2008 Dennis Davison

Harriers Down, Shoulders Up



lacktriangle went up to Hawk Hill once in the late '70s or early ■'80s, pre-GGRO, when the area was still managed by the U.S. Army and Hawk Hill was still known as Hill 129. The only way in was through the Five-Minute Tunnel. When you emerged, you were stopped at the guardhouse. If the Army wasn't shooting at the rifle range (yes, that really was a rifle range), you were allowed to go directly to Hill 129. Guess what I found? Yep, fog! There were fewer trees, few if any people, and a few raptors as well. Things have changed a bit. The guardhouse is still there, though unmanned; there are more trees, more people, more traffic, and more raptors... but fog is still a major frustration.

Northern Quadrant spotter Michael Harkins pulls his cap down to shield his eyes from the west wind on a busy Hawk Hill afternoon. (Photo: Matthew Perry)

HAWKWATCH BEGINNINGS

There are three Hawkwatchers left from the first GGRO season in 1986: Fran McDermott, Donna Ciccolini, and myself. Cheryl Kraywinkel also began as a Hawkwatcher in 1986, but has since migrated to the Telemetry program. In 1986, hawk identification classes were held at the San Francisco Zoo with both slides and live raptors. Our office was in East Fort Baker. A couple of years later we moved to Building 1061 in Fort Cronkhite, and then to Building 1064, our present location. Most raptor observatories

conduct their counts with one or two official counters. Topography and the flight behavior of raptors in the Marin Headlands made such a system nearly impossible for us.

We began the GGRO hawk count with fourteen teams of volunteer counters. Each team, and each volunteer, rotated through every other week—a system that was met with skepticism by some. However, we persisted and strove to improve our methods. It became apparent early on that the raptors were not riding a strictly North-South rail line through the Headlands. They could show up from any direction and could disappear and reappear as they passed in, out, and around the ridges and valleys of the Headlands. Simply aligning our counters in a north-facing position caused us to miss raptors cruising low behind us, in the East and South Quadrants. Thus we began using the Quadrant System in 1989, and by 1992 it was in full swing.

THE QUADRANT SYSTEM

Each team divides itself into four groups, one group per quadrant. This guarantees that the entire 360-degree view from the hill is under observation at all times. The groups rotate each hour to reduce fatigue and to ensure that everyone gets time in a busy quadrant. Watchers are able to minimize double-counting by "passing" hawks that have been counted from one quadrant to the next as the hawks cruise the hill. However, since the birds could disappear from view without actually being observed before crossing the Golden Gate, we know that an absolute count is nearly impossible. Therefore, we began recording raptor activity as hawk sightings per hour (HpH), a rate of activity instead of a hard number. Our data are now collected in the same manner by all fourteen teams, resulting in comparable data from one day to the next and one season to the next.

THE 2008 SEASON

The 2008 Hawkwatch season started out with seven straight days of fog—what a surprise! As usual, a few teams seemed to get locked in a nasty fog cycle. However, the weather improved and by season's end we were down only one hour from the 10-year average for counting hours on Hawk Hill.

RAPTOR-SIGHTINGS IN THE MARIN HEADLANDS DURING AUTUMN

2008 RAPTOR RATE (RAPTORS/HOUR)		1998-2007 AVERAGE
Hours	508	509
14.79	7,515	9,406
0.17	88	107
0.14	69	84
< 0.01	1	0
0.01	6	4
0.90	457	818
8.05	4,087	4,634
3.84	1,951	2,619
< 0.01	2	1
(1.10	559	412
0.26	131	126
< 0.01	1	6
13.46	6,836	9,891
0.03	15	24
0.01	4	9
0.04	18	21
0.74	377	595
0.36	184	177
0.44	223	172
0.01	7	5
1.78	903	1,534
46.1	23,434	30,652
	### Application #### Application #### Application #### Application #### Application #### Application #### Application ####### Application ###################################	### SIGHTINGS Hours 508 14.79 7,515 0.17 88 0.14 69 <0.01 1 0.01 6 0.90 457 8.05 4,087 3.84 1,951 <0.01 2 <0.01 2 <0.01 1 13.46 6,836 0.03 15 0.01 4 0.04 18 0.74 377 0.36 184 0.44 223 0.01 7 1.78 903



AN ABBREVIATED TIMELINE OF GGRO'S FIRST 25 YEARS FROM FIELD JOURNAL **ENTRIES**

10/21 Captured and banded first Red-tailed Hawk. Great thrill.

JUDD HOWELL



Conservancy Director Greg Moore, GGRO Director Allen Fish, and GGRO Founder, NPS Ecologist Judd Howell. (Photo: Noni Welch)





GGRO Hawkwatch Founder Carter Faust calls out nawks to Herb Brandt. (Photo: GGRO)

Fog fickle. In... out... In...out. Finally Beth Gardner persuaded us to go to Slacker where fog stayed away. Rewarded with adult Golden and 2 Broadwings, along with

ALLEN FISH

grand Accipiter passages.

These are the days!



John Keane prepares to release GGRO's first banded eagle, a one-eved Golden wo and a half ears later, this agle was recovered as bones 200 niles to the north.

Hawkwatchers practice the new Quadrant System at Fort Cronkhite. Includes Buzz Hull, Keith Chadbourne, Fran McDermott, Donna Ciccolini, Penny Watson, David Jesus. (Photo: Allen Fish)

Sightings were another story altogether. Total raptor sightings were down 24%. This year we had 23,434 sightings compared to the 10-year average of 30,652. Hawks per hour were also down 23% (46.1), compared to the 10-year average of 60.2. Nearly all species were down, most notably: Cooper's Hawks (-26%), Redtails (-31%), American Kestrels (-37%) and Northern Harriers (a whopping -44%). Even Turkey Vultures saw a 20% decline. Could the massive wildfires in Northern California earlier in the year be a factor? Merlins and Broadwings showed a slight increase of 4% each. Peregrine Falcons (+30%) and Red-shouldered Hawks (+36%) were the only species that showed an increase in sightings over the 10-year average. Bald Eagles, at six sightings, were only one less than the record of seven seen in 1999.

American Kestrel sightings, at 377 this year and 378 for 2007, are at their lowest since 1991. The 10-year average for this species is 595 sightings. This is disturbing, as American Kestrel numbers have also been dropping at other hawk migration sights, particularly in the East. Allen Fish wrote an article in the *Pacific Raptor Report #29* detailing this trend. He also described the changing ratio of Kestrels to Merlins on Hawk Hill. The ratio was 89:1 in 1983, 16:1 in 1985, and nearly 2:1 today. Until the last two years, our Kestrel numbers have been relatively stable while Merlin counts have been increasing. Merlins are always exciting to see, but they are no longer rare.

The highlight of 2008 was a juvenile Mississippi Kite seen by the Monday I team on October 27. This is only the third record for Hawk Hill for this species and the second for the GGRO counters. The first sighting on Hawk Hill was on September 13, 1976 by William

Pursell and Alice Mericourt, and the second was on October 28, 2003. As the species name suggests, this is a species of the Southeast; the closest population to us is in Arizona. Other raptors from the South have tempted us in recent years; Grey Hawk, Common Black-hawk, Zone-tailed Hawk, Swallow-tailed Kite, and Crested Caracara have each been seen in Marin County in recent years, but not by the GGRO counters on Hawk Hill in the autumn. A Caracara actually buzzed GGRO headquarters at Fort Cronkhite, in July 2005, but refused to visit Hawk Hill. Surely, it is only a matter of time before one or more are recorded from the hill.

The last two weeks of the season had decent (for the time of year) numbers of raptors on most days, and dry weather. Notable were two Golden Eagles and two Harlan's Hawks (an uncommon dark form of the Red-tailed Hawk).

Why do I keep coming back season after season? Certainly, it's the great staff and the camaraderie with other volunteers, even banders (hey, I married one!). It is also the satisfaction of contributing to the understanding of raptor migration, and the presentation of our findings to the scientific community and the public. But what really gives me a kick is watching a novice hawk counter work through the identification of a bird in the sky. "I've got a hawk—it's a harrier—a juvenile!" The counter turns to call it in, and I give them the thumbs up for a good call, and their face lights up. That's the real payoff!

Retired postman Dennis Davison has anchored GGRO's Sunday One hawk count for more than two decades.

Dennis was part of the team of counters who invented the GGRO's Quadrant System in 1988.

TELEMETRY 2008 Lynn Jesus

What's in a Name?

ADAM, BO, CHIP, DANNY, ELVIS...

SINCE GGRO'S TELEMETRY PROGRAM BEGAN IN 1990, we have given each raptor a nickname, in alphabetical order. In 2008, the two subjects which we tracked were the "W" and "X" juvenile Red-tailed Hawks—the 23rd and 24th Redtails we have tracked.

Of course, naming the bird is done for the benefit of the people involved in the study. We humans can more easily remember the details of the various birds' flights, because we can remember that Francisco went north and then south, Elvis went missing, etc. However, in 2008, we learned that at least one of our subjects took its nickname very seriously.



Gazetteer, ruler, pencil, protractor, legal pad—tools of a low-tech radiotracker. (Photo: Galen Leeds)

propriate. For years, I have taken paper maps, protractors, colored pencils, and rulers and plotted the flight paths of the various hawks that we have tracked. The completed map represented bearings and flight paths indicated by arrows going virtually in every direction. A word-processing font called "Wingdings 3" likewise has arrows going in every direction . While applying the trans-

mitter, little did I know that the juvenile, female Red-tail in front of me was cyber-literate and would take her name to heart. I definitely underestimated Wingding.

On November 4, 2008, we released Wingding with her transmitter from Hawk Hill. True to her name, Wingding flew some circles above Hawk Hill, and then flew eastward over Slacker Ridge to East Fort Baker, where she again circled. She then headed north to Sausalito, then westward into the

Marin Headlands, again. When it was finally time to find a roost area, she flew two miles due east to Angel Island where she spent the night.

On November 5, Wingding began her Day Two tour of the Bay Area by crossing San Francisco Bay northeastward to

WINGDING

While waiting for GGRO banders to provide us a healthy, juvenile Red-tailed Hawk for our 2008 study, the telemetry team wrote names beginning with "W" on a flipchart. Hawkwatchers and banders added to the list. Choosing from the list of names, I found one name particularly ap-

1989

8/18

Pretty exciting first day out! Beautiful conditions. Caught 2 HY Redtail. Also saw 1 after hatch year male Northern Harrier, 1 Merlin, 1 Prairie Falcon. The Merlin screamed through at Mach1, leaving us to gaze in wonderment at its contrail as it disappeared over the horizon. The Prairie stayed at the site for well over a couple of minutes,

making close passes before moseying on.

JEREMY JOHNSTONE, DAN GOTTSEGEN; HAWK BLIND



Bob Fivis and Sally Mills banding a Sharp-shinned. Sally was the founding editor of GGRO's *Pacific Raptor Report*. (Photo: GGRO)

10



Langridge
balances on
a car while
"getting the
beep" from a
radiotagged
Red-tailed
Hawk. (Photo: GGRO)

10/8

"The Ferruginous was absolutely beautiful.
Add also 38 immature kids from school groups who identified "hawk-ccipiters" very enthusiastically for us.
Nice visits from a Merlin and a male Harrier. Not so nice visits from fog."

THURSDAY 2 HAWKWATCH



10/24 "Varia haze, a

"Variable winds, variable haze, and variable moods made for variable raptors. But we did see a Shorteared Owl, a Peregrine Falcon, a pair of Whitetailed Black-shouldered Kites, and at least 1643 Band-tailed Pigeons."

ALLEN FISH, ZACH SMITH, AND BRODIE STUART; MONDAY 1 HAWKWATCH



Karen Scheuermann prepares Elvis, a juvenile Redtailed Hawk, for his receiver and antenna attachment. (Photo: David Jesus)

Radiotracker

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Richmond. The next two hours she coursed southward down through the East Bay toward Milpitas. Then she flew northwestward to the Peninsula, and then southward through Atherton, Palo Alto, and Mountain View. All four telemetry teams lost the signal, and then at 1:50 PM, the team on Yerba Buena Island picked up a single bearing that indicated Wingding might have hopped the Coast Range heading west toward the Pacific Ocean.

Indeed, with the sun setting, the team that had been on Yerba Buena Island (Mark Sutherland and James Raives) drove along the San Mateo coastline, and located Wingding's signal just south of Davenport (north of Santa Cruz). So on Day Two, Wingding began by heading northeast, then south, then west over the ridge, then south again...all in an effort to end up in Davenport. Her flight path was definitely not the shortest distance between two points, and it certainly gave the teams a challenge.

Day Three (November 6) began with Team 2 (Larry Beard and Galen Leeds) picking up Wingding's signal by 8:00 AM near Bonny Doon Road just south of Davenport. The team then had visual sightings of Wingding as she flew with an adult male Northern Harrier, and an adult Red-tailed Hawk. They watched her hunt and course along low hilltops before dropping behind one. "We did not see her again that day," the team wrote in their notes. The other two teams were positioned on the top of the Santa Cruz Mountains ridgeline and on Hecker Pass as Team 2 tried to catch up with Wingding.

Cross-bearings provided by the high point teams showed she was north of Santa Cruz, then her flight moved southward through Aptos. By 12:30 PM she was near Watsonville, and then the signal bounced erratically throughout the area. The 12:45 cross-bearing had Wingding south

of Watsonville near Marina, but then the 1:00 PM bearings pointed north of Watsonville to Corralitos. The 1:30 PM cross was just off-shore, south of Moss Landing, and by 1:45 the cross indicated she was again north of Watsonville. And then, abruptly, all signals disappeared.

How did Wingding disappear when two teams had clear views and signals over the terrain? Had she slipped south along the coast through Big Sur? Or had she flown quickly through Salinas and then southward? The ground team headed to Fremont Peak to get to an inland high point. There were no further signals from Wingding that day.

On Day Four (November 7), while Teams 1 and 2 monitored the Monterey Bay Area, Team 3 (Caryn Ansel and Mark Sutherland) drove from Highway 101 west to the coast, then south along Highway 1 through Big Sur, then through Los Padres National Forest, up and over the crest on Naciemiento Ferguson Road, through Fort Hunter-Liggett, and then back northward on Highway 101. Unfortunately, the effort went unrewarded. None of the teams picked up Wingding's signal.

Throughout the tracking process, Wingding would start her flights by heading one direction—only to then change her flight plan. She started north to go south, and started east to go west. The teams in the field would head north along with her, only to find that she suddenly changed direction, leaving the trackers in the dust. Wingding had perfected the ability to fly circles around the teams, and then disappear. In the end, after three days of tracking this erratic flight style, the three teams lost Wingding. Wingding had taken her name as a challenge, and she won.

XXIV

Rain delayed the start of our tracking the "X" bird—which

10/10

"Trapped a Coop and Sharp. Played with a Peregrine for 40 minutes! 30+ stoops and none through our nets."

QUENTIN GOODRICH AND DIAN LANGLOIS HAWK BLIND



David Gregoire, Joe DiDonato, and Allen Fish try South Slacker Hill as an alternative migration lookout to Hawk Hill and discover more fog. (Photo: Laura Bryon)

9/20

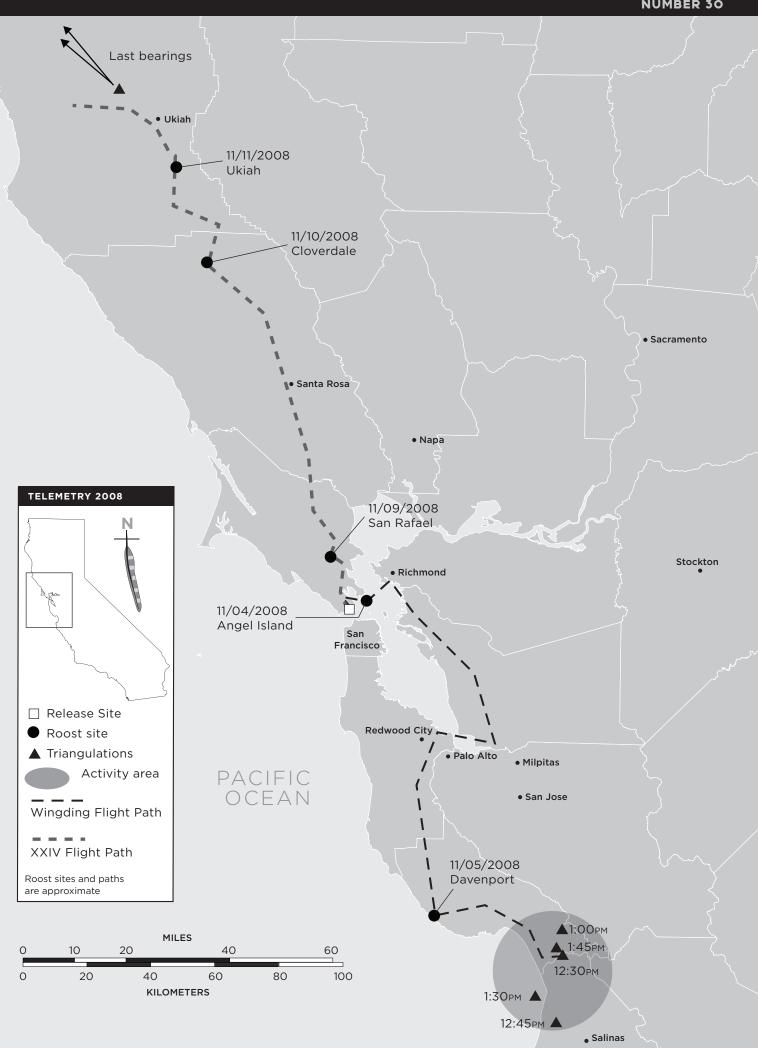
12

"We had a little trouble with our karmic adjustment device midday but the problem was easily solved by application of chocolate and vegetarian spicy jerky. It made sense that food helped, because we caught three full-crop hawks — in total, three Coops and four Sharpshins, all on RoboLure."

ANNE ARDILLO, KAREN GERSTEIN, SIOBHAN RUCK, BUZZ HULL; HAWK BLIND



he patagial mark on a juvenile Redtailed Hawk for a banding demonstration on Hawk Hill (Photo: Greg Gothard)



NUMBER 30 **PACIFIC RAPTOR REPORT**

gave us more time to come up with "X" names. Now we had already tracked Xingu (in our Rare Bird Tracking Study), and Xavier was likewise already used. Although creative "X" names are difficult to come up with, the flipchart filled with suggestions like X-wing, X-Marksthe-spot, etc. While it is common for the person applying the transmitter to name the hawk, this time we chose to vote. And the winner was... XXIV! What? What is XXIV? Well, XXIV is, of course, the Roman numeral representing the number 24, and this was—drum roll please—our 24th juvenile Red-tail! Now XXIV doesn't easily roll off your tongue, nor would it work well for radio communications. Jeff Boissier suggested the pronunciation "ziv." Well, after some thought, the bird became known simply as "24." And 24 was a great bird to track—he did not follow Wingding's example.

On Sunday, November 9, 2008, GGRO banders at Hawk Blind provided us with a juvenile, male Redtailed Hawk. After applying the transmitter and releasing him from Hawk Hill, 24 made a dramatic circling of the hilltop, and flew northward past the ridgeline above Sausalito, and continued northward some ten miles until he slowed down and selected the area near San Anselmo (just west of San Rafael) for his evening roost.

On Monday, November 10, 24 was up and traveling by 9:00 AM, and the San Pablo Ridge Team (Cheryl Kraywinkel and Caryn Ansel) was able to maintain bearings on him as he flew northward through Marinwood, over Mount Burdell, through Petaluma, and up to Santa Rosa. This is the largest range of bearings northward that we have ever been able to receive from the San Pablo Ridge site. Cross-bearings were provided by the Mount Burdell team, while the third

team was trying to keep up. Soon all three teams were on the move, and 24 slowed down just southeast of Cloverdale. Toward the end of the day, he moved slightly westward towards the Lake Sonoma Wildlife Management Area, just south of Cloverdale. Day Two had been a good flight day, a roughly 60mile trip, and more importantly, 24 cooperated with his trackers.

On November 11, 24 roamed around the Cloverdale area until approximately 10:30 AM. He then headed northward, once again along Highway 101, toward Ukiah. He stopped during the afternoon to check out the area near the Russian River alongside Highway 101. He settled down seven miles south of Ukiah, near Henry Station Road, just east of Highway 101.

November 12, 2008 was the last scheduled day of tracking for 2008, and 24 cooperated once again. Starting Day Four south of Ukiah, 24 moved along the Russian River to the east side of Highway 101. He then shifted to the west side of Highway 101 and flew northward, closer to Ukiah. By noon, he was near downtown. By 1:30 PM, 24 was northwest of Ukiah and heading westward into the mountains. With one high point team on Cow Mountain, and two teams traveling local roads, including Low Gap Road and Orr Springs Road, the teams were still able to get crossbearings as 24 ventured deeper and deeper into the mountains. The last bearings from Orr Springs Road showed the steady northward movement of 24 into the Big River Watershed.

In this type of terrain, the raptor definitely has an advantage. Flying over ridgelines takes only seconds for the raptor, but hours of backtracking for the landbound trackers. Although it was too bad that we had to leave 24, all of the trackers agreed that this was a difficult area in which to track.

Sixteen years ago, GGRO Telemetry teams tracked another juvenile Red-tailed Hawk (Francisco, released October 19, 1992) who similarly went north along Highway 101, and then into the mountains along the coast. Francisco was lost in the Lost Coast area, south of Eureka, but reappeared back in the Bay Area the following month. Unfortunately, 24 was not picked up again in the Bay Area, even though we occasionally monitored radio signals from Hawk Hill. These two birds have helped us understand the great range of movements of our juvenile Red-tailed Hawks during the fall.

The year 2008 marks the 19th season of radiotracking for the GGRO. Nineteen years and 52 hawks later, we have a better understanding of the dispersal and/or migration paths of raptors through the San Francisco Bay Area and California. Over those years, this time-intensive style of tracking has only been possible because hundreds of volunteers have spent days and weeks in the field. A typical day of tracking begins before sunrise, and ends after sunset; and it can be both intense and exhausting. It can also be very rewarding. The 19 seasons have given us a unique and complex picture of how and where each individual raptor has traveled after being banded, tagged, and released in the Marin Headlands.

There are actually two seasons in Lynn Jesus' year: knitting and raptor tracking.



Intern Lynn Schofield has a peak moment with an adult Harlan's Hawk, banded in the Headlands on December 5, 2008. Note the fine granular spotting on the tail and the unusual calligraphy on the primaries. (Photo: Jasper Toscani)

BANDING 2008 Buzz Hull Sharpies Buck the Trend

THE 2008 SEASON SEEMED TO BE below average to most of the ■ GGRO banders, although it was actually well above average in terms of numbers of captures at 1,530. The banders had been spoiled by a series of exceptionally fine totals over the previous several seasons, reaching a record high last year at 2,243.

The drop in numbers of adult Red-tailed Hawks banded in 2008 compared with 2007 underscored the disappointment felt by



Zach Smith and Bill James radiotrack a Red-tailed Hawk through the underbrush of Daly City. (Photo: Karen Scheuermann)

10/2 Quimby the Red-shoulder sat on a wall she pulled off the transmitter & let it fall, All of the trackers from 1064, said "give us a bird that will travel some more" They gave them a harrier and off it went, with a transmitter glued right next to its vent.

> LYNN BANTLEY, COLD & HAWKLESS (ALSO MARION, JOHN, JOHN, AND MAURA)

Hawkwatchers Tom Delebo and Lynn Jesus scan the East Quadrant for fastflapping Merlin. (Photo: David Jesus)

2003

9/12

"Hot, hot, hot! Temp hit 94.5 degrees shortly after noon with no wind. Almost too hot to concentrate. Most hawks flying too high or laying low. Highlights were Swainson's, Redshoulders, a kite, and numerous kestrels. On a non-raptor note, the day was filled with swifts of both species."

FRIDAY 2 HAWKWATCH



Will Shor (1921-2005) co-founded the GGRO's banding program, bringing us his encyclopedic knowledge of raptor biology, and a deep reverence for all creatures falconiform. (Photo: Siobhan Ruck)

"Well, let's see. We had Bobcats that wouldn't go away, a marathon footrace up the Miwok Trail, police presence for Prince Charles and Camilla, fighter jets flying by at eye-level, kung-fu dancers on No-Name Hill, and quail running about... yet somehow as all the madness happened, we had a great banding day: 3 Sharpshins, 1 Coop, and 1 Redtail. Fun. Except for getting footed."

> KENDRA ARMER, COLLEEN O'ROURKE, JEFF ACUFF; HILL 88 BLIND

many banders. We had banded 81 adults of this magnificent species in 2007, making the 2008 total of only five adults seem especially dismal. Adult Red-tails are few in number in the Marin Headlands compared with the juveniles, and many GGRO banders have gaps of several seasons between experiences with them. The total in 2007 may have been just a one-season blip in the data—more adult Red-tails—rather than the beginning of a trend as we may have hoped.

RAPTORS BANDED IN THE MARIN HEADLANDS DURING AUTUMN

	2008	AVERAGE 1992-2007*	TOTALS 1983-2008
Northern Harrier	5	12	248
Sharp-shinned Hawk	646	468	8,664
Cooper's Hawk	504	579	11,031
Northern Goshawk	0	0	5
Red-shouldered Hawk	17	15	290
Broad-winged Hawk	0	1	20
Swainson's Hawk	0	0	8
Red-tailed Hawk	280	343	7,770
Ferruginous Hawk	0	0	2
Rough-legged Hawk	0	0	5
Golden Eagle	0	0	2
American Kestrel	38	53	1,003
Merlin	27	22	408
Peregrine Falcon	10**	4	72
Prairie Falcon	3	2	32
Eurasian Kestrel	0	0	1
TOTAL	1,530	1,452	29,561

^{* 1992} through 2007 are used for this comparison due to similarity of methods and effort between those years and 2008.

Although most species were captured in substantially lower numbers than in the previous several seasons, two species did not follow this trend:

Sharp-shinned Hawks and Peregrine Falcons.

In 2008, Sharpies visited the blinds in the third highest number we've ever seen (646), while we set a new GGRO record (10) for the number of Peregrines banded. Two of our four interns caught Peregrine Falcons on the same day:

Carmen DeLeon caught a juvenile at Slacker

Blind, and Helen Davis caught an adult at Hill 88 Blind on October 15. Intern Teresa Ely caught another juvenile at Slacker on December 1. Although intern Lynn Schofield didn't get a Peregrine, she was at Hawk Blind on December 5 to enjoy a second-year Harlan's Hawk, a subspecies of Red-tailed Hawk that breeds in the far north and only occasionally graces the Marin Headlands with its presence.

Another highlight of the season was October 22 at Hawk Blind when at least one adult of both sexes of both Cooper's Hawks and Sharp-shinned Hawks were banded on the same day, the first time for that event at the Golden Gate Raptor Observatory. Finally, an exceptionally strong class of apprentice banders joined the GGRO team in 2008, auguring good things to come for many years in the banding program.

2006

10/28

Spectacular—
Phantasmorruginous!
Glorious sunny weather.
Highlights were 3 Golden
Eagles, 1 Ferruginous, a
Bobcat and a Coyote.
Many Redtail kettles."

SAT 1 HAWKWATCH

Denise and Nick Villa conduct the HawkTalk for a Peak Weekend crowd of appreciative kids and families. (Photo: David Jesus)

2008



Camp, also a
1992 intern,
lifts a juvenile
Northern Harrier back to
the Pacific
Flyway.
(Photo: Beth
Wommack)

Bander Julia

How I became a ggro bander Nick Villa Recalling the Main Event

half my life. The 2009 season will mark my 25th year as a volunteer for this most special organization. Yet when I am asked why I became a bander or what drew me to raptors in the first place, I am hard-pressed to come up with a simple answer. There were so many things and events in my life that contributed to my fascination with hawks. Thinking back, it seems birds of prey were always a part of my life.

First of all, I had the good fortune of being raised in rural upstate New York. My backyard bordered a 30,000-acre state park of mostly dense pine forest. Birds of all descriptions abounded. Whether hiking through this park or hunting pheasants in country cornfields with my father, I always took time out to admire the skill and acrobatic daring displayed by hawks and falcons alike. Something about their grace, power, and fearlessness touched me in a way no other animal could. But of all the dozens of experiences I had with raptors while growing up in New York, nothing could have prepared me or surpassed what I have come to call, "The Main Event!"

It occurred in the winter of 1982. I was working for the General Electric Company in Oakbrook, Illinois. I occupied a small office with a window facing an elementary school and exercise yard next door. Between the buildings was a small culvert running the length of my building. A small four-foot fence separated the properties. As luck would have it, a family of American Kestrels was nesting in the school building. The school building was a simple A-frame design and a vent hole under the frame served as housing for a family of four.

Each and every night during the previous summer, I would watch in amazement as one by one, the four birds would each leap out of a large oak tree in the middle of the school yard. Gaining great speed in their dives and barely missing the ground, they would then fly straight up into the tiny vent hole, folding their wings at just the right moment to gain entry. Watching these fantastic flyers hunt and acquire prey each



Nick Villa pulls the can off of a juvenile Cooper's Hawk at a weekend Banding Demonstration. (Photo: Walter Kitundu)

and every day would have ranked high in anyone's memories—but the best was yet to come.

That winter in Illinois the temperature rarely climbed above freezing. In January, two back-to-back snowfalls brought the snow level to just inches below my window. This was two solid feet of very white and very dry powdery snow. (Too bad I don't ski.) Why the kestrels didn't hotfoot it for the South was a complete mystery, until one bright workday morning the answer was made clear.

That morning, all four birds perched on the fence directly across from my window. The distance to the fence was only about 10 feet, so my view was excellent. The elder male was the first to make a move. He hopped off the fence and in a quick but short power dive appeared to be heading right for my window. At the last possible instant he folded back his wings and dove head first into the snow bank only a foot or so below my window. His body completely disappeared under the snow. Less than a half-second later a great explosion of snow accompanied by his rapidly beating wings signaled his quick exit from the bank. Clutched in his talons was a small black mouse.

I watched in awe as he casually flew back to the fence with his meal. He stopped only long enough to show his mate and youngsters this was how it was done. Then he proceeded to the tall oak tree and enjoyed his catch. I watched in total amazement as this same feat was performed at least four more times by all members of the family.

I know of no other animal, winged or otherwise, that shows as much skill, agility, and certainly adaptability as the American Kestrel.

So now you know why I like birds of prey.

Part of the 1985 banding class, Nick Villa has been a foundation of the GGRO banding program for 25 seasons, and besides—he sweeps his banding blinds.

^{**} New GGRO season high!

BAND RECOVERIES 2007–2008 Marion Weeks

A Long-Distance Cooper's Hawk

In 2008, the Bird Banding Laboratory (BBL) used new procedures to notify banding organizations such as the GGRO of band recoveries that had been reported. Overall, the reports seem to reach us in a more timely manner. They are now sent via e-mail and arrive almost every two weeks as birds are found. We may receive a report within 10 days of the finder's contact with the BBL—except during our banding season. Our banding data are not relayed to the BBL until the end of our season, and then only after they have been meticulously reviewed for accuracy by Buzz Hull.

On our end, when we receive a "Report to Bander" from the BBL, our first action is to decode the BBL abbreviations about the circumstances of the hawk's recovery. Next we attempt to reach the finder to get more details and ensure that the information is correct. We first try to reach them by phone. Failing that, we send a letter, and then if necessary, a second letter that includes a questionnaire for them to fill out and return to us. If these are not answered, we try to obtain the finder's correct contact information via the Internet. If all avenues reach a dead end, we write "circumstances unknown" at the end of the recovery note listed here, and we will close the case in the master file. That means that we cannot confirm any of the data transmitted to us by the BBL.

Luckily, we do manage to get in touch with a large number of the finders. Although the change in BBL procedures has meant that we hear about band recoveries faster than we used to, we have noted many more discrepancies lately than in past years.

There is some good news in the details of this 2007—2008 batch of band recoveries. Two Red-tailed Hawks were found 13 years after banding; one was released alive (#850) and the other had to be euthanized (#857). Interestingly, both were recovered in Oregon.

We also have a new long-distance traveler: A juvenile female Cooper's Hawk (#865) left the Marin Headlands on September 15, 2007, on a migratory path to Cabo San Lu-

cas, Baja California Sur, Mexico, where she was recovered November 10, 2007. These however are merely the facts. Below is the story behind the facts.

The finder, Glenn Ehrenberg, described Cabo San Lucas as a place where Great Horned Owls are year-round residents. Peregrine Falcons, he said, used to stay through the winter, feeding on birds in the nearby lagoon—until a road was built and the lagoon (and the prey base) disappeared. This winter, he saw more Red-tailed Hawks than ever.

Hawks are attracted every winter to Glenn's aviary at his family's home at the tip of the peninsula. "They kill our birds," says Glenn. His family has begun to cover the aviary, but some Cooper's Hawks still manage to get under the cover in their attempt to get at their birds.

Glenn saw this Cooper's Hawk attacking his birds and he scared it off. It flew a short distance to the top of a Cordon cactus. A few minutes later, a few Red-tails attempted to attack the aviary. Then Glenn watched another Red-tail fly by with prey in its talons, followed by two opportunistic juvenile Red-tails. All three birds landed nearby in a dry riverbed. Glenn ran to the riverbed, scared them off, and then discovered that the dead banded Cooper's Hawk had been the Red-tail prey. He reported the band number to the Bird Banding Laboratory and kept the dead Cooper's Hawk in their freezer until his mother made him discard it.

Many of our Cooper's Hawk recoveries come from people who have outdoor pigeon or dove aviaries, but this is the first Coop death we know of due to Red-tail predation. What makes this even more unique is that this recovery is the most southerly GGRO recovery of any raptor to date. This female Cooper's Hawk traveled 1,274 miles in 56 days. Whew!

Novato resident Marion Weeks is starting her 18th year of banding. For the past decade at least, Marion has also been GGRO's Band Recovery Editor, which means she corresponds with the people who find banded hawks and gets to hear their stories, some strange, all true.

BAND RECOVERIES 2007-2008

UPDATE ON RECOVERY #730-B

Juvenile Red-tailed Hawk banded 9/8/04 by Allen Fish; found "unable to fly" at Hayward, Alameda Co., CA on 9/25/08; reported by Rose Britton of the Sulphur Creek Nature Center where the Redtail was successfully treated for botulism, and released 10/2/08. The hawk was brought to them by Hayward Animal Control. This bird passed through the same two agencies when it was found 11/17/05 at Hayward. It was treated for an "injured wing" and being "stunned after flying into something" and was released on 12/7/05.

LIST OF NEW RECOVERIES:

842 After-second-year Red-tailed Hawk banded on 10/25/05 by Lynn Bantley; found dead after being hit by an automobile on Sun-

set Blvd. in San Francisco, San Francisco Co., CA on 6/11/07; reported by Jocasta Mettling.

843 Juvenile female Cooper's Hawk banded on 9/17/06 by Eric Jepsen; found dead 6/12/07 near Fairfield, Solano Co., CA; circumstances unknown.

844 Juvenile Red-tailed Hawk banded on 10/27/02 by Siobhan Ruck; remains found by Mezzo Tint on 6/14/07 in a tree near Watsonville, Santa Cruz Co., CA.

846 Juvenile female Red-tailed Hawk banded on 9/5/06 by Tim Howe; found 7/18/07 caught in pigeon netting on the top floor of the State PUC building at the San Francisco Civic Center, San Francisco Co., CA. "We cut the netting where it was entangled and got it out. Once bird was removed from net. we carefully took it down to our loading dock alley and released the bird after reporting it and being told it was okay to let it go. (We) watched it fly off and perch on the top of a distant phone pole;" reported by Leah Schuller.

847 Juvenile female Cooper's Hawk banded on 9/20/06 by Marc Blum-

berg; found 10/8/06 in East Palo Alto, Santa Clara Co., CA; admitted to Peninsula Humane Society with a fractured femur where it was euthanized; reported by Sue Kelly.

848 Juvenile female Northern Harrier banded on 12/22/06 by Randy Breaux; bones, feathers, and skin found by Brandon Hall 10/28/07 at Sonoma Marsh, Sonoma Co., CA.

849 Juvenile female Cooper's Hawk banded on 9/7/06 by Terry Mead; found headless on 10/11/07 near California Valley, San Luis Obispo Co., CA; reported by Robert Stafford, Department of Fish and Game, who believes it was a victim of Great Horned Owl predation.

850 After-hatch-year Red-tailed Hawk banded on 11/18/94 by Zach Smith; found 13 years later on 11/6/07 with a companion Redtail feeding on a turkey carcass behind a church at Fall Creek, Lane Co., OR. Glen Brewer stated, "it flew ten feet then flopped on its back." He wrapped it up in his shirt and called the Cascades Raptor Center. Louise Schimmel, Executive Director of CRC, reported that the Redtail was found to be bruised and given care; released 11/23/07. Glen believes he still sees the pair flying in the field behind his house.

851 Juvenile Red-tailed Hawk banded on 9/24/04 by Buzz Hull;

found injured 11/18/07 at Fremont, Alameda Co., CA; apparently shot by a B.B. gun. Taken to Ohlone Humane Society and Wildlife Rehabilitation Center to be treated for severe eye damage and was euthanized after a long stay; reported by David Anderson.

852 Juvenile male Cooper's Hawk banded on 9/1/06 by Michele Casale; found dead by Pete Facchini 11/24/07 near Gustine, Merced Co., CA; circumstances unknown.

853 Juvenile female Cooper's Hawk banded on 10/19/06 by Candace Davenport; found dead by Robert Humphry 11/23/07 at mouth of San Carpoforo Creek in remote northwest corner of San Luis Obispo Co., CA..

854 Juvenile female Sharp-shinned Hawk banded on 9/25/06 by John Keane; found dead by George Fields 11/24/07 in Ripon, San Joaquin Co., CA.

855 Juvenile Red-tailed Hawk banded on 9/11/97 by Dian Langlois; ten years later on 12/19/07 was trapped and released west of Petaluma, Sonoma Co., CA; reported by Stan Moore.

856 Juvenile female Cooper's Hawk banded on 11/13/96 by Neal Johannsen; found dead, 11 years later, on 12/24/07 after a window strike at Novato, Marin Co., CA; reported by Leslie Purdy.

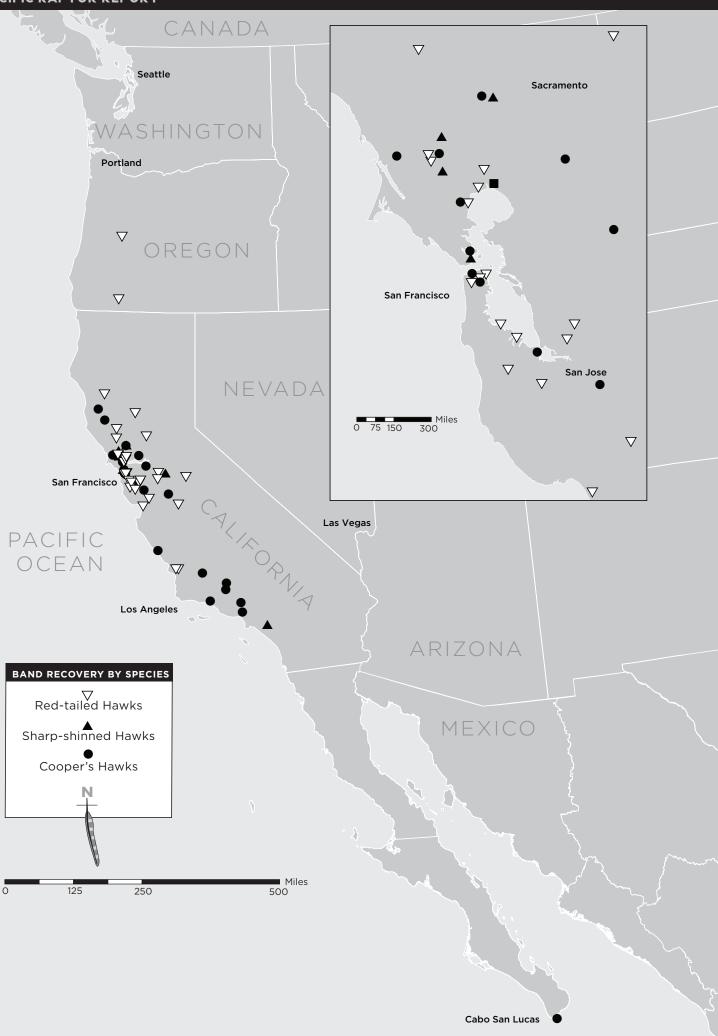
857 Juvenile Red-tailed Hawk banded on 10/24/94 by Stan Moore; found shot 13 years later on 12/31/07 at Medford, Josephine Co., OR; taken to Wildlife Images Rehabilitation and Education Center where it had to be euthanized; reported by Cory Alvis who stated, "The reason I remember this bird is that some jerk shot it."

858 Juvenile Red-tailed Hawk banded on 9/08/04 by Jeff Wall; found later that same year by Corey Sater at the Old River Delta



Buzz Hull does the radio countdown and releases an adult Cooper's Hawk for the Accipiter ID Study. (Photo: Teresa Ely)

PACIFIC RAPTOR REPORT



System, west of Tracy, San Joaquin Co., CA; exact date and circumstances unknown.

859 Juvenile female Red-tailed Hawk banded on 9/25/06 by Diane Bahr; found badly decomposed in neighbor's yard 1/20/08 at Novato, Marin Co., CA; reported by Donn Davy.

860 Juvenile male Sharp-shinned Hawk banded on 11/13/04 by Marc Blumberg; found dead 1/18/08 at an "estate near Du Soleil Resort and Spa" just north of Napa, Napa Co., CA; reported by "Jude unknown;" circumstances unknown.

861 Juvenile female Sharp-shinned Hawk banded on 12/20/07 by Claire O'Neil; found dead 1/13/08 near Sausalito, Marin Co., CA; reported by Bec Detrich; circumstances unknown.

862 Juvenile female Cooper's Hawk banded on 9/26/04 by Buzz Hull; trapped and released as part of a scientific study on 1/20/08 by Jeff Kidd and Pete Bloom near Newhall, Los Angeles Co., CA.

863 Juvenile male Red-tailed Hawk banded on 11/22/06 by Mamiko Kawaguchi; was hit by a car 11/12/07 near Kelseyville, Lake Co., CA and euthanized three days later; reported by Sandie Elliott of Spirit Wild.

864 Juvenile female Cooper's Hawk banded on 9/25/07 by Bethany Sturgeon; found five days later dead of unknown cause 9/30/07 in Santa Barbara, Santa Barbara Co.. CA; reported by Alexander Lejeune.

865 Juvenile female Cooper's Hawk banded on 9/15/07 by Dian Langlois; found dead, killed by a Red-tailed Hawk 11/10/07 at Cabo San Lucas, Baja California Sur, Mexico; reported by Glenn Ehrenberg. This is our southern-most band recovery to date and flew 1274 mi (2050 km) in only 56 days.

866 Juvenile female Cooper's Hawk banded on 9/17/07 by Brian Smucker; found dead on 9/27/07 by Rich Brazil in Petaluma, Sonoma Co., CA. Of note, Rich reports that a Cooper's was "hanging around the aviary" for a few days, then not seen for a couple of days, and two days later a Coop was found dead about 20 feet away from his aviary in a field.

867 Juvenile female Cooper's Hawk banded on 9/18/07 by Nick Villa; presumed found in San Francisco, San Francisco Co., CA; was either brought in dead or euthanized at the San Francisco Animal Care and Control on 10/1/07; reported by Shaelyn St. Onge-Cole.

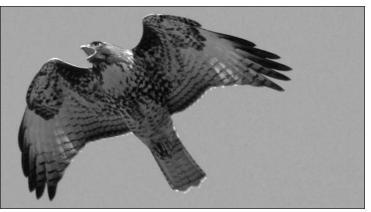
868 Juvenile female Cooper's Hawk banded on 10/8/07 by Ann Ruffer; found dead of a probable window strike on the deck of a houseboat near a glass door on 11/20/07 at Sausalito, Marin Co., CA; reported by Harbor Master Ken Watsey.

869 After-second-year Red-tailed Hawk banded on 9/10/07 by

Marion Weeks; presumed found in San Francisco, San Francisco Co., CA; and was either brought in dead or euthanized at the San Francisco Animal Care and Control on 9/22/07; reported by Shaelyn St. Onge-Cole

870 Second-year Red-tailed Hawk banded on 11/1/07 by Neal Johannsen; found dead 1/24/08 at a landscaping job site in Burlingame, San Mateo Co., CA; reported by Manuel Castaneda.

871 Juvenile female Cooper's Hawk banded on 9/19/07 by Natalya Blumenfield; found dead on 9/28/07 by Edward Salvestrin in St. Helena, Napa Co., CA. He keeps doves and believes this hawk kept flying into and on top of the pen for two days—then didn't see it any more until his dog found the dead hawk within two days of the last sighting.



Three of the 21 juvenile Red-tailed Hawks banded and reported on here, were confirmed shot as adults (#851, 857, and 891). Remarkably, two were shot right here in the San Francisco Bay Area. The third, a 13-year-old bird at the time of death, was found in Medford, Oregon. (Photo: Eddie Bartley)

872 Juvenile female Cooper's Hawk banded on 8/24/07 by Craig Nikitas; found dead within a few days—exact date unknown, at San Jose, Santa Clara Co., CA; reported by Carmel De Bertaut; circumstances unknown.

873 Juvenile Red-tailed Hawk banded on 9/5/06 by Al Brewster; found dead after possible collision with electric wire on 2/9/08 near Woodland, Yolo Co., CA; reported by Jerry Percival.

874 Second-year Redtailed Hawk banded on

11/22/07 by Nancy Brink; found dead 2/6/08 with four other hawks underneath telephone pole at Blackpoint, Sonoma Co., CA; reported by Michael Schuler. Owner of nearby pheasant club told finder that a "blood disorder or blight has been killing hawks in the area. When they are very weak, they fall from perch on telephone pole."

875 Juvenile Red-tailed Hawk banded on 9/4/03 by Laurel Talbot; found 2/12/08 in Woodside, San Mateo Co., CA. Two hawks were in a fight causing both to be taken to the Peninsula Humane Society; our banded Redtail was euthanized because of a leg fracture; the other hawk was released; reported by Patrick Hogan and Glenda Niven of PHS.

876 Juvenile female Cooper's Hawk banded on 9/18/07 by Bethany Sturgeon; observed by Carl Oman in his tree at San Francisco, San Francisco Co., CA with a wing that "didn't look right" on 2/16/08. The bird was picked up by SF Animal Care and Control and transferred to Peninsula Humane Society where the "swelling in its wrist" worsened; the hawk was euthanized after a few days.

877 After-second-year female Cooper's Hawk banded on 10/8/07 by Diane Bahr; found in a pigeon loft eating a chick 10/11/07 at Antioch, Contra Costa Co., CA by Melandro Carriedo. Antioch Animal

Control found the hawk to be injured and transferred it to Lindsay Wildlife Museum for care. After six to seven weeks it still could not fly well enough to survive in the wild and was euthanized on 12/4/07.

- **878** Juvenile female Cooper's Hawk banded on 9/30/07 by Noreen Weeden; found dead on 3/5/08 in Mendocino Co., CA by Salvador Garcia; circumstances unknown.
- **879** After-second-year Red-tailed Hawk banded on 11/22/07 by Nancy Brink; found alive but weak in swampland two miles west of South Dos Palos, Merced Co., CA on 2/29/08: died shortly after being moved to dry land—was emaciated upon exam; reported by Judy and Darrell Criswell.
- **880** Juvenile Red-tailed Hawk banded 10/13/06 by Ed Lewis; found dead 3/6/08 in Delevan, Colusa Co., CA; reported by Jeri Dewit; circumstances unknown.
- **881** Juvenile female Cooper's Hawk banded 9/16/06 by Josh Hull; found dead 12/14/06 on family's driveway by Leah Trudell about 16 miles west of Frazier Park in a remote area of Ventura Co., CA.
- **882** Juvenile Red-tailed Hawk banded 10/25/04 by David Fix; band found 12/27/07 on leg brought to owner by his dog at their home in rural, Covelo, Mendocino Co., CA; reported by David Howard.
- **883** Juvenile Red-tailed Hawk banded 8/14/06 by Diane Bahr; brought to Peninsula Humane Society on 3/26/08 and released same day; Patrick Hogan of PHS stated the bird was found in Redwood City, San Mateo Co., CA.
- **884** Juvenile Red-tailed Hawk banded 10/18/95 by Buzz Hull; bones and feathers found on abandoned dairy ranchland west of Petaluma, Sonoma Co., CA on 2/5/03 by Paul Clary; reported by Paul's friend David Armstrong.
- **885** Juvenile male Sharp-shinned Hawk banded 9/19/07 by Buzz Hull; found dead on 2/25/08 close to house on ranch near Petaluma, Sonoma Co., CA; reported by Katie Lavigna who stated it could have "starved or hit window."
- **886** Juvenile Red-tailed Hawk banded 11/8/06 by Bill Barnaby; band only found seven miles outside of Healdsburg, Sonoma Co., CA on 3/27/08 next to a barn—no bird or carcass or feathers and "lock on band was round and fully crimped;" reported by Anthony Morgan.
- **887** Juvenile Red-tailed Hawk banded 12/1/04 by Buzz Hull; was hit by a car 3/14/08 at or near La Grange, Stanislaus Co., CA and euthanized at Stanislaus Wildlife Center located in Hughson, CA; reported by Margaret Axiak.
- **888** Juvenile female Sharp-shinned Hawk banded 9/14/06 by Buzz Hull; found dead on 4/4/08 at Peter's Canyon Park, Orange, Orange Co., CA; reported by Trenton Schooley.
- **889** Juvenile Red-tailed Hawk banded 11/25/02 by Diane Bahr; found dead 2/22/08 on train tracks by two homeless people who reported it to Gordon Willey, Supervisor, Alameda County Trails. Gordon believes the Redtail was hit by a train near Niles Junction, Alameda Co., CA.

- **890** Juvenile female Sharp-shinned Hawk banded on 9/26/06 by Siobhan Ruck; found dead on 4/4/08 at San Luis Obispo, San Luis Obispo Co., CA; reported by Pete Duran; circumstances unknown.
- 891 Juvenile Red-tailed Hawk banded on 9/27/02 by Greg Brown; found shot 4/5/08 in backyard of Teri Jinks at Morgan Hill, Santa Clara Co., CA; picked up by Wildlife Education and Rehabilitation Center where gaping wounds were found on exam. WERC's veterinarian at Princevalle Pet Hospital in Gilroy felt the injuries were too dire and euthanized the hawk on 4/7/08; reported by Sue Howell.
- **892** Juvenile Red-tailed Hawk banded on 11/30/06 by Russ De Long; found dead 4/12/08 on ranch near Sears Point, Sonoma Co., CA; reported by Sue Smith.
- **893** Juvenile female Sharp-shinned Hawk banded 9/17/99 by Janice Schopfer; found dead on 12/31/99 between Petaluma and Rohnert Park, Sonoma Co., CA; reported by Tom Holz who said the hawk looked like it had been hit by a vehicle.
- **894** Juvenile Red-tailed Hawk banded on 10/9/06 by Ann Ruffer; found dead 4/29/08 along an aqueduct in Vernalis, San Joaquin Co., CA; reported by Mike Machado.
- **895** Juvenile female Cooper's Hawk banded on 10/10/07 by John Ungar; found dead on 5/21/08 outside a neighbor's barn where many California Quail are known to congregate in Tomales, Marin Co., CA; reported by William Jensen.
- **896** Juvenile Red-tailed Hawk banded on 8/25/01 by Thi Nguyen; found dead by Melody Malachowsky on 6/9/08 at Los Altos Hills, Santa Clara Co., CA; no further information at this time.
- **897** Juvenile Red-tailed Hawk banded on 9/22/06 by Craig Jones; band or number only discovered on 6/10/08 near San Luis Obispo, San Luis Obispo Co., CA; reported by Randy Liggett; circumstances unknown.
- **898** Juvenile female Cooper's Hawk banded on 8/16/07 by Terry Mead; found stunned 6/30/08 in Woodland Hills, Los Angeles Co., CA, near a building with lots of glass walls. Was put in flight cage and "went nuts" flying around; released before 1 PM the same day; reported by Brenda Varvarigos of Ojai Raptor Center.
- **899** Juvenile female Cooper's Hawk banded on 9/20/07 by Marc Blumberg; found dead by Scott Wiltsee in June 2008—day uncertain, 10 miles northwest of Frazier Park, Kern Co., CA; circumstances unknown.
- **900** Juvenile female Cooper's Hawk banded 9/11/08 by Claire O'Neil; found dead by Kayla Hammond on 7/11/08 in Ukiah, Mendocino Co., CA; no further information at this time.

Novato resident Marion Weeks is starting her 18th year of banding. For the past decade at least, Marion has also been GGRO's Band Recovery Editor, which means she corresponds with the people who find banded hawks and gets to hear their stories, some strange, all true.

PEREGRINATIONS Jim Hallisey Carrizo Plain



(Photo: Jim Hallisey)

HEN ALLEN FISH ASKED IF I WOULD BE WILLING TO WRITE an article on raptor watching on the Central Coast with an emphasis on the Carrizo Plain, I immediately responded in the affirmative. After all, it was his prophetic revelation that led me to eagle nirvana. With Allen's permission, I will share his great pearl of knowledge with all of mankind:

"Grasshopper, where you find ground squirrels, you will find Golden Eagles."

One day I hope to be able to snatch the pebble from his hand, but I digress.

Join me if you will on the Path of the Eagle, aka, the Bitterwater Road to Carrizo Plain milk run. By the way, this drive has also produced buckets full of Ferruginous Hawks and Prairie Falcons, with Bald Eagles, Merlins, Roughlegged Hawks, Burrowing and Short-eared Owls, Northern Harriers, and White-tailed Kites all very likely candidates as well. Plus there are lots of American Kestrels and an occasional odd Red-tailed Hawk. Not to mention large flocks of Sandhill Cranes if Soda Lake decides to fill up for the winter.

The Pronghorn Antelopes, coyotes, and foxes will get you through an unlikely raptor lag.

Let me be more geographically specific. Proceed south on the 101 to the charming city of Paso Robles. Exit the freeway on eastbound Highway 46 and begin looking for hawks immediately. However, the real action begins at Bitterwater Road, a right-hand turn approximately 24 miles from Paso Robles. If you miss the turn and continue up the road a few more miles, you will intersect the infamous corner where James Dean "bought it sight unseen." Just so you know.

The Carrizo Plain National Monument is actually still quite a drive from here, so be prepared. Bitterwater Road runs southeast for about 30 miles to its intersection with Highway 58, and from there you are still another 10 miles or so from the monument. Bless President Clinton who, in his last days as president in 2001, elevated this beautiful and bountiful place to the status of a National Monument. The Carrizo Plain is the largest remnant of grassland in the San Joaquin Valley that has not been converted to agricultural, industrial, or urban land use.

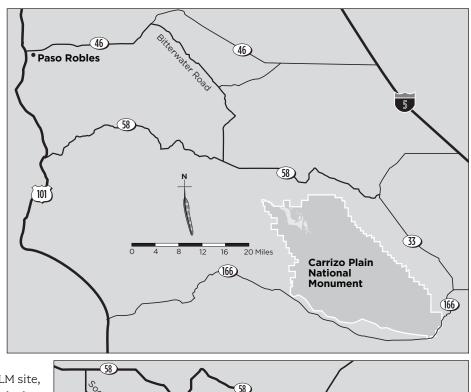
There is no fee for visiting the monument. The Visitors Center is called the Guy L. Goodwin Education Center (Google it for an excellent website of Carrizo Plain visitor information) and is open from the beginning of December to the end of May, Thursday through Sunday, from 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM. Make this your first stop to receive updated information about road conditions. Most of the roads within the monument are unpaved. There are two designated campgrounds, plus designated areas that are open for camping. The website includes a map showing these areas, as well as a self-tour podcast that you can download as an mp3 file or print out as a text file. Visit http://www.blm.gov/ca/ st/en/fo/bakersfield/Programs/ carrizo/self-guided-tour.html. (If you can't bear to type all of that, just Google

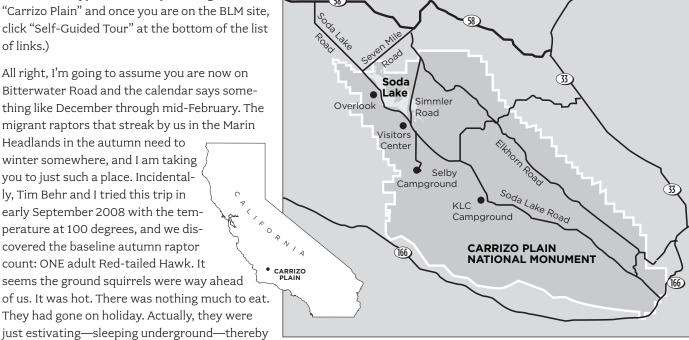
of links.)

All right, I'm going to assume you are now on Bitterwater Road and the calendar says something like December through mid-February. The migrant raptors that streak by us in the Marin Headlands in the autumn need to winter somewhere, and I am taking you to just such a place. Incidentally, Tim Behr and I tried this trip in early September 2008 with the temperature at 100 degrees, and we discovered the baseline autumn raptor count: ONE adult Red-tailed Hawk. It seems the ground squirrels were way ahead of us. It was hot. There was nothing much to eat. They had gone on holiday. Actually, they were just estivating—sleeping underground—thereby proving the corollary to Master Fish's great prophecy: "Grasshopper, no ground squirrels, no Golden Eagles."

(Talking with someone of Allen's insight is like carefully and artfully peeling the layers of an onion. It just makes you want to cry.)

Unbelievably enough, Tim Behr was willing to overlook the





early September debacle and returned to join me for a similar midwinter run. Please ride along with us and sample what you may encounter.

Once you turn onto Bitterwater Road, scan the plowed fields on either side of the road. An adult Bald Eagle is often lounging in the field on the right, while Goldens dominate on the left. Within a mile, ground squirrels are everywhere: left, right, and on the road. And so are the raptors.



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FERRUGINOUS HAWK (JOE MEDLEY), TURKEY VULTURE, WHITE-TAILED KITE, PEREGRINE FALCON (DAVID JESUS); GOLDEN EAGLE (GGRO),

CARRIZO PLAIN RAPTORS

BEST VIEWING SEASON:

December through February

RAPTORS SEEN OFTEN:

Red-tailed Hawk, American Kestrel, Turkey Vulture

RAPTORS SEEN OCCASIONALLY: Prairie Falcon, White-tailed Kite, Northern Harrier, Golden Eagle, Short-eared Owl, Burrowing Owl, Swainson's Hawk, Peregrine Falcon, Red-shouldered Hawk

Over the 30 miles of Bitterwater Road, we count fifteen Goldens, three Balds, nine Ferruginous, but just three Prairie Falcons. On past trips I have had as many as twelve Prairies. The highlight this time was a juvenile dark morph Ferrug perched, Ferrug-like, on the ground. It flew for us and gave us great looks at its stark white tail and outer wing panels offset against a milk chocolate background.

As you pass the Bar S Ranch slow down and look for Burrowing Owls. I have seen them there in the past, but considering that the ground squirrels have provided them with plenty of burrowing habitat, they can be anywhere.

Bitterwater Road tee's with Highway 58. Turn left, proceed just over six miles, and turn right at the Carrizo Plain Monument sign onto Soda Lake Road.

While we were rolling down the road on the way to Soda Lake the hawks were popping. Every fourth telephone pole has a Golden, a Ferrug, or a Prairie. If you scope in the distance, more and more birds present themselves.

As you approach Soda Lake, there is a dirt road on the right that takes you up to the top of the tallest hill on the Plain. Take it. Park in the lot and hike the 50 yards to the Soda Lake Overlook. If you are lucky, the lake will be holding Sandhill Cranes. If not, the view is still wonderful.

Continue down to the right-hand turnoff for the visitor center. It may or may not be open, but stop anyway and at least look in the window. An unfortunate juvenile condor, the victim of a high-tension powerline, flies forever just inside. It is massive. Caution: a juvenile Roadrunner rules the parking lot roost and will challenge all comers. Tim,

RAPTORS SEEN OCCASIONALLY BUT MOSTLY IN WINTER:

Bald Eagle, Ferruginous Hawk, Rough-legged Hawk, Small Accipiters, Merlin, Long-eared Owl

OTHER NOTABLE BIRDS:

Loggerhead Shrike, Sandhill Crane, Mountain Plover, Horned Lark, Greater Roadrunner, Phainopepla, Yellow-billed Magpie, LeConte's Thrasher, Sage Thrasher, Sage Sparrow, and a wide variety of waterfowl and shorebirds.

blessed with the grace that only comes under duress, barely made it back into the car in time.

Now you have options. You can retrace your route and expect (hope) to find all and more of what you have already discovered, or do a loop a stone's throw from the very spine of the San Andreas Fault on a dirt road favored by the Prairie Falcons. To do the loop, continue south on Soda Lake Road to Simmler Road on your left, which will take you north and connect you to Elkhorn Road, which travels along the fault back up to Highway 58. A word of extreme caution: if the road is dry, any vehicle can handle it. If it is wet, NO vehicle can travel it.

Either way, you will make your way back to Highway 58 and back to the Bitterwater Road. Watch for late afternoon Rough-legged Hawks. I have yet to see one on the Carrizo Plain, but have had good success on Bitterwater

What else to say? There is much of the Carrizo Plain that I did not mention that you may want to explore on your own. Ask about any bird, flower, or wildlife hotspots at the Education Center. On your way home, Paso Robles is a cool town that has not forgotten its rural roots, but has added a touch of the ambience that comes from being an up-and-coming wine destination. And there is nothing bitter about that.

Jim Hallisey spent a decade or so scanning for Merlins from Hawk Hill's North Platform for GGRO. Then in a moment of irrationality, he moved his family to the rural, slow-paced life of San Luis Obispo County, where the occasional California Condor soars overhead and Loggerhead Shrikes skewer prey on barbwire fences.

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IN HONOR of Russ DeLong's 25 years as a bander • Davida Bushner

IN MEMORY of Ruth Engel • "May you sing with the Phoebe and soar with the Osprey" Robert Engel

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