

Bird Field Note
April 10, 2014
Eric Rasmussen & Kate Stone



The Red-tailed Hawks carry material to a new nest in Sheep Camp. Their historic nest blew down over the winter.



KS

Philip inspects some of the erosion that occurred in the shrubby draws.



Last year we did not detect any American Tree Sparrows during spring draw surveys. This year we detected a few in our first week of surveys.



We also saw many Mourning Doves making use of the bare ground and debris on south-facing hill slopes.

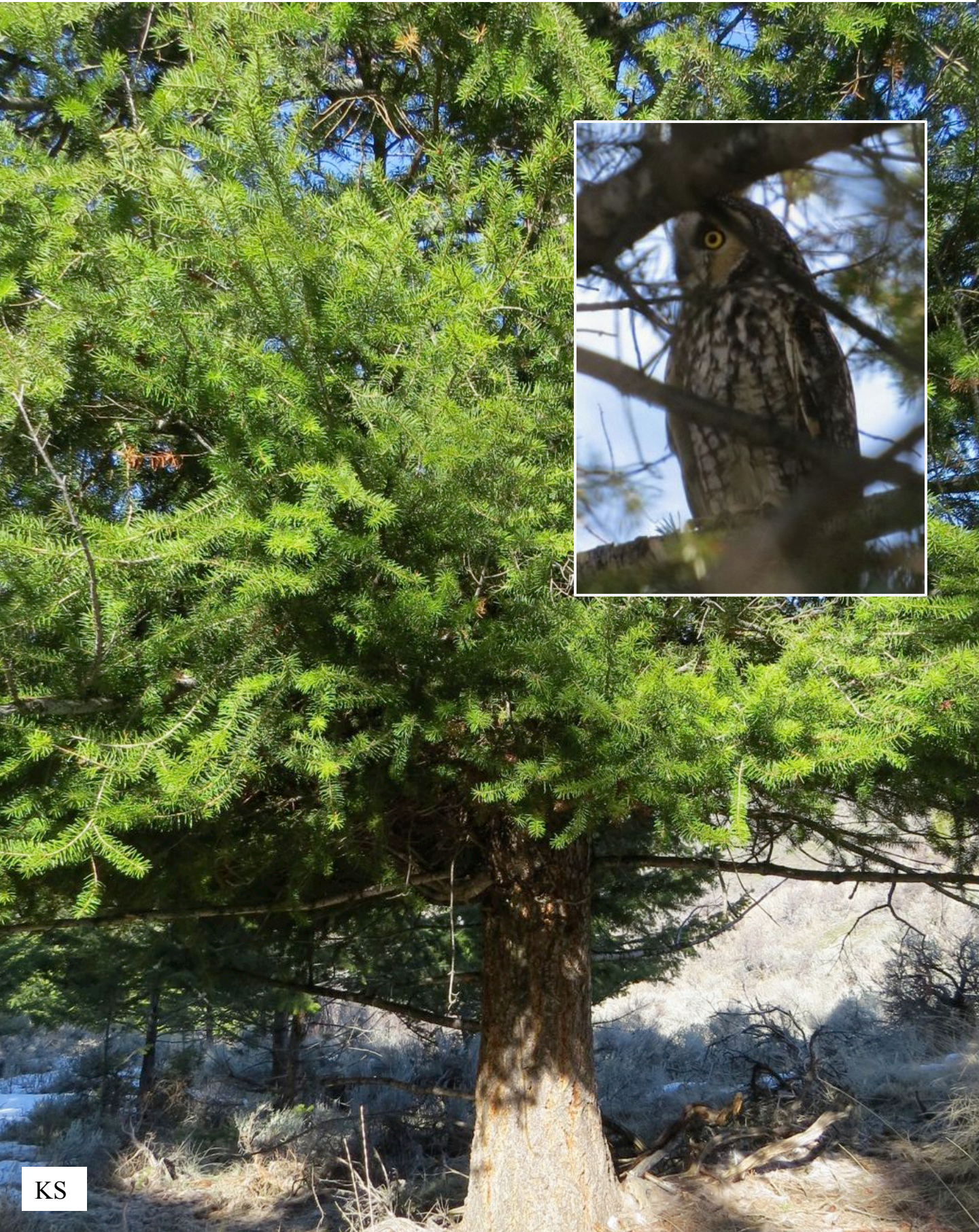




We keep checking the shrikes in hopes of detecting a Loggerhead Shrike moving through. We still only see Northern Shrikes.



Kate flushed a Long-eared Owl out of the same low mistletoe clump she found a Northern Saw-whet Owl in last year.



The owl flushed to another clump of trees and bumped a Clark's Nutcracker off her nest. She sports an aluminum leg band, suggesting she is one of two nutcrackers banded by the Avian Science Center. After some screaming, she returned to her nest to incubate.



The nutcracker nest sits in a spindly Douglas-fir beside the main ranch road.



Raptor Migration Update 3/17-4/4

Spring raptor migration surveys started March 17th. The count has been consistently slow, with a three-week total of 267. Daily totals hover around the teens, with a couple days in the low thirties. Our total by this point last year was 749. It is difficult to speculate why the count is low, but the late winter storms that deposited feet of snow throughout the west may be a factor.

The forecast calls for warmer weather coming up from the south. This may be the trigger for migrating raptors. The next couple weeks could be big if they all decide to come back around the same time.

(3/17-4/4) Spring Raptor Totals

		Season Total
Eagles	Golden Eagle	30
	Bald Eagle	15
	Unknown Eagle	5
Accipiters	Sharp-shinned Hawk	10
	Cooper's Hawk	9
	Northern Goshawk	0
	Unknown Accipiter	3
Buteos	Red-tailed Hawk	95
	Rough-legged Hawk	46
	Swainson's Hawk	0
	Broad-winged Hawk	0
	Ferruginous Hawk	1
	Unknown Buteo	15
Falcons	American Kestrel	9
	Merlin	1
	Peregrine Falcon	1
	Prairie Falcon	1
	Unknown Falcon	0
Other	Northern Harrier	6
	Osprey	0
	Turkey Vulture	14
	Unknown Hawk	6
		267





We observed two Golden Eagles copulate on the ground, downhill of our survey site.





In flight the two eagles have distinctive markings; the male (above) shows light patches on the wings, while the female lacks a tail feather.



Tumultuous spring squalls periodically envelop the Bitterroot Valley.



Some of the first migrants in the shrubby draws, Spotted Towhees flit among the shrubs.



Other critters besides birds use tree enclosures for perches.

