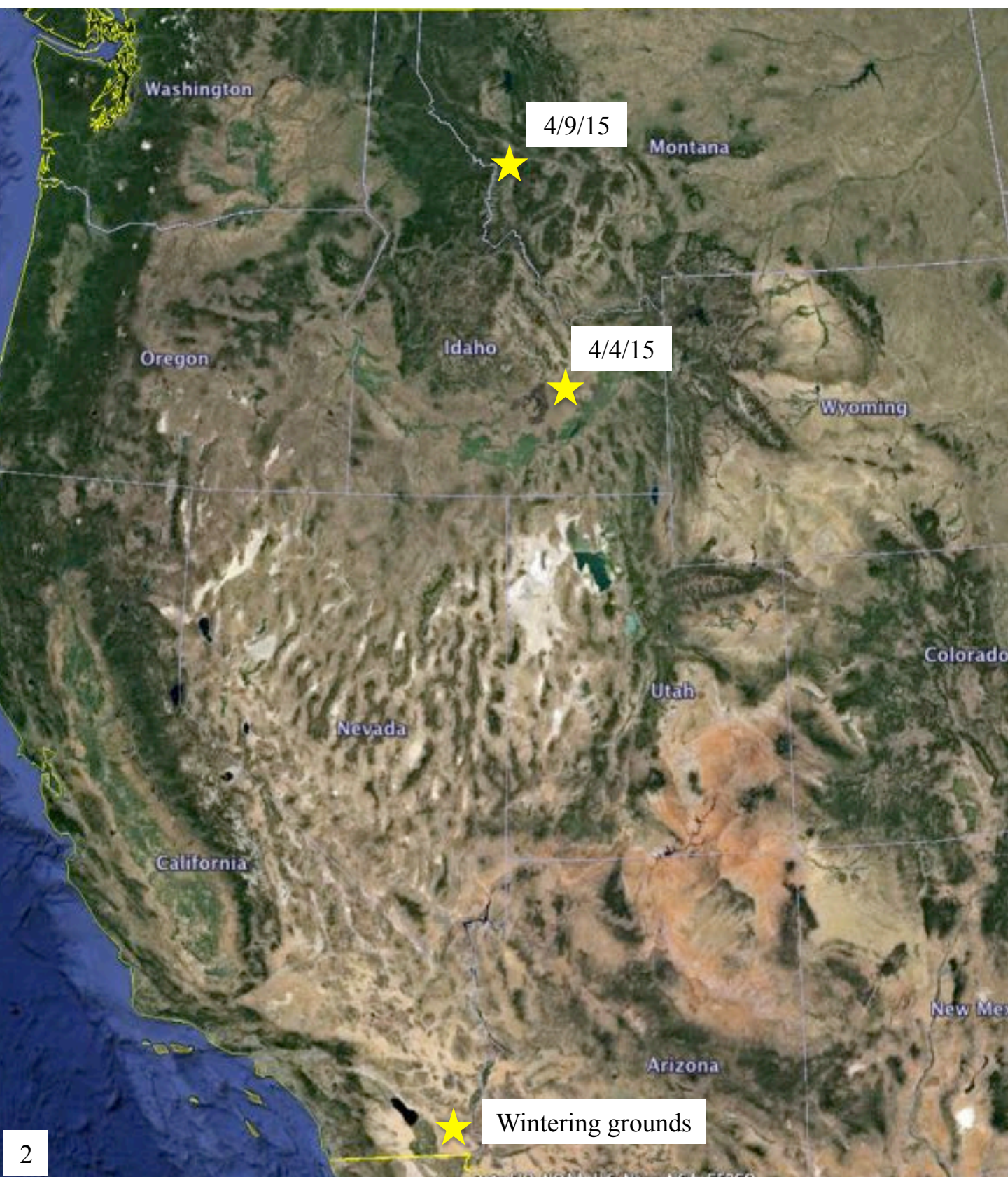


Bird Field Note
Kate Stone
04/10/15



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Long-billed Curlews popped up in full force this week, though we have yet to see a marked bird. After three weeks with no signals, the [Intermountain Bird Observatory](#) team was surprised to pick up a transmission from one of our female curlews. On April 4th, she stopped over near Craters of the Moon National Monument, Idaho. By April 9th, she arrived in the vicinity of the Orchard House.



William and I spotted the first American Kestrel re-sighting of the year. We saw a color-banded male perched on a power line just north of the Orchard House. Raptor View Research Institute banded it as an adult at a nest box east of the Rock Pile in 2013. No-one saw him in 2014.



Banded 2013



Re-sight 2015

A covey of California Quail popped out of this shrub clump in Lower Woodchuck. I saw four and heard at least a few more rustling around. I could hear the distinctive “Chicago” call of one male farther up the drainage.



A woodpecker started to make its mark on one of our bat houses.



Debbie Leick photo

Debbie found a new badger activity area (map next page).



Debbie Leick photo



The female Red-tailed Hawk on the northern floodplain finally began incubating. Other local hawks started incubating over a month ago.



Signs of beaver activity mark the standing and downed trees near the Bald Eagle nest across the river. Hopefully the eagles fledge young before the beavers move to their nest tree. Most Bald Eagles in the Bitterroot Valley continue incubation, though one nest at the south end of the valley hatched in the past few days.





Female

On 4/3, the pygmy owl pair made repeated ventures in and out of the potential nest cavity. The male hooted from the cavity entrance. When not in the cavity itself, the pair spent long minutes perched on the same tree branch, vocalizing and preening each other. Just as we packed up to leave, we heard and saw a glimpse of copulation.



Based on all of the activity, we thought the pygmy-owls might start nesting this week. On 4/6/15, we used the peeper camera to investigate the suspected pygmy-owl nest cavity. We found a cavity empty of owls or eggs, but lined with soft-looking grass.



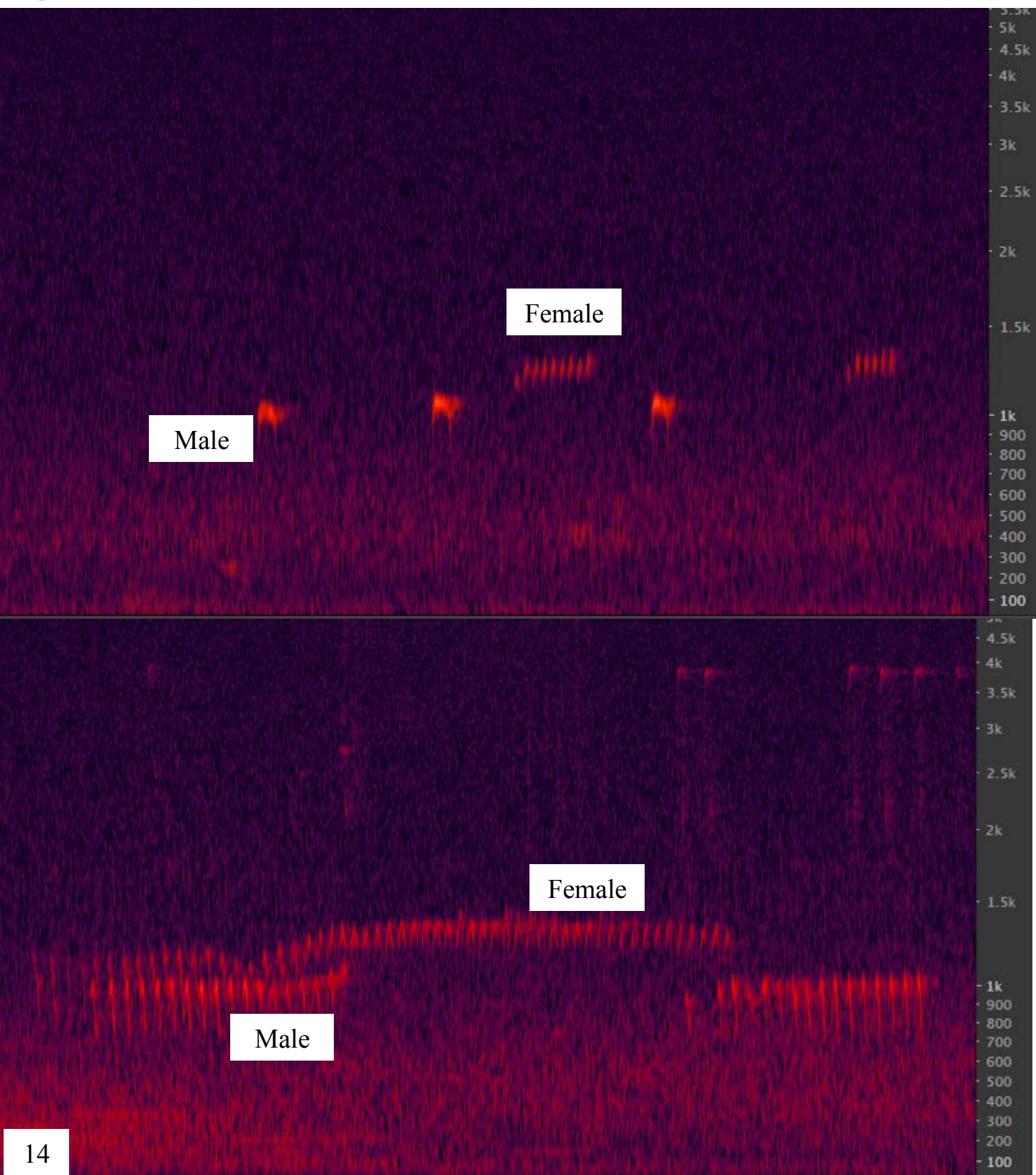
We tracked the male to a daytime roost over a half-mile from the nest cavity. He perched in the outer branches of a large Douglas-fir.



At sunrise on 4/8, I heard the female hooting from outside of the cavity. Based on their vocalizations, the male came and went twice, but did not interact for long with the female. I finally left her roosting quietly near the nest cavity. I tracked the male to a tree roost about a quarter-mile away. They seem to spend less time “pair bonding”, which hopefully means they will initiate their nest soon.



Our acoustic monitor captured a wide range of pygmy-owl vocalizations. From observations, we know the female often gives a high-pitched, fluttery trill that contrasts with the male's deeper, single hoots (top). During copulation, both owls trill, with the female vocalizing at a higher pitch than the male (bottom). The recordings will tell us when the pair is most active, how the type and frequency of vocalizations change through the season, and how often they copulate.



Cavities riddle the trees in the pygmy-owl territory; it seems to be a woodpecker hot spot. We've shared the forest with Piliated and American Three-toed Woodpeckers, Northern Flickers, and Williamson's Sapsuckers during owl observations.



Spring Migration Update

Raptor View Research Institute



Red-tailed Hawks and Turkey Vultures dominated this week's count. We expect the numbers of passing eagles and Rough-legged Hawks to decrease in the next week, and the numbers of American Kestrels, Ospreys, and Accipiters to increase. Our counts of Red-tailed Hawks and Turkey Vultures will likely remain high.

Weekly (4/2-4/8) and Seasonal Raptor Totals

		Weekly Total	Season Total
Eagles	Golden Eagle	6	41
	Bald Eagle	2	11
	Unknown Eagle	1	5
Accipiters	Sharp-shinned Hawk	7	11
	Cooper's Hawk	8	22
	Northern Goshawk	0	1
	Unknown Accipiter	2	3
Buteos	Red-tailed Hawk	59	179
	Rough-legged Hawk	7	23
	Swainson's Hawk	0	0
	Broad-winged Hawk	0	0
	Ferruginous Hawk	0	0
	Unknown Buteo	8	34
Falcons	American Kestrel	4	10
	Merlin	0	0
	Peregrine Falcon	2	2
	Prairie Falcon	2	3
	Unknown Falcon	1	1
Other	Northern Harrier	2	14
	Osprey	4	5
	Turkey Vulture	31	52
	Unknown Hawk	5	13
	TOTAL	151	430

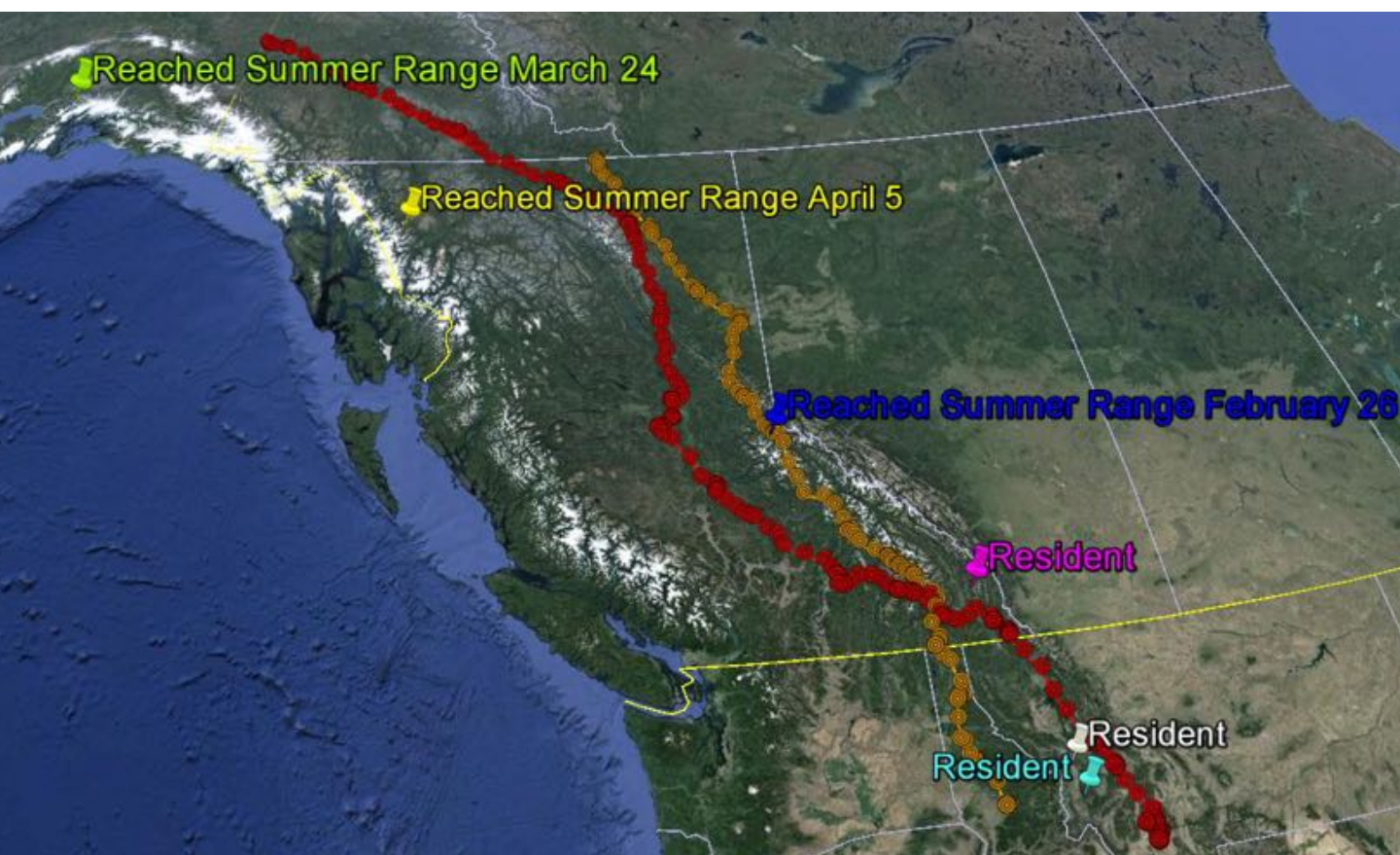
Three of the seven Osprey outfitted with GPS transmitters have started their spring migration. Scooter, the male from the Ranch Entrance, has already made it back to his nest.



Scooter (left) covered more than 1,500 miles in less than five days.



Six Golden Eagles with satellite transmitters are currently on their summer ranges. Two individuals (red and orange) continue to move north. This is our first year tracking the male eagle shown in red below. So far he has covered ~2,000 miles since departing on March 19. The eagle depicted in orange has covered over 1,200 miles since leaving his wintering grounds near Kooskia, Idaho. This year marks his first as an adult of breeding age; we look forward to comparing this year's activities to those when he was a sub-adult.



We saw a marked decrease in the activity of our resident adult female Golden Eagle, suggesting the onset of incubation.

