

Raptor Research Update

March 29, 2016



On March 10, we finished our 2016 winter eagle trapping on the MPG Ranch. We captured 16 Golden Eagles and three Bald Eagles this year, all but one of which tested high for blood-lead levels. We outfitted six of the Golden Eagles with GPS transmitters and look forward to learning where they spend the summer.



Three of the adult Golden Eagles captured this winter appear to be Montana residents, while two are well on their way to summer territories further north. The young Golden Eagle (dark blue), who fledged last summer from a nest near Nome, Alaska, has spent the last few weeks just north of the Idaho-British Columbia border.



We are also still tracking seven adult Golden Eagles captured in earlier winters. One male (dark blue) is a resident of the Skalkaho drainage of the Bitterroot Valley. Four of the six migrants have already reached their summer territories, while the other two should reach theirs in the next few days. The two eagles who summer in southern Canada started north extremely early, and reached their summer territories before the others had even started their journeys.



Male Captured 1/2/13
Male Captured 2/8/13
Female Captured 12/16/13
Male Captured 1/30/14
Male Captured 1/7/2015
Male Captured 2/15/15



All seven of the Ospreys we are tracking are still on their wintering grounds. We expect the earliest of them to start moving next week.



Six of the transmitters we deployed last fall are still functioning. Like the Osprey, none of these raptors have started moving north.

Juvenile Prairie Falcon
Adult Cooper's Hawk
Juvenile Peregrine Falcon
Juvenile Red-tailed Hawk
Adult Cooper's Hawk
Juvenile Red-tailed Hawk
Adult Red Tailed Hawk

Spring Migration Update

On March 15 we began our sixth consecutive season of monitoring the spring hawk migration over the MPG Ranch. MPG biologist Kerr Rasmussen, and RVRI's Sarah Norton, Mary Scofield, and Jessica Taylor are conducting this year's counts. So far we have counted a total of 341 raptors. As in previous years, Red-tailed Hawks, Rough-legged Hawks, and Golden Eagles dominate the first weeks of migration. Our total of 32 Bald Eagles is the most we have counted in the first two weeks of any spring count.

Spring 2016 Seasonal Raptor Totals (3/15-3/29)		
		Season Total
Eagles	Golden Eagle	42
	Bald Eagle	32
	Unknown Eagle	5
Accipiters	Sharp-shinned Hawk	4
	Cooper's Hawk	9
	Northern Goshawk	1
	Unknown Accipiter	1
Buteos	Red-tailed Hawk	127
	Rough-legged Hawk	47
	Swainson's Hawk	0
	Broad-winged Hawk	0
	Ferruginous Hawk	0
	Unknown Buteo	29
Falcons	American Kestrel	0
	Merlin	0
	Peregrine Falcon	4
	Prairie Falcon	2
	Unknown Falcon	0
Other	Northern Harrier	5
	Osprey	0
	Turkey Vulture	25
	Unknown Hawk	8
	<i>Total</i>	341

After a warm and sunny first half of March, the weather has been chilly for most of the count.



This Red-tailed Hawk took a close look at our owl as it passed our count site.

