

Eyes on the Sky

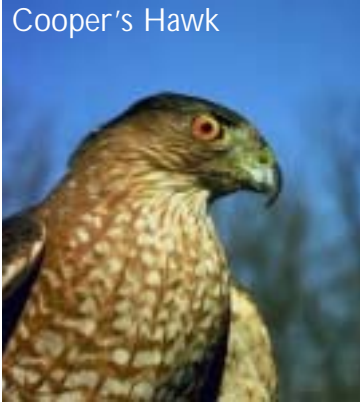
The Raptor Population Index Taking Flight



The Hawk Migration Association
of North America

*Preserving raptor populations and their environments
across the hemisphere through programs of monitoring,
recreation, education, science and conservation.*

Cooper's Hawk



Volunteers gather at key watch sites across North America each spring and fall.



Photo: Bill Brown, Niagara Peninsula Hawkwatch



Red-tailed Hawk

Working Together for Raptors

Over the last year, a partnership has been formed that brings together three leading raptor research organizations: HMANA, Hawk Mountain Sanctuary Association (HMSA) and HawkWatch International (HWI). The goal of the partnership is "To jointly develop a Raptor Population Index (RPI) program ... to determine annual population indices and trends of hawks counted during spring and fall migrations at sites throughout the United States, Canada and Central America. The specific objectives of the RPI are to (1) produce scientifically defensible indices of annual abundance and trends for each species of migratory raptor, from as many count sites as possible; and (2) make those results available widely, i.e. to participating count sites, the scientific community, conservation agencies and the public."

The partners have created an RPI implementation plan and submitted grant proposals to fund a three-year pilot project. In June, 2004, the project received an \$86,100 challenge grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) to fund the first year of the pilot project. This grant must be matched 2:1 before the project can be implemented.

Project Purpose and Need

Accurate knowledge of population status and change is fundamental to species conservation. Lack of reliable information on populations of many raptors forms a conspicuous gap in North American bird monitoring. Counts of migrating raptors may be the key.

The large volume of potentially useful data on raptor populations, collected by HMANA and other groups, has never been brought together in a coordinated scheme to provide timely information on raptor population trends. The primary purpose of RPI is to initiate such a program.

RPI aims to establish a permanent, continent-wide monitoring program based on raptors counted regularly and consistently at as many sites as possible. Raptor population indices and trends will be derived from multi-year data collected at strategically situated hawk-watch sites throughout the continent. RPI will provide the first scientifically-based, regularly updated, hemispheric assessment of the status and trends of raptors counted in diurnal migration.

Many of you have been tracking raptor migration for decades and contributing to the huge archive of data that HMANA and others have compiled. Now it is time to really use those data to understand what is happening on a broad scale. Sophisticated statistical analyses have been developed recently to allow relatively precise tracking of trends. Some examples of preliminary analyses are shown on these pages. Imagine the value of this level of analysis at your site and at hundreds of sites across the continent.

These and other results demonstrate how statistical analyses of trends in counts of migrating hawks can elucidate the conservation status of many raptors. The goal of the RPI program is to apply this approach to a much larger number of count sites across North America.

Benefits to Hawk Counters

When the RPI project is fully operational we expect to provide regular feedback to individual sites. You will be able to summarize results in your newsletter, on your website, on posters for public display, etc., showing what has happened to hawk numbers at your site over the years.

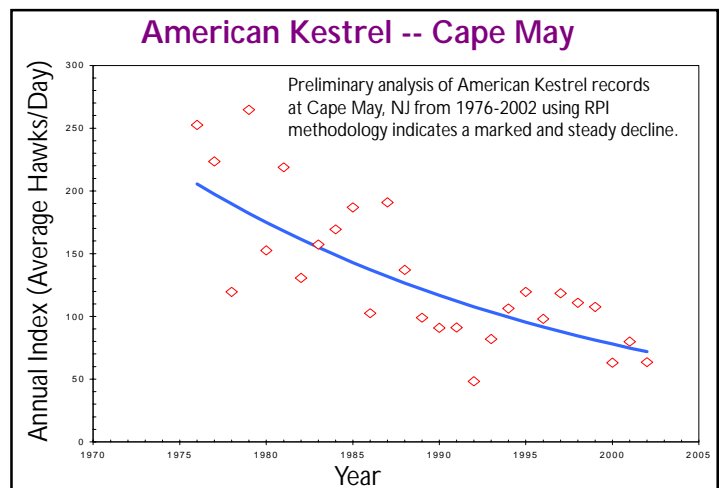
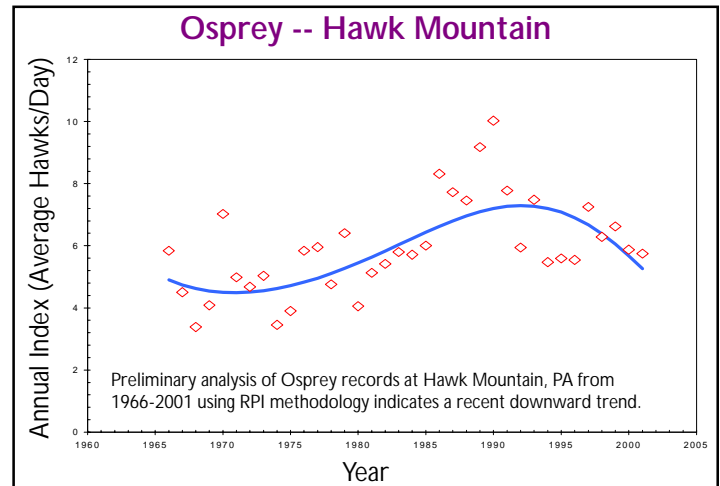
In addition we expect to provide an overview of trends on a regional and continental scale. This information will raise the profile of your site and enhance public awareness of raptors and their conservation needs.

Next Steps

To fully implement the first year of the project, the partnership must raise matching funds totaling at least \$172,200. Hawk Mountain Sanctuary Association has generously agreed to contribute about 30% of the match by funding the salary of a project coordinator who will be responsible for the data analyses at Hawk Mountain. The RPI partners have submitted requests for funding to foundations and corporations. Assuming that we are successful in raising the remaining matching funds, HMANA will soon be hiring staff to carry out its contribution to the RPI and we expect to get the project under way no later than January 2005.

What you can do to help the RPI Project

The RPI is truly a joint project. Not only is it a partnership among three organizations, HMANA, HMSA and HWI, but, more importantly, it is a partnership between you, the hawk counters, and



Merlin



the RPI project team. Together we can do more to benefit the cause of raptor conservation than any of us can do alone. What can you do to help the RPI project succeed?

First, keep on counting hawks at your site, following a consistent standardized protocol.

Second, report your hourly data to HawkCount (HMANA's online count database) and give permission for release of the data for use in the RPI project. The RPI project will not be able to analyze data from all sites immediately, but it will be helpful to have data from as many sites as possible entered in HawkCount for safe keeping and future use.

Third, make a donation to the RPI project. Just as every Sharp-shinned Hawk counted at your site is an important contribution to the RPI database, every dollar you donate will make a valuable contribution to the goals of the RPI program. Moreover, the NFWF challenge grant guarantees that each dollar you donate now will be worth at least \$1.50. Please help ensure that HMANA meets the challenge and that RPI takes flight.

American Kestrel



Become a Founding Sponsor of the RPI

You can support the RPI program at one of the following six sponsorship levels*:

| | | | |
|--------------|-------------------|-----------|-------------------|
| Golden Eagle | \$5,000 + | Osprey | \$2,500 - \$4,999 |
| Goshawk | \$1,000 - \$2,499 | Peregrine | \$500 - \$999 |
| Broad-wing | \$100 - \$499 | Kestrel | < \$100 |

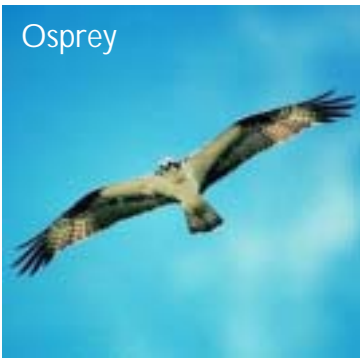
Please send contributions to:

Vic Berardi, Treasurer, HMANA, 6032 Golfview Drive, Gurnee, IL 60031.

(Make checks payable to "HMANA") or contribute online

**All contributions are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.*

Osprey



The RPI Project Team

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