



RAPTOR REVIEW

"The earth is the Lord's and everything in it." Psalms 24:1a

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Donor Recognition

Nov 2012– June 2013

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THANK YOU!

Calendar Alert

La Rivière Raptor Festival
April 5, 2014



Photo by J. Paul Goossen

-2013 MIGRATION- WHERE DID THEY ALL COME FROM?

Last year's annual raptor newsletter headlined the question "Where were the raptors?" This year we wondered where they all came from! With a count of over 18,000 birds of prey, raptor counters were amazed at this year's migration in the Pembina Valley.

The lingering 2013 winter appears to be the reason for the delayed migration of many raptors. As a result, the count was extended into May and finished with an astounding number of records. Of the 17 raptor species, 14 had counts exceeding previous highs.

Bald Eagles, Sharp-shinned Hawks and Red-tailed Hawks continued to be the most numerous raptor migrants

through the valley. **Turkey Vultures** numbers soared to a record count of 360 while **Osprey** numbers rose to 243. **Bald Eagle** numbers climbed to over 1,800 with **Sharp-shinned Hawks** numbers not far



Photo by J. Paul Goossen

Eyes to the sky!

behind at nearly 1,600. As usual, **Red-tailed Hawks** were the most abundant bird of prey, with a count of nearly 12,500. High counts were also made for **Broad-winged Hawks** (733) and **Swainson's**

Hawks (133). A rare sighting of a **Ferruginous Hawk** was only the 4th in the past nine years.

Golden Eagles topped 100 for the first time in the count's history. The **Gyr-falcon** was a surprise addition to the suite of migratory raptor species using the valley. Another arctic breeder, the *tundrius* subspecies of the **Peregrine Falcon** put in an unprecedented showing of 210 individuals (see next page for more details). The Northern Goshawk, Ferruginous Hawk and Rough-legged Hawk counts were below previous high counts. Next year's count will extend into May to see if Peregrine Falcon numbers remain high. Will next year's raptor count match that of 2013? Stay tuned....

PARTNERING WITH COMMUNITY THE 2013 LA RIVIERE RAPTOR FESTIVAL

A Rocha's Raptor Awareness Day, held on three occasions over the past nine years, has officially transitioned into The La Rivière Raptor Festival, organized by the community of La Rivière with A Rocha as a planning

partner. About 350 visitors enjoyed the 2013 event. Live raptors, brought out by Wildlife Haven Rehabilitation Centre and the Prairie Wildlife Rehabilitation Centre, were the hit of the day. A special guest,

a **Burrowing Owl**, provided visitors with a close-up encounter of an endangered species. Craft activities for kids, displays, a photo contest, and food, helped make for a successful day. Mark April 5 for next year's festival.

Your donation is welcomed!

Please help support the 10th A Rocha Pembina Valley spring raptor count in 2014!

Your tax-deductible donation would be greatly appreciated.

Send your cheque to A Rocha Canada (see Contacts below for address)

or

DONATE ONLINE!

www.arocha.ca

(Click the red Donate button, find Conservation Projects, choose The Hawk Watch)



2013 Pembina Valley Spring Raptor Migration Count

Species	No.
Turkey Vulture	360
Osprey	243
Bald Eagle	1,868
Northern Harrier	198
Sharp-shinned Hawk	1,591
Cooper's Hawk	123
Northern Goshawk	38
Broad-winged Hawk	733
Swainson's Hawk	133
Red-tailed Hawk	12,488
Rough-legged Hawk	42
Ferruginous Hawk	1
Golden Eagle	104
American Kestrel	59
Merlin	88
Gyr Falcon	2
Peregrine Falcon	210
Unidentified	128
Total	18,409

PEREGRINE EXPLOSION

The Peregrine Falcon is the fastest bird on the planet. Seeing seven of these amazing birds during a spring count was thought to be a respectable number. However, raptor counters were not expecting a tsunami of Peregrines in 2013. The first Peregrine was seen on April 2 and by April 20 the count was at seven, tying previous high seasonal counts. Unexpectedly, the next day, the count jumped by six. But that was just the start of the Peregrine wave. The peak came on April 26 when an unbelievable count of 46 was made. The following day



Photo by Henry Heikerl

Peregrine Falcon

45 passed through valley. By the end of the count, on May 6, the total number of Peregrine Falcons stood at 210!

Why had we not counted more in the past? The answer is apparently related to timing.

We typically end the raptor count around the third week in April when the Red-tailed Hawk

numbers are winding down to single digits. This year, with a late spring, the count period was extended into the first week of May.

Tundrius peregrines winter in South America. Their migration to and from the Arctic may involve a round trip flight of 24,000 km. Their arrival in Canada is later than the *anatum* subspecies which nests in Winnipeg and Brandon, for example. This year's high count of Peregrines has piqued the interest of Peregrine experts who think the Pembina Valley may be a regular migration route for this falcon and that substantial numbers of Peregrines may annually pass through this migration corridor. It will be exciting to see next year's Peregrine count!

HARLAN'S HAWK

The Red-tailed Hawk is one of the most varied plumaged raptors in North America. In fact, up to 16 subspecies are recognized including one, experts refer to as Harlan's Hawk. This subspecies appeared to be so different than other Red-tailed Hawks that at one time, Harlans were considered to be a separate species.

Harlans nest primarily in

northwestern Canada and Alaska. They have two col-



Photo by Karl Bardon

Harlan's Hawk - dark morph

our morphs: light and dark. Karl Bardon, a raptor expert from Minnesota, was surprised by the number of Harlans he saw during his

first visit to the valley in 2013. During his 20-day visit to the Pembina Valley, Bardon saw over 300 Harlan Hawks. The only raptor count site which has recorded more Harlans than the Pembina Valley is in Alaska.

This new information adds to the significance of the Pembina Valley in that it not only has, on average, the highest count of spring migrating Red-tailed Hawks, but also has a relatively high number of the Harlan subspecies.

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A Rocha

A Rocha is an international conservation organization working to show God's love for all creation. We work out our commitment to environmental action through community-based conservation projects. Underlying all we do is our biblical faith in God, who made the world, loves it and entrusts it to the care of human society.

A Rocha's five characteristics:
Christian, Conservation, Community, Cross-cultural and Cooperation



We are on the Web!
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