
RAPTOR USE OF WATER SOURCES AS DOCUMENTED VIA A REMOTE CAMERA NETWORK

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The MPG Ranch maintains a large network of over 200 remote cameras on two properties in western Montana. We use these cameras to document the occurrence of rare or unusual wildlife, the phenology of life history activities, and wildlife use of areas of interest. Over the course of 3 yrs, our cameras have documented raptors frequently visiting natural and man-made water sources. Most of our common, resident raptors visit water sources for activities such as bathing, preening, drinking, and hunting. Camera stations at natural water sources near breeding territories of Cooper's hawks (*Accipiter cooperii*), northern goshawks (*Accipiter gentilis*), Northern saw-whet owls (*Aegolius acadicus*), and western screech owls (*Megascops kennicottii*) recorded routine visits to water during the breeding season. These behaviors are difficult for observers to see in the field, and their documentation adds insight into our overall understanding of the life history and habitat needs of raptor species. Frequent use of stock tanks underscores the importance of providing escape structures to reduce mortality risk.