
MIGRATING AND OVERWINTERING POPULATIONS OF DIURNAL RAPTORS IN THE BITTERROOT VALLEY, MONTANA

Eric Rasmussen*, MPG Ranch, Florence, Montana 59833

Kate Stone, MPG Ranch, Florence, Montana 59833

Rob Domenech, Raptor View Research Institute, Missoula, Montana 59806

Adam Shreading, Raptor View Research Institute, Missoula, Montana 59806

We identified a major spring and fall migration of diurnal raptors over a low-elevation foothills site in the northeast Bitterroot Valley. We conducted full-time migration surveys in both seasons for 2 years. Red-tailed Hawks were the most abundant species counted in both seasons. During fall migration, species composition differed from other Montana hawk watch sites located on high-elevation ridges. We used a combination of survey techniques to assess overwintering populations of raptors in the Bitterroot Valley during the winter of 2012-2013. We developed an iPad application that allows us to map fine-scale occurrence of birds and used this method to document raptor presence at the north end of the valley. Citizen Scientists affiliated with Bitterroot Audubon performed systematic, broader-scale surveys at the south end of the valley. These two methods will likely document over 3,000 raptor observations by the end of winter 2013. Rough-legged and Red-tailed Hawks comprise the majority of raptor detections. We will examine these data for spatial and temporal trends in raptor occurrence.