

# Eyes on the Sky

Counting for Conservation



American Kestrel

Photo by Vic Berardi



Bald Eagle

Photo by Joseph Kennedy

## The Raptor Population Index 2007 Annual Report





Golden Eagle  
Photo by Joseph Kennedy

## Counting for Conservation: A Message from the Partners

This report has an outstanding conservation message: We have completed the first continental-scale assessment of the status of North American raptor populations. The resulting report *The State of North America's Birds of Prey, 2007*, which will be published later this year, contains chapters on the history of raptor conservation, updates on our knowledge of migration ecology, and recommendations for the operation of migration watchsites.

Our conservation assessment depends upon two critical elements provided by hawk-watchers: (1) high-quality field data submitted to HawkCount.org, and (2) financial contributions made in support of RPI. Please find more information on the soon-to-be-published *The State of North America's Birds of Prey, 2007*, below.

We thank you for your help during the first three years of the RPI project, and invite you to renew your support for raptor conservation.

Ernesto Ruelas Inzunza,  
*RPI Project Manager,*  
Hawk Migration Association  
of North America

Keith L. Bildstein,  
*Sarkis Acopian Director*  
*of Conservation Science,*  
Hawk Mountain Sanctuary

Jeff P. Smith,  
*Conservation Science Director,*  
HawkWatch International



Osprey  
Photo by Joseph Kennedy

## RPI Purpose, Need, and History

Diurnal raptors are at the top of many food chains and are sensitive indicators of ecosystem health. Hawkwatchers have combined their enjoyment of raptor migration with the collection of valuable long-term data on the status of birds of prey from migration watchsites at mountaintops and along shorelines.

Hundreds of watchsites contributed data to a central repository over the past several decades, but most of these data remained unused for many years.

RPI started in the summer of 2004 in response to the need to put these count data to conservation use. The existing network of watchsites, operated by hundreds of volunteer citizen scientists and professional biologists, was brought together to fill this gap by submitting count data collected at these sites to the HawkCount.org web site, RPI's central data bank.

## RPI Vision and Objectives

The RPI partners believe that raptor migration counts contribute effectively to long-term population monitoring by producing scientifically-sound assessments of population status that are shared widely through public outreach and education.

### Specifically, RPI is:

- (1) Producing statistically defensible indexes of annual abundance and trends for each species of migratory raptor from as many count sites as possible;
- (2) Providing frequently updated assessments of the status of each species, and;
- (3) Making those results widely available to participating count sites, the scientific community, conservation agencies, and the public.



Northern Harrier  
Photo by Joseph Kennedy



Hawk watchers at Illinois Beach State Park in Illinois  
Photo by Vic Berardi



American Kestrel  
Photo by Joseph Kennedy



Merlin  
Photo by Joseph Kennedy



Peregrine Falcon  
Photo by Iain MacLeod

## Announcing a Milestone Report: The State of North America's Birds of Prey, 2007

*The State of North America's Birds of Prey, 2007*, is the first continent-wide assessment of the population status of raptors using migration count data. The report compiles autumn counts from 22 watchsites in the East, West, and around the Gulf Coast, from Canada to México. Data submitted in hourly format to HawkCount.org, or transferred manually by HawkWatch International and Hawk Mountain Sanctuary scientists and volunteers, were analyzed to assess population trends for periods of between 9 and 30 years.

The report contains some important results, including documentation of recoveries of several species following the DDT era (Figure 1) and recent declines of American Kestrels nearly everywhere (Figure 2).

Results from this landmark publication will be presented this autumn in a symposium entitled *The State of North America's Birds of Prey, 2007* at the joint meeting of the Raptor Research Foundation and Hawk Migration Association of North America in Fogelsville, Pennsylvania, 12-16 September 2007. A formal announcement of the publication will be made later this autumn.

### Progress Review 2006-2007

- Completed the compilation of data and population trend analyses for 22 autumn counts
- Prepared profiles for each of the sites used for analysis
- Prepared conservation status reports for eighteen species of raptors
- Introduced RPI and preliminary outcomes to the scientific community in a symposium held in Veracruz, México
- Participated actively in inserting RPI into large-scale conservation initiatives such as the Northeastern Coordinated Bird Monitoring Partnership
- Developed the connection of HawkCount.org to other biological data warehouses such as the Avian Knowledge Network

### Funding Development

Primary funding for RPI comes from a 2:1 challenge grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF). In 2007, NFWF approved a third-year grant of \$101,515. To fully access the grant, those dollars must be matched with \$204,161 from non-federal sources.

These matching funds come from the three RPI partner organizations. Hawk Mountain continues its long-term commitment to supporting the position of North American Monitoring Coordinator, along with time from their Senior Monitoring Biologist, and many other in-kind contributions, including volunteer entry of counts. HawkWatch International and the Hawk Migration Association of North America also are making significant contributions to the matching funds needed. In grant-year 2007-2008, our goal is to raise \$61,116 so that we may access the NFWF grant in full.

### Plans for 2007-2008

#### During the next year, RPI will:

- Publish *The State of North America's Birds of Prey, 2007*;
- Convene a symposium at the 2007 joint meeting of the Raptor Research Foundation and Hawk Migration Association of North America to highlight the RPI Project and *The State of North America's Birds of Prey, 2007* report;
- Improve HawkCount.org;
- Enter counts for 10-15 spring monitoring sites and analyze them.

## RPI Watchsites

We thank the following watchsites for submitting at least 250 site-days of hawk counts in hourly format, over five years or more, for RPI (as of July 2007)

Allegheny Front, PA  
 Audubon Hawkwatch at Waggoner's Gap, PA  
 Barre Falls, MA  
 Beamer Conservation Area, ON  
 Belvédère Raoul-Roy, QC  
 Blueberry Hill, MA  
 Boise Ridge, ID  
 Bonney Butte Raptor Migration Project, OR  
 Borrego Valley, CA  
 Braddock Bay, NY  
 Bridger Mountains Raptor Migration Project, MT  
 Cape May Bird Observatory, NJ  
 Chelan Ridge Raptor Migration Project, WA  
 College Creek, VA  
 Corpus Christi Raptor Migration Project, TX  
 Eagle Crossing, QC  
 Florida Keys Raptor Migration Project, FL  
 Fort Smallwood Park, MD  
 Franklin Mountain, NY  
 Goshute Mountains Raptor Migration Project, NV  
 Grand Canyon Raptor Migration Project, AZ - Lipan Point  
 Grand Canyon Raptor Migration Project, AZ - Yaki Point  
 Hamburg Hawkwatch, NY  
 Hawk Cliff, ON  
 Hawk Mountain Sanctuary, PA  
 Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory, MN  
 Holiday Beach Migration Observatory, ON  
 Illinois Beach State Park, IL  
 Jacks Mountain, PA  
 Kiptopeke, VA  
 Kittatinny Mountain, PA  
 Lighthouse Point Hawk Watch, CT  
 Mahogany Rock, NC  
 Manzano Mountains Raptor Migration Project, NM  
 Montclair Hawk Lookout, NJ  
 Montreal West Island, QC  
 Mount Lorette, AB  
 Observatoire d'oiseaux de Tadoussac, QC  
 Peak Mountain, CT  
 Picatinny Peak, NJ  
 Pilgrim Heights, MA  
 Ripley Hawk Watch, NY  
 Rose Tree Park, PA  
 Sandia Mountains Raptor Migration Project, NM  
 Second Mountain, PA  
 Smith Point Raptor Migration Project, TX  
 Snickers Gap, VA  
 Stone Mountain, PA  
 Tuscarora Summit, PA  
 Veracruz River of Raptors, México  
 Wellsville Mountains Raptor Migration Project, UT

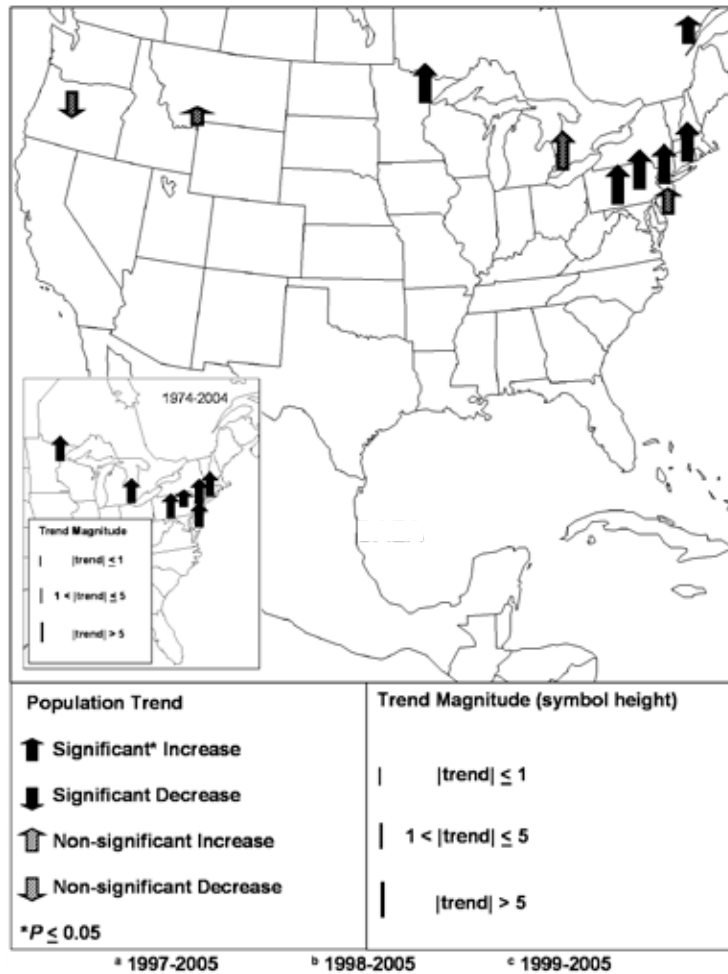
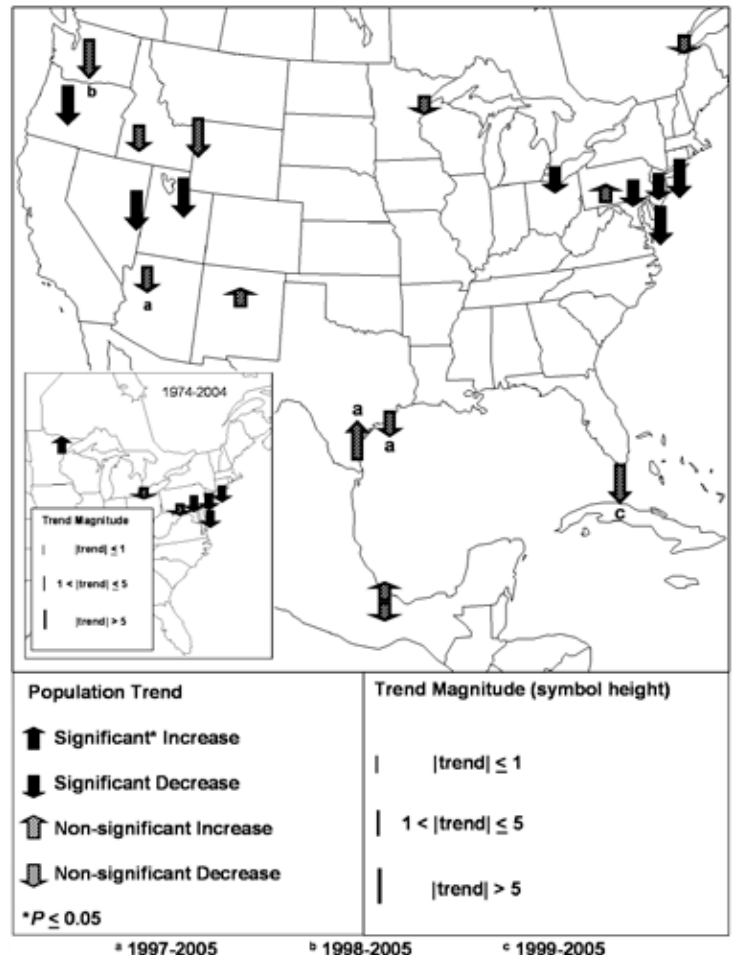


Figure 1. Bald Eagle population trends. After the DDT era, Bald Eagle populations have experienced a remarkable recovery.

Figure 2. American Kestrel population trends. Scientists are trying to elucidate the reasons for the American Kestrel's recent and widespread declines.



## RPI Sponsors:

### Grants:

#### Golden Eagle (\$5,000+)

National Fish and Wildlife Foundation

#### Northern Goshawk (\$1,000-\$4,999)

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act

### Organizations:

#### Peregrine Falcon (\$500-\$999)

Eastern Massachusetts HawkWatch  
Hawk Mountain Sanctuary Volunteers  
Niagara Peninsula Hawkwatch

#### Broad-winged Hawk (\$100-\$499)

Birding Club of Delaware County  
Niagara Peninsula Hawkwatch (in memoriam Bruce Duncan)

### Individuals:

#### Golden Eagle (\$5,000+)

Jennifer P. Speers  
George W. Perkins, Jr.

#### Northern Goshawk (\$1,000-\$4,999)

Jason Sodergren

#### Peregrine Falcon (\$500-\$999)

Andrew Francis  
David J.T. Hussell and Erica Dunn  
Iain and Susan MacLeod  
David P. McNicholas  
Stephen B. Oresman  
Chandler S. & Eleanor C. Robbins  
Will Weber  
Joseph E. Wojtanowski

#### Broad-winged Hawk (\$100-\$499)

Ajit I. and Liza Antony  
David W. Babington  
Warner B. and Ann E. Berthoff  
Peter H. Bloom  
Robert F. Boehm  
David and Catherine A. Brandes  
Terry L. Bronson  
Judith C. Cinquina  
Alden C. Clayton  
Mary E. Clemesha  
Neil W. Currie  
Russell D. Edmonds  
Susan and Wavell Fogleman  
Ralph and Jane Geuder  
David and Ursula Godine  
Laurie J. Goodrich  
John C. and Marya B. Halderman  
Stephen W. Hoffman  
Sharon Johnson  
Daniel E. Miller

## Collaborate with RPI

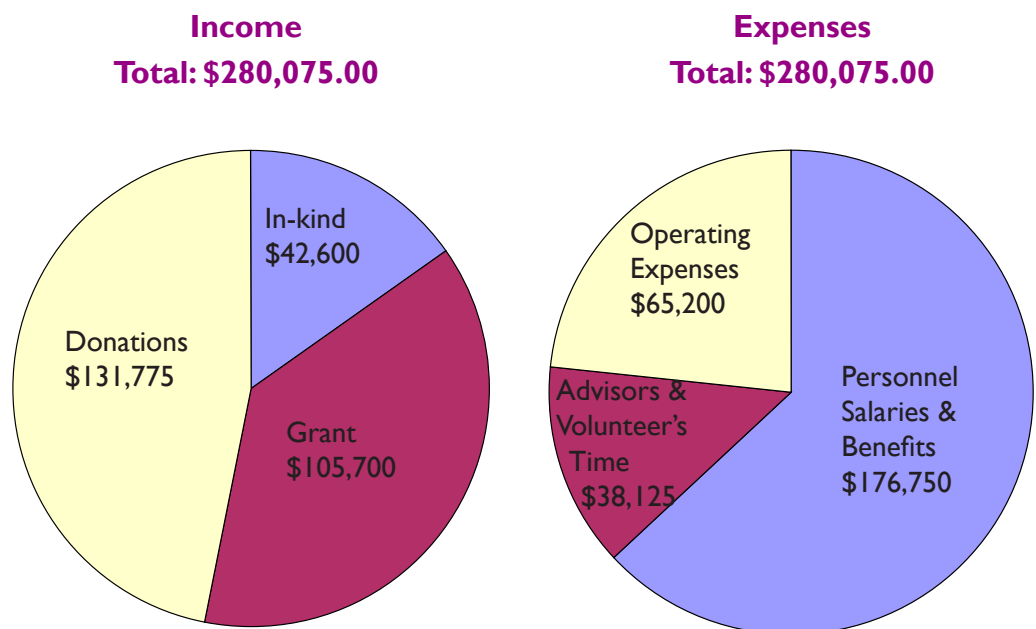
### Why should your hawkwatch be part of RPI?

- RPI provides safe storage of your counts and makes data visible and available for use to researchers, conservation managers, and the general public
- RPI provides results to many data queries in real time (and continues to improve and further develop its reporting capabilities)
- RPI will provide you with statistically valid assessments of trends of raptors at your site and comparisons with other sites
- Through RPI, counting hawks at your site *counts* for raptor conservation. As RPI develops, we expect to improve and increase our direct interactions with participating sites and with the conservation community.

## How You Can Contribute to RPI

- Collect data systematically at your watchsite and report it in hourly format in the HawkCount.org web site
- Adopt the current, standardized RPI (HMANA) data-collection protocol (available at [www.rpi-project.org](http://www.rpi-project.org))
- Enter historical hourly counts from your site into the HawkCount.org database
- Help promote awareness of the RPI Project and its values among your local hawkwatching community
- Make a donation to RPI

## Financial Summary (Year Ending 31 July 2007)



Donations include \$121,500 contributed to staff time and expenses by HMS and \$32,034 cash donated by members and friends of HMANA.

In-kind contributions include value of time and other expenses donated by committee members and other volunteers.

*(Unaudited financial summary based on RPI project accounts)*

### **Broad-winged Hawk (continued)**

Angelo C. and Marian L. Mincone  
Scott S. Moorhouse  
Mary Normandia  
Benjamin Olewine  
Stephanie P. Parkinson  
R. Gilbert and Jann M. Randell  
Ernesto Ruelas Inzunza  
Jane M. and Bernard W. Schaaf  
Susan K. Simovich  
Pamela Kim Van Fleet

### **American Kestrel (< \$100)**

George N. Apell  
John M. Brotherton  
Francine Cantor  
Cynthia D. Ellis  
Norval Fairman  
Robert and Linda Feldman  
Gregory A. George  
A. Craig and Isabel L. Houston  
Rudolph Keller  
Arlene F. and David M. Koch  
Thomas J. and Janet L. Kuehl  
William C. Latta  
Lawrence F. LaPré  
Betty E. O'Leary  
Sue Ann Ricciardi  
Susan D. and Jeffrey L. Schmoyer  
Dan A. Sherman  
Arthur Slaughter  
Matilda E. Thompson  
Matthew E. Wlasniewski

### **Data entry Staff and Volunteers:**

Laurie Conlon  
Mary-Therese Grob  
Jack Holcomb  
Eleanor Kline  
Ann Lessel  
Jon Levin  
Jim Morris  
Marc Robinson  
Don Woodring  
Linda Ziegler  
Hawk Mountain interns

## **Become a Sponsor of the RPI Project and Support Raptor Conservation**

Generous support of individuals and hawk watches has been critically important to the successful launching of RPI. We cordially invite individuals and hawk watches to help bring the RPI vision to reality by becoming Annual Sponsors.

### **Please choose one of the following six levels of sponsorship:**

Golden Eagle	\$5,000 or more
Osprey	\$2,500 - \$4,999
Northern Goshawk	\$1,000 - \$2,499
Peregrine Falcon	\$500 - \$999
Broad-winged Hawk	\$100 - \$499
American Kestrel	< \$100

Please make checks payable to: HMANA and send them to Ernesto Ruelas Inzunza, Raptor Population Index Project Manager, Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, 159 Sapsucker Woods Road, Ithaca, NY 14850. Alternatively, you may contribute on line at <http://www.hmana.org/rpi>. All contributions are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law. RPI donors over \$100 receive a complimentary one-year HMANA membership.

## **The RPI Team**

### **Management Committee**

Keith L. Bildstein, Chair; Stephen W. Hoffman, David J.T. Hussell, Iain MacLeod, Jeff P. Smith, and Will Weber.

### **Science Advisory Committee**

David J.T. Hussell, Chair (Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources); Jonathan Bart (United States Geological Survey), Keith L. Bildstein (Hawk Mountain Sanctuary), Charles M. Francis (Canadian Wildlife Service), Mark R. Fuller (United States Geological Survey), Laurie J. Goodrich (Hawk Mountain Sanctuary), Stephen W. Hoffman (Montana Audubon Society), Steven T. Kelling (Cornell Lab of Ornithology), David Mizrahi (New Jersey Audubon Society), Bruce Peterjohn (United States Geological Survey), Jeff P. Smith (HawkWatch International).

### **RPI Staff**

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### **Organization Support**

Laurie J. Goodrich (HMS) and Iain MacLeod (HMANA)

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