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Ground-breaking Report Provides First Continental Assessment of North American Raptor Populations

Medford, MA Raptor populations across the continent are doing rather well, according to a ground-breaking report from the Raptor Population Index (RPI) Project. RPI's exciting new book, *The State of North America's Birds of Prey*, provides the first continent-wide analysis of raptor populations spanning up to three decades. This report analyzes long-term migration counts from 22 independent monitoring sites across the continent, most of which have had consistent annual coverage by volunteer citizen-scientists and professional biologists.

The report finds that birds of prey populations, unlike many other species of birds, are in relatively good shape. Many species show upward trends, including Turkey Vulture, Osprey, Bald Eagle, Cooper's Hawk, Swainson's Hawk, Merlin, and Peregrine. Other species appear to be declining, often significantly, in particular regions of the country, and are the subject of growing concern. These include the Sharp-shinned Hawk, Northern Harrier, and, more precipitously, American Kestrel. The report includes analysis of trends in less widespread species, such as Swallow-tailed and Mississippi Kite, Swainson's Hawk, and Prairie Falcon.

This landmark book is the first of such reports developed by RPI, a cooperative, continent-wide raptor monitoring project of the Hawk Migration Association of North America (HMANA), Hawk Mountain Sanctuary, and HawkWatch International, founded in 2003. This research was first presented at a symposium during the joint conference of the Raptor Research Foundation and HMANA in September 2007.

Written by 22 of the hemisphere's best-known raptor migration specialists, it includes a brief history of raptor conservation in North America, the principles and methods for the use of migration counts to determine population trends, regional overviews of trends in migration counts, a report on the conservation status of 20 species of birds of prey, a description of the data management system, and recommendations for the operation of raptor migration monitoring sites.

Created as a tool to inform conservation and wildlife management, RPI uses standardized, long-term migration counts from watch sites stretching from Canada to Mexico and from the Atlantic to the Pacific. Results are intended to inform the scientific community, provide decision—support for conservation, and educate the general public, as well as to fill a critical gap in continental bird monitoring programs for raptors. By working cooperatively across geographic boundaries and using state-of-the-art quantitative analysis tools, RPI is rapidly becoming a model for standardized species monitoring at a continental scale.

The book is edited by Dr. Keith Bildstein, Sarkis Acopian Director of Conservation Science at Hawk Mountain Sanctuary; Dr. Jeff Smith, Conservation Science Director at HawkWatch International, and RPI Project Manager Ernesto Ruelas Inzunza at HMANA. The volume is the third in a series of avian monographs published jointly by the Nuttall Ornithological Club — the oldest natural history society in North America — and the American Ornithologists Union — the largest ornithological society in the world.

The State of North America's Birds of Prey can be ordered through Buteo Books by calling 434-263-8671, visiting www.buteobooks.com, or emailing customerservice@buteobooks.com. For more information on hawk migration and HMANA, or on RPI, visit www.hmana.org or email info@hmana.org.

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If you'd like more information on RPI and hawk migration, or to schedule an interview with one of the editors, please call Paul Roberts at 978-326-4213, or email Paul at info@hmana.org

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