



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

May 11, 2015

Dear Cooperator,

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks will be discontinuing our coordination of the Raptor Survey Routes in 2015. I appreciate that this may come as a surprise to some and a source of disappointment to many. The Raptor Survey Routes have been successfully run since 1977 in large part because of your dedication and commitment to the program. We have garnered quality information on raptor trends in Montana as a direct result of your efforts.

As survey methods and analysis have advanced, we have been able to compare the results of the Raptor Survey Routes with the Breeding Bird Survey data, a similar, albeit broader national effort. These analyses are ongoing, but we can see that the direction for long-term trends for the raptor species documented by the Raptor Survey Routes are similar to those trends documented with the Breeding Bird Surveys. Breeding Bird Surveys also provide additional information that allows for more detailed analyses. In an effort to streamline our programs, we have recommended to management that we redirect the efforts from Raptor Survey Routes into the expansion of the Breeding Bird Surveys and other species-driven targeted surveys.

The level of information that has been collected through 38 years of dedicated surveys has been astounding. Over 1500 routes have been completed, documenting more than 23,000 records for 23 species of raptors! Each of these records has contributed to our overall understanding of raptors in Montana, and we are grateful for your contribution.

If you would like to continue running your route, we do not discourage you. You could enter your data at the Natural Heritage Program's MapViewer, and you will contribute to the point observation database for those raptor species. If you are interested in volunteering for many other bird conservation efforts that exist, I would encourage you to contact myself or your local Audubon chapters. Opportunities exist with Peregrine Watch, Breeding Bird Survey routes (expanded in 2015), Christmas Bird Count, or FeederWatch. There may also be local efforts to monitor osprey, bald or golden eagle nests, waterbirds, harlequin duck, long-billed curlew, black swift, high elevation species, loons or owls.

We greatly appreciate your past participation and I am confident that we can count on your continued commitment to Montana's bird and wildlife communities. Thanks for your contribution to the conservation of Montana's raptors!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Allison Begley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Allison Begley
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Total Counts for Raptor Species Observed during Raptor Survey Routes (1977-2014)

SPECIES	2013	2014	1977-2014	SPECIES	2013	2014	1977-2014
<i>American Kestrel</i>	264	120	6073	<i>Northern Harrier</i>	76	72	3128
<i>Bald Eagle</i>	79	43	655	<i>Osprey</i>	128	65	1651
<i>Broad-winged Hawk</i>	2	0	4	<i>Peregrine Falcon</i>	4	0	18
<i>Burrowing Owl</i>	2	3	11	<i>Prairie Falcon</i>	9	4	241
<i>Cooper's Hawk</i>	4	2	51	<i>Red-tailed Hawk</i>	403	179	5440
<i>Ferruginous Hawk</i>	60	18	985	<i>Rough-legged Hawk</i>	0	10	48
<i>Golden Eagle</i>	47	4	959	<i>Sharp-shinned Hawk</i>	2	1	45
<i>Gyr Falcon</i>	0	0	1	<i>Swainson's Hawk</i>	79	80	2688
<i>Merlin</i>	2	3	53	<i>Turkey Vulture</i>	103	45	856
<i>Northern Goshawk</i>	0	0	21	<i>Unidentified</i>	40	25	919

Number of Red-tailed Hawks Observed

