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Cape May Point Raptor Banding Station — 1974 Results

William S. Clark¹

The Cape May Point Raptor Banding Station has been in operation every fall for the past eight years for the purpose of catching and banding migrating hawks and owls. This article reports the station's results for 1974. The previous years' results are reported in earlier volumes of this journal.

The station is actually composed of two banding setups located 150 meters apart on a north-south line. The original one is called the North Station and the other the South Station. The North was operated every day from August 25 until November 24 and November 29 and 30; the South was operated all but 13 days in August and November, when there were no qualified banders available. Descriptions of the operation have been published in the articles mentioned above.

Tables 1A-D report the daily banding totals by species. They include the combined banding totals for both stations by species, the banders for each station and average wind direction and velocity.

The South setup was extensively modified this year. Bob Dittrick designed and built a new blind and the setup area was enlarged. An extra mist net was added and the other traps were spread out. The new blind has a tower in one corner that allows the station assistant to have a better view of the hawk flight, permitting earlier warning on low flying hawks.

The 2,418 hawks banded represent the highest single season total ever at CMP (and, to the best of my knowledge, at any raptor banding station). There are many reasons contributing to this, such as the moderate temperatures throughout (last year was very warm), many cold fronts coming through CMP, the revamping of the South setup, sufficient trained operators and assistants on the large flight days, and the almost record numbers of American Kestrels and Sharp-shinned Hawks, our most numerous hawks.

This year we had five days with over 100 hawks caught and two more days in the nineties. We

caught record numbers of Cooper's Hawks, Red-shouldered Hawks, Broad-winged Hawks, Marsh Hawks, and Kestrels, and caught only 14 less than the record 1030 Sharp-shinned Hawks from 1972. We set the following one-day banding records: 15 Cooper's Hawks, 3 Broad-winged Hawks, and 138 Kestrels. There were a record number of foreign recoveries and our first return this year (See Table 5), but no unusual raptors were caught.

Table 2A reports the total number of raptors seen daily, which includes the hawks banded. Turkey Vultures were seen in the same numbers as previous seasons. They mainly pass through CMP in October.

The number of Sharp-shinned Hawks counted was just slightly fewer than last year's record. The flight began in mid-September and continued heavy until mid-October and gradually tapered off until early November. During November fair numbers were still recorded. Cooper's Hawks came in surprisingly greater numbers this year. The counts for the last 4 years are 152, 178, 332, and 441 — possibly indicative of an increasing breeding population. The Goshawk flight this year was limited to two individuals on the last day of operation.

The Broad-winged Hawks flew through CMP in record numbers this year. The count was almost ten times our previous high count. They continued coming through during October and into early November as usual. The last one seen was a very late individual on November 23. The Red-tailed Hawks were seen in larger numbers than is usual during September and October but fewer during November. The same was observed for Red-shouldered Hawks. As usual, few Rough-legged Hawks were counted.

Bald Eagles migrate relatively early in the season. We counted four immatures during late August and September. Golden Eagles were seen from mid-October on. This year, like the Buteos, they came in larger numbers in October than November.

This year the number of Peregrines and Merlins counted was noticeably fewer than in previous years. During a "normal" season at CMP, there are 8-10 days with over 20 Merlins counted, this year only 2. The high count days net between 40-70 Merlins, this year's high was 23. The causes may be the weather (Merlins usually show up on south wind inclement weather days at CMP), a poor breeding season or both. (Approximately 95% of hawks caught at CMP are young.) The Peregrines did have a difficult breeding season in the Arctic due to adverse weather.

However, the Kestrels came early and in great numbers. Beginning in August the numbers passing through increased until over 1000 were counted on September 14. The flight tapered off until mid-October then remained constant until the first of November. They continued sporadically during November. This was the highest annual number recorded at CMP.

Table 3 gives a breakdown by station of how the hawks were caught. This was the first year that the South Station caught more than the North even though it was operated on fewer days; however, these were light flight days. During the heavier flights the South was usually manned by the more experienced operator. The new blind and station layout also added to the better showing of the South setup.

The bow net continues to be the biggest catcher. The average of 13.8 hawks caught per day is higher than any previous years. We continued to set out large mist nets for owls this year. Table 4 shows the number of owls banded this year by date. This total is less than last year primarily because of catching many fewer Saw-whet Owls. We had both a foreign recovery and a return. (See Table 5).

Table 5 is a new table necessitated by the number of foreign recoveries this year. Notice that all but one were banded as nestlings. The previous high number of banded birds caught in one season was two hawks.

There were many prearranged visitors to the station this year and six banding demonstrations were given to birding groups. We had little interference from birders or other unwanted visitors. (Visitors are welcome but arrangements must be made with the author beforehand. It is possible to arrange demonstrations for groups.)

Operating a raptor banding station requires concentration and patience and is often boring when there is no flight. But it can also be fun and exciting. Unusual occurrences are part of the fun,

and some of this season's more interesting events are described below.

Brian Millsap ran the North Station the last week in August. Once, while luring for a Kestrel out front (to the east), an immature Bald Eagle flew low and slowly from the rear of the station (west). When Brian saw it, it was just hitting the top of the large mist net stretched North-South through the station. The Eagle took the net out ten feet or so, and as the net sprung back the eagle was flipped out. The eagle didn't get a band, we didn't band our first eagle and Brian's heart didn't settle down for many minutes.

Bob Dittrick was operating the North Station when a Kestrel flew in carrying a "mouse." It made repeated stoops at the lure. Finally, hovering high over the lure, it let go the "mouse," which fluttered away (actually, a monarch butterfly) and came to the trap and was caught. Its "greed" cost it one sure meal but gained it an "anklet" of aluminum.

Jim Hill was running the South Station when a Merlin chased a Tree Swallow through the setup. The falcon caught its prey just as both hit one of the mist nets. Another hawk banded without luring!

The operators of the station this year were Chris Curts, Bob Dittrick, Steve Freligh, Joe Harmer, Jim Hill, Larry Hood, Dan James, Brian Millsap, Sam Orr, Steve Potts, Marshall Stinnett, and myself. Assistants this season were Tom and Connie Bonino, Ed Buckler, Jane Church, Dale Clayton, Bob Curts, Phyllis Dague, Art Davison, Bob Dittrick, Sr., Paul Engman, Margie Halpin, Steve Holt, Natalie Houghton, John Kolodziej, Fred Locquet, Mary Lou McCormick, Wendy Paulson, Ed Phillips, Merek Plater, Tom Schultz, Cathy Selph, Lisa Wilcox, Dennis Wright and Jim Zook. Their contribution was greatly appreciated by the operators.

Next year, we plan to operate both stations from late August through Thanksgiving and to operate some experimental stations in other areas of Cape May Point.

I would again like to thank Mr. David Rutherford for his kindness in continuing to give permission to use his property for this important banding operation.

The accompanying photographs were taken at the station by the author.

17800 Dasset Court, #101, Annandale, Virginia
22003

August								Aug.
	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	Total
Sharp-shinned Hawk								
Cooper's Hawk								
Goshawk								
Red-tailed Hawk				1				1
Red-shouldered Hawk								
Broad-winged Hawk								
Harrier								
Peregrine								
Merlin								
Kestrel	8	6				6	16	36
Total	8	6		1		6	16	37

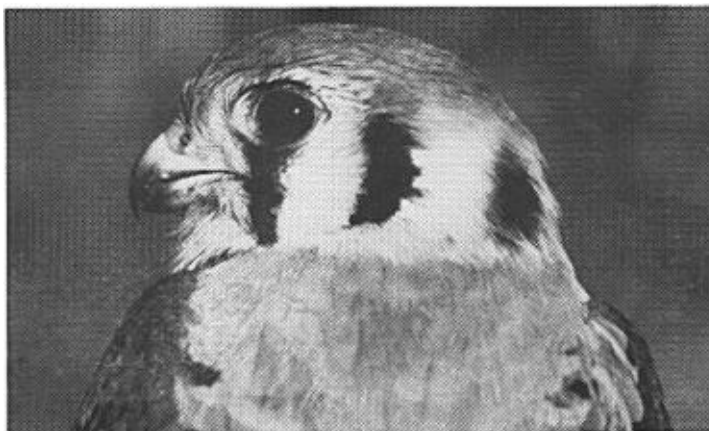
Station	North	CL	MP	MP	MP	MP	MP	CL
Operator	South		MP	MP				MP
Wind Direction		NE	E	S	SW	SW	SW	NE

Operator Code:

CL - Clark	HO- Hood
CU - Curts	JM- James
DT - Dittrick	MP- Millsap
FL - Freligh	OR- Orr
HA- Harmer	PT- Potts
HL - Hill	ST- Stinnett

Table 1A. Total Hawks Banded in August

Male American Kestrel



Sharp-shinned Hawk



September																															Sept.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	Total	

Table 1B. Total Raptors Banded in September

October																																	Oct. Total
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31			
Sharp-shinned Hawk	8	13	53	17	9	14	18	53	14	38	41	20	40	1	15	1	30	91	24	75	42	20	38	9	18	43	31	5	3	6	7	797	
Cooper's Hawk	1	2	5	4	3		1	15	1	4	3	2				2	4	1	3			1			2							54	
Goshawk																															0		
Red-tailed Hawk			2				1	1	1								1	2	2	6	1						2				19		
Red-shouldered Hawk								1					1				2	1									1				6		
Broad-winged Hawk	3	2				1	2	3		1																					12		
Harrier	4				1												1					1									7		
Peregrine															1																2		
Merlin	5	1			1		1		2	2	3					1	1												1		18		
Kestrel	11	24	41	9	2	4	1	18	15	33	8	8	6		2	16	16	7	16	2	3	1		2	6	16	2			2	271		
Total	25	47	103	30	16	19	22	91	32	77	56	34	46	2	18	2	49	115	35	96	50	24	41	9	20	51	47	10	3	7	9	1186	
Station	North	DT	JM	JM	DT	HA	HA	HA	HA	CL	CL	CL	DT	DT	DT	HA	HA	HA	HA	HA	HA	HA	HA	HA	HA	HA	OR	HO	HO	HO	HO		
Operator	South	JM	JM	DT	DT	JM	CL	CL	HA	HA	HA	HA	HA	HA	HA	DT	DT	DT	DT	CL	CU	CU	CU	HA	OR	CL	CL	CL	CL	CL	HO		
Wind Direction		NW	NW	NW	N	S	SW	SW	N	NW	SW	NE	S	NE	SE	S	NW	NW	N	NW	NW	SW	SW	NE	S	NW	NW	SE	S	S	SW		

Table 1C. Total Raptors Banded in October

		November																														Nov. Overall	
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	Total	
Sharp-shinned Hawk	8	11	8	1	2	4	6	5	4	2							2	2				1	5	1	2				1	1	66	1016	
Cooper's Hawk	1																														1	74	
Goshawk																														1	1	1	
Red-tailed Hawk	1				1	1	2	6	1									1	1				6	4	1				2	4	30	58	
Red-shouldered Hawk																	2						2								4	10	
Broad-winged Hawk							1																								1	17	
Harrier						2	1																								3	18	
Peregrine																															0	3	
Merlin																															0	57	
Kestrel	2	2	5	1	5	5	3	1										3		1			1	1						1	31	1164	
Total	11	14	13	1	3	12	12	11	10	4	0	0	0	0	0	4	5	1	2	0	1	14	6	3				4	6	137	2418		
Station	North	HO	ST	ST	ST	ST	ST	ST	ST	CL	CL	CL	HL	HL	HL	HL	CL	CL	CL	CL	CL	CL	CL	CL	CL	CL	—	—	—	—	MP	DT	
Operator	South	HO	CL	CL	—	ST	ST	ST	CL	CL	CL	—	—	—	—	—	—	DT	DT	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	MP	
Wind Direction		S	N	N	S	SW	NW	NW	W	NW	NE	E	E	W	S	NW	W	SW	SW	W	SW	W	NW	N	SW	—	—	—	—	NW	NE		

Table 1D. Total Raptors Banded in November

	August										Aug.	
	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	Total				
Turkey Vulture	1							1				
Sharp-shinned Hawk												
Cooper's Hawk												
Goshawk												
Red-tailed Hawk				1			1	2				
Red-shouldered Hawk												
Broad-winged Hawk	10	1	3					12	26			
Rough-legged Hawk												
Golden Eagle												
Bald Eagle	1		1						2			
Harrier			1						1	2		
Osprey	7	2							2	11		
Peregrine												
Merlin												
Kestrel	100	29	7	3	16	16	238	409				
Total	119	33	11	4	16	16	254	453				

Table 2A. Total Raptors Sighted in August

September

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	Sept	Total
Turkey Vulture					1	1		8							1							21	7	4	20	3					67	
Sharp-shinned Hawk													3	2	4	8	42	11	2	51	291	196	173	205	240	11		141	1380			
Cooper's Hawk													1		2	2	4		1	2	11	13	4	16	10	1		31	98			
Goshawk																														0		
Red-tailed Hawk	5	2		2				3	1	1				2	6	32	13	18	6		11	19	10	1	3	4		6	145			
Red-shouldered Hawk	1													1						3	1	6	1	1				5	19			
Broad-winged Hawk	68	12		5	80			15	2	3			9	7	14	1	58	1		47	21	14	12	5	5	1	1	8	389			
Rough-legged Hawk																														0		
Golden Eagle				1																										0		
Bald Eagle											1																			2		
Harrier			1	1				4	3	1	1	1	3	44	6	15	3	16	8		2	11	8	9	2	4		1	1	6	151	
Osprey	8	9			6		3	10	2	2	6	4	1	3	5	6	4	15	11	1	3	23	6	6	15	12	7	7	6		181	
Peregrine																				2	2				6	4	1	1		16		
Merlin														2		2	12	8	18	4	18	15	6	4	3	19	23	4	7	9	154	
Kestrel	117	214	4	64	510	1	10	139	33	78	113	118	165	1081	110	158	152	246	102	14	15	511	491	63	27	40	48	8	5	203	4840	
Total	199	237	5	72	599	1	13	179	41	85	120	124	169	1145	138	233	185	371	192	30	43	676	875	328	242	331	344	34	41	410	7442	

Table 2B. Total Raptors Sighted in September

October

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	Oct. Total
Turkey Vulture	3	1	5	18	2	3		19	18	6			1				87	3	60	31			4		6		7					274
Sharp-shinned Hawk	640	273	871	119	72	156	189	356	82	105	254	71	242	19	55	7	168	528	87	323	212	81	185	69	128	206	148	85	34	41	110	5916
Cooper's Hawk	7	22	40	23	10	15	11	81	19	11	6	4	16	2			5	14	21	7	7	1	1	2		5		6	1		337	
Goshawk																															0	
Red-tailed Hawk	25	5	96	27	14	3	3	24	18	2	5		1				1	40	95	18	89	34	17	17		21	4	71			630	
Red-shouldered Hawk	1		17		1	2	1	1	1	1			1				2	3	5	3		1			1		15				55	
Broad-winged Hawk	34	53	993	1073	84	499	634	415	28	4	5							3		2	1						2				3830	
Rough-legged Hawk																						1		1	1	1					3	
Golden Eagle																	1		1									3		1	6	
Bald Eagle																															0	
Harrier	5	41	61		3	17	6	13	2	6	7	5	4	4			7	14	20	9	16		3	7	1	5	10	6	3	1		276
Osprey	4	3		1	1	4	5	2	8	11	4	8	1		2		1										6	1		1		63
Peregrine								1	2	1	4	1			3		1															14
Merlin	21	2	3	2	3	3	3	2	9	12	17	8	2			1	2	11									3	1	2			107
Kestrel	54	101	251	60	15	30	21	93	54	145	57	34	48	3	11	5	59	49	28	60	14	18	9	1	19	29	71	21	5	3	10	1378
Total	794	501	2337	1323	205	733	875	1007	239	306	355	131	315	29	71	13	247	746	263	480	371	136	215	101	151	274	241	217	44	48	121	12889

Table 2C. Total Raptors Sighted in October

November																															Nov. Overall	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	Total	Total	
Turkey Vulture																																
96	82	54	31	25	120	46	62	39	5	3					44	3					35	13					3	10	145	487		
Sharp-shinned Hawk																																
1					2	1						1			7	12	1			5	37	7	6				7	3	649	7945		
Cooper's Hawk																																
															1						1								6	441		
Goshawk																																
31	6				78	10	48	189	5	1					20	4	4	33			126	106					2	2	2			
Red-tailed Hawk																																
	1							4	2						6	4	1	4			19	6					24	63	748	1525		
Red-shouldered Hawk																																
																											3	50	124			
Broad-winged Hawk																																
							2	1														1							4	4249		
Rough-legged Hawk																																
																					1								1	4		
Golden Eagle																																
																					1								1	7		
Bald Eagle																																
																														0	4	
5	12	3	8	29	3	25	5							1	2	1	4	2	1	23	7	6					3	2	142	571		
Harrier																																
1	6																												7	268		
Osprey																																
				1																									1	31		
Peregrine																																
																														0	261	
Merlin																																
16	18	43	14	25	25	18	16	6	7	3	1				2	4	7	1	1			2	1				7	5	222	6849		
Kestrel																																
113	137	122	48	58	255	78	173	260	19	8	1	1	0	0	80	30	6	49	3	7	243	142	13	0	0	0	0	44	88	1978	22762	
Total																																

Table 2D. Total Raptors Sighted in November

	North				South				Both					
	Mist Net	Dho- Gaza	Bow Net	Ver- Bail Chatrri Total	Mist Net	Dho- Gaza	Bow Net	Ver- Bail Total	Mist Net	Dho- Gaza	Bow Net	Ver- Bail Chatrri Total		
Sharp-shinned Hawk	176	96	182	454	245	150	164	3	562	421	246	346	3	1016
Cooper's Hawk	4	8	15	27	21	5	18	3	47	25	13	33	3	74
Goshawk			1	1					0			1		1
Red-tailed Hawk	1	1	31	33	4	19	2	25	5	1	50	2	58	
Red-shouldered Hawk			4	4	1	4	1	6	1		8	1	10	
Broad-winged Hawk	4	2	5	11	3	3		6	6	7	2	8	17	
Harrier	1		1	2	1	3	12	16	2	3	13		18	
Peregrine				1			2	2	2	1		2	3	
Merlin	8	8	17	33	8	13	3	24	16	21	20		57	
Kestrel	69	58	483	11	3	624	129	117	288	6	541	198	175	771
Total	264	173	739	11	3	1190	412	288	513	15	1228	676	461	1253
No. of days in operation				94					81					175
Average hawks/day				12.8					15.2					13.8

Table 3. Hawks Caught by Station and Type of Trap

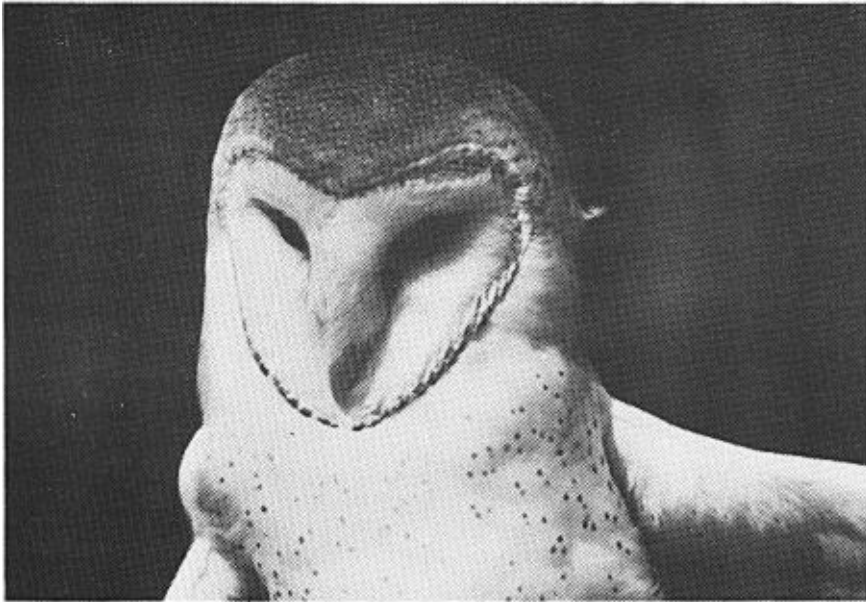
	Sept.		October													
	24	25	1	2	3	4	7	8	9	18	26	27	28	29		
Barn Owl	1	2	2	2	4	2	8	4		7		2	5	1		
Long-eared Owl							1		1		2	1				
Short-eared Owl																
Saw-whet Owl								1					1			
Total	1	2	2	2	4	2	9	5	1	7	2	3	6	1		

	November															
	1	2	4	6	7	8	9	10	11	17	18	23	29	30	Total	
Barn Owl			1	1	10	7	7	3	1		1	1			72	
Long-eared Owl	1			1	3	5	8	1	1			8	1	2	36	
Short-eared Owl				1			2								3	
Saw-whet Owl		3		1	5	1	4			1		3	1	1	22	
Total	1	4	1	4	18	13	21	4	2	1	1	12	2	3	133	

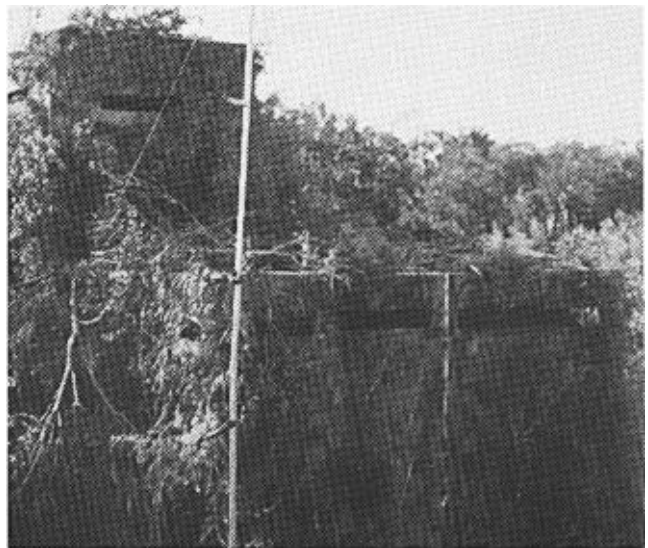
Table 4. Owls Banded

Banding Data						Recovery Data			
Band	Species	Age when Banded	Sex	Date	Bander	Location	Date	Age	Station Remarks
752-97621	Sharp-shinned Hawk	HY	M	10-10-74	Hope Atkinson	So. Dartmouth, Mass.	10-24-74	HY	N
871-12780	Red-tailed Hawk	L	U	06-02-74	Rob Bierregaard	Lakeville, Conn.	10-21-74	HY	S Rebanded w/ 877-22802
1263-46097	Kestrel	L	F	05-26-74	Mike Olmstead	No. Bellingham, Mass.	09-02-74	HY	S
1063-99870	Kestrel	L	F	06-08-74	Heinz Meng	New Paltz, N.Y.	09-14-74	HY	S Rebanded w/ 1143-09189
1143-32901	Kestrel	L	F	06-09-74	Rob Bierregaard	Martha's Vineyard, Mass.	09-18-74	HY	N
1263-46119	Kestrel	L	F	06-27-74	Mike Olmstead	Lancaster, Mass.	09-22-74	HY	S
696-99344	Barn Owl	L	U	06-16-74	Fred Schaeffer	Cream Ridge, N.J.	10-04-74	U	S Rebanded w/ 987-08953
987-08905	Barn Owl	U	U	10-24-73	Brian Millsap	Cape May Point, RBS	11-09-74	AHY	S

Table 5. Foreign Recoveries and Returns at CMP



Barn Owl



New south blind with tower