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AFR: Cape May Raptor Banding Project - 1993 Yearly Report

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This was the 27th consecutive autumn season of operation for the Cape May Raptor Banding Project (CMRBP) at Cape May Point, New Jersey. We operated up to four banding stations simultaneously from 7 September to 27 November using techniques previously described by Bill Clark (1970. *EBBA News* 33:181-189, 1981. *J. Wildl. Manage.* 45:1043-1044). We captured 2960 hawks of 11 species during 252 station-days of operation (Table 1). The totals for eight species increased over those of the past two seasons but most were also below their respective 15-year mean (see Schultz 1992. *N. Am. Bird Bander* 17:128-129 for CMRBP capture totals by year since 1967). We also set new season records for Cooper's Hawk and Northern Goshawk.

The total of 107 Northern Harriers was well above the previous two seasons but was slightly below our 15-year mean. The ratio of 7.4% adults in the 1993 capture sample was also well below our mean for the species. Sharp-shinned Hawk capture rates continued the gradual downward trend since 1979. The 1424 captured this season was up from 1992 but still well below our 15-year mean of 2545. In stark contrast to the continuing decline of Sharp-shinned Hawk capture rates, yearly capture totals of Cooper's Hawks have increased steadily and dramatically since 1979. The 654 Cooper's Hawks captured was a new season record and was more than twice the totals of the early and mid 1980's. The 26 Northern Goshawks captured this season was a surprise and a new season record. There have been no adult Goshawks captured at Cape May since 1991, although several were seen in the local area this autumn. The totals for Red-tailed Hawk (200) and Red-shouldered Hawk (11) were close to their respective mean despite a lack of cold fronts passing off the mid-Atlantic coast during the month of November.

Broad-winged Hawk totals (6) were also about average for the project. The total of 326 American Kestrels was a dramatic increase over the past two seasons but still below our 15-year mean of 369 per season. The capture total of 153 Merlins was also up from the past two seasons but far below our 15-year mean (259). The 52 Peregrine Falcons captured was well above the 1992 total but barely half that of our record 1990 season (120). Finally, an Osprey captured in early October was the 17th for the project.

We had four foreign recaptures and one return to Cape May Point this season. The return was an ASY female Cooper's Hawk originally banded in late October 1992. A previously banded HY Peregrine Falcon was captive bred by the Canadian Wildlife Service and released to the wild near Sudbury, Ontario. We also captured an American Kestrel from MA, a Sharp-shinned Hawk banded two days previously in central NJ, and a HY Red-tailed Hawk banded one day earlier at Wise Point, VA.

The CMRBP continued its tradition of public education with the presentation of free public hawk banding demonstrations every weekend at the Cape May Point State Park. During the six-week period of mid-September through the end of October, we spoke to approximately 5,000 - 7,000 people about raptor ecology, research and banding, identification, and habitat conservation. Although some of the participants in these programs were birders familiar with the migration spectacle at Cape May Point, many of the participants were visiting the park for other recreational purposes, drawn to the programs by the sight of life hawks. These programs provide our project with a unique opportunity to contact and educate people about raptor ecology who would not normally participate

in bird walks or other Audubon-sponsored interpretive activities. In addition, we conducted approximately 15 other programs for local school groups, conservation organizations, and field identification seminars. Each season the CMRBP is available to other researchers engaged in other types of raptor research projects. This season we had two researchers, one from the Canadian Wildlife Service and one from the University of Nevada at Las Vegas, collecting blood samples of captured raptors. Both researchers were gathering data on genetic differences between populations of raptors in differing geographic areas. We will continue this valuable service in the future and consider all proposals submitted by other researchers for the use of our facilities.

The CMRBP wishes to thank the Cape May Bird Observatory (especially Paul Kerlinger) and the New Jersey Audubon Society for providing administrative and financial support for this project for the past 15 years. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Fairbanks, AK; the Cape May Point State Park (Dean Cramer); and Portable Communications Inc. (Ken Grossweiler) also provided logistical and financial support during the 1993 autumn migration season. We also thank landowners Bill Maher, Dave Rutherford, the Nature Conservancy, and the New Jersey Department of Fish, Game and Wildlife for allowing us to continue operating banding stations on their properties.

Every autumn the CMRBP is indebted to the generosity of time, labor, and financial support of many banders and helpers who come to Cape May and donate their time in support of this project. They are truly a dedicated and talented group of people, too numerous to name completely, but no less appreciated. The 1993 CMRBP banders were: Olin Allen from VA, Gene Biglin VA, Becky Boutz VA, Doug Brown UK/Portugal, Bill Clark VA, Peter and Claudia Thompson Deahl VA, Katy Duffy WY, Paul Engman VA, Mary and John Forness NY, Bobby Geise WY, Mitch Harris ID, Shari Harden CO, Al Hinde MA, Nancy Kirch NY, Beth Lewis ID, Pat Matheny WY, George and Paula McNeil MD, John Miller NJ, Linda Moore VA, Jeannette Morss MA, Paul and Maggie Napier VA, Sam Orr OK, Bob Pantle NY, Sean and Shirley Prosser VA, Tony Quezon VA, Ted Savia VA, Chris and Brenda Schultz CO, Dave Tetlow NY, and Bob Yunick NY.

Table 1. Hawks captured by the CMRBP by species and month in 1993.

Species	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Total
Osprey	0	1	0	1
No. Harrier	38	45	24	107
Sh-Shin. Hawk	364	831	229	1424
Cooper's Hawk	113	488	53	*654
No. Goshawk	0	12	14	*26
Red-tailed Hawk	20	55	125	200
Red-shld. Hawk	0	5	6	11
Brd-wng. Hawk	4	2	0	6
Am. Kestrel	189	124	13	326
Merlin	88	64	1	153
Peregrine Falcon	16	35	1	52
Total	832	1662	466	2960

* New Season Record

