

2008

## Hawks From Every Angle: How to Identify Raptors in Flight

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### Recommended Citation

McNicholl, Martin K. (2008) "Hawks From Every Angle: How to Identify Raptors in Flight," *North American Bird Bander*. Vol. 33 : Iss. 2 , Article 6.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/nabb/vol33/iss2/6>

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**HAWKS FROM EVERY ANGLE [:] HOW TO IDENTIFY RAPTORS IN FLIGHT.**

By Jerry Liguori. 2005. Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ and Oxford University Press, Oxfordshire, U.K. xi + 132 pp. \$19.95 paper; \$55.00 cloth.

Watching diurnal raptors in flight has become an increasingly popular hobby in recent years, with participants ranging from casual observers to dedicated aficionados, whose every spare moment is spent at hawk watching sites during spring and/or fall migration. Such people become amazingly adept at identifying small dots on the horizon. This guide is dedicated to aiding in the identification of North American species of diurnal raptors in flight, with all sorts of tips that may help zero in on race and/or gender of many individuals. Although currently considered [at least officially] more related to storks, New World Vultures are also included, in keeping with their raptor-like appearance while in flight.

After the table of contents, a foreword by bird identification expert David A. Sibley, a preface and acknowledgements, the main text begins with an introduction consisting of sections on using the guide, a glossary, primarily of flight terms (types of flight and flight postures) and of those anatomical and plumage features observed well on flying raptors, photographs of flight positions, and brief discussions on light conditions, molt and aberrant plumages, hawk migration patterns and North American viewing sites, and weather as they affect identification of flying raptors. Brief sections also cover optical equipment and photography. Anatomical features are labelled on three photographs, several prominent hawk watching sites are shown on maps of the U.S., central America and extreme southern Canada for spring and fall, and tables outline peak migration periods in spring and fall and dates and sites of daily and seasonal record high North American counts for each diurnal raptor species. The location shown on the fall site map as Holiday Beach, Ontario, is actually that of the spring site, Beamer Conservation Area, Grimsby, near the western shore of Lake Ontario. Holiday Beach is along the north shore of Lake Erie. All other sites shown are from the U.S., except Veracruz, Mexico, although two Alberta sites are listed for high counts of Golden Eagles.

The text continues with a series of well-illustrated chapters on North American species groups: Accipiters, Northern Harrier, Buteos, Falcons, and Vultures, Osprey and Eagles. The Accipiters are discussed as a group, whereas the other chapters cover the group as a whole, followed by sub-chapters on individual species. Mississippi Kite is covered within the falcon chapter. Several species of limited North American distribution, such as California Condor, Black, Gray, Harris's, Short-tailed and White-tailed hawks, Hook-billed, White-tailed and Swallow-tailed kites and Northern Caracara are not included except in sections on species with which the species under discussion is compared. Species or group accounts include sections on size and structure, migration dynamics, plumages of juveniles, adults and/or races, morphs and other variants, similar species, and identification "pitfalls." Identification tips are related to plumage, flight style (including wing beat) and/or observer view (soaring, head-on, gliding overhead or "wing on/going away"). Distribution and length of these sections vary from chapter to chapter in relation to complexity and relevance to identifying the species or species group under consideration. Sections are added on other features ("white rump," dark flight feathers and wing panels) when relevant. The book closes with a "bibliography" (one page reference list) and a brief index to species accounts.

The greatest strength of this book is its emphasis on the effects of slight distortions, such as changes in postures, molt and light conditions in confusing identification of flying birds at considerable distances. Liguori recognizes that unrelated species, such as herons, may be confused with raptors when flying in some postures, especially at great distances, and includes them in his comparisons when appropriate. Potentially confusing factors, such as melanism vs. dark-phased birds, geographic variation in size and distortion in head projection of Sharp-shinned Hawks by having a full crop, are emphasized. Errors are few, and mostly minor grammatical points, such as only being misplaced to modify the wrong word or "between" being used in comparisons of more than two features or species. Illustrations are numerous (e.g., 32 Red-tailed Hawk photo plates). Geographic, morph and racial differences in plumage, size and even chronology

are also mentioned, although emphasis depends on ease of identification in the field. For example, differences among three Merlin races are considered in detail, whereas Krider's is the only regionally distinct Red-tailed Hawk race considered in detail, presumably because of the complexity of the array of variation within and between other races, this array being emphasized in non-racial terms. The statement (p. 103) that Merlins are more likely than other falcons to harass other raptors may be true, but my observations at Vancouver International Airport would suggest that Peregrines do so more often—possibly a distortion of sample size.

As emphasis in this book is on identification at a distance, its value to banders is primarily in helping to hone identification skills generally. Hawk watchers and others who wish to increase their identification skills at considerable distances will find it a valuable reference tool.

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## *Eastern Regional News*

***Eastern Bird Banding Association***

***Founded 1923***

### **Eastern Bird Banding Association Annual Meeting Minutes 12 Apr 2008**

**President** - Dave Hauber read the e-mailed president's report from Sue Finnegan thanking the officers and councilors who helped make EBBA a special organization. Special thanks to Bob Pantle, Gale Smith, Don and Elaine Mease and John Tautin.

**First Vice President** - John Tautin stated that this year's joint meeting of NABC and EBBA has over 100 registered participants.

**Second Vice President** - David Hauber reported that the next annual meeting will be held on 27, 28, and 29 Mar 2009 in Chincoteague, VA.

**Third Vice President** - David Hauber provided a budget, in the absence of a Third Vice President, projecting an income of \$16,900 and an estimated expense of \$16,900

**Treasurer** - In the absence of the Treasurer, David Hauber gave the treasurer's report which showed that we closed the year with a slight surplus. Copies of the report are available to any member who would like a copy.

**Editor** - In the absence of Bob Pantle, Jerry Lahr reminded everyone that the job of editor is difficult and time consuming. EBBA contributed approximately 38% of items appearing in *NABB*.

#### **Committee Reports:**

**Nominating Committee** - Jerry Lahr announced the candidates for officers and councilors, which were approved unanimously:

President	John Tautin
First Vice President	David Hauber
Second Vice President	Ken Heselton