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Response to H. Czikeli

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I agree with Czikeli (1984) that, at first glance, habitat imprinting is an attractive explanation for differential perch-site selection by wintering Red-tailed Hawk color morphs. His argument, however, rests on the assumption that dark morphs and light morphs breed in geographical and/or ecological isolation from each other. Although it is true that *Buteo jamaicensis borealis*, the eastern subspecies, and *B. j. kriderii*, the midwestern subspecies, are essentially monochromatic (light-bellied), *B. j. calurus*, the western subspecies, and possibly *B. j. harlani*, the northwestern subspecies, are polychromatic. *Buteo j. calurus* is especially variable, ranging from very light-bellied to black (Taverner 1936, Bent 1937). Representatives of each subspecies overwinter in northwestern Arkansas. It is likely that many of the light morphs included in my study were of western origin, having fledged alongside dark morphs. Therefore, a significant difference in perch-site selection between light and dark morphs does not necessarily translate into a difference between eastern and western birds. I must also emphasize that I could find no differences among morphs with respect to habitat selection (Preston 1980), contrary to what might be inferred from Czikeli's argument.

Many questions raised by my original study indeed remain unanswered. For example, the critical information regarding ecological affinities of the various western morphs is not yet available. It would also be useful to know what proportion of the light-bellied hawks overwintering in Benton County, Arkansas are of western origin. Ongoing research may yield some of the elusive answers. In any case, Czikeli's comments appropriately underscore the need for critical inquiry regarding the ecology of hawk polychromatism. One of the goals of my original paper was to foster this inquiry.

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