

REGIONAL MEETING OF THE RAPTOR RESEARCH FOUNDATION  
in Saint Paul, Minnesota, December 10, 1969  
Report by Byron E. Harrell

A regional meeting of the RRF was planned and held Wednesday evening, December 10, 1969, at the Saint Paul Hilton Hotel following the Midwest Fish and Wildlife Conference. Because some interested people would have to leave before that time an informal session was held on Tuesday afternoon. I was unable to be there, but Mr. Vere Scott furnished me a tape recording of this session. The following were present Wednesday evening: Lee Eberly, Vermillion, S.D.; Dr. Findley, Denver, Colo.; Don Hager, Milwaukee, Wisc.; Fran and Fred Hamerstrom, Plainfield, Wisc.; Byron Harrell, Vermillion, S.D.; David Hatch, Winnipeg, Man.; Susan Harris, Vermillion, S.D.; Charles Jonkel, Ottawa, Ont.; George Jonkel, Huron, S.D.; Jim Koplun, Arcata, Calif.; Don MacCarter, Missoula, Mont.; William Scharf, Traverse City, Mich.; Vere Scott, Winnipeg, Man.; Jim Streater, Appleton, Wisc.; Rolf Walenstrom, Aberdeen, S.D. Notes on the Tuesday meeting will be included where appropriate in the following account.

A short summary of the Cornell Conference originally prepared for the NAFA Symposium was handed out. Breeding was the first topic of discussion. Ideas on this topic developed at Cornell and Fort Collins were reviewed by Fran Hamerstrom. The preservation of the Rock Peregrine (anatum) gene pool may well depend on breeding projects. The backyard projects have provided and undoubtedly will continue to provide important impetus and information for larger scale projects under government or foundation auspices. Hopefully three types of projects will develop: substantial federal program probably at Patuxent; one or more large non-federal projects perhaps associated with well staffed zoos; backyard projects. Major effort should be placed on the Rock Peregrine; Latitude Peregrines (those from similar latitudes) should also receive attention as well as Arctic and Peale's Peregrines. Previous success with long-wings include Waller, Beebe, Schramm (twice), Kendall, Koehler, and Patuxent; all but one were backyard and falconer projects. There is a problem in obtaining the birds: most birds in captivity are females (males harder to catch, probably to keep, and are less preferred). The possibility of trades for more common races or species, of loans, of wild birds in Eastern Canada and in Alberta of the same subspecies were discussed. There was considerable discussion of day length problems, both the problem of breeding them at different latitudes and if the Rock Peregrine is lost, the introduction of other populations. Problems of the physiological and genetic nature, the effectiveness and requirements in manipulation of artificial lighting, and the possibility of "imprinting" were discussed. Many long-wings are high-strung so there are behavioral problems in breeding projects. There are difficulties in getting fertile eggs; problems of parental care might be solved by a raptor equivalent of a banty such as a stable Red-tail. Blood tests to determine physiological state and whitewashing eyries in attempting reintroduction were also mentioned.

Population problems received considerable attention. It was reported that a committee to plan Peregrine breeding surveys included Tom Cade (Chairman; Alaska), Richard Fyfe (Canada), Steve Herman and Monte Kirven (California and Baja California), and Jim Enderson (rest of west). At Fort Collins an interim committee was formed for breeding areas: Richard Fyfe (Canada except B. C.), Wayne Nelson (British Columbia), and Gerald Swartz (Alaska); for migration: James Ruos (East) and others to be selected. One thing this committee could do would be to suggest to RRF members worthwhile places to study (or to avoid). The printed report of the RRF committee was mentioned, and ways to extend its data collecting were discussed. Perhaps some subcommittees could function well for species like Osprey. Dunstan is assembling data from workers on this species; this could be continued by a subcommittee. Migration observations could be systematized also; standards could be proposed to develop greater comparability. Special problems such as daily and local variability and therefore problems of reliability need to be approached and studied. Migration recording should probably be more extensive and more intensive. Dr. Finley commented on the essential aid he received from falconers in Golden Eagle survey work and also on the use of a plane. The importance of intensive local studies was stressed especially by Fran Hamerstrom. A brief survey tends to miss non-breeders, an important population statistic and also fails to recognize or misunderstands changes in behavior. Her work on Harriers was cited as an example of data which would be missed on brief surveys. She also commented on a parallel development of work on raptors to that of wildlife management: count, breed, manage environment. Raptor research can telescope these approaches.

Banding was introduced by a report from Fran Hamerstrom that the Bird Banding Office has had no problems with raptor banders for some years. She also reported that the information she has been assembling on age and sex for the Manual has been published in various places and therefore available for Manual revisions. Further information is still desirable especially on owls. Some at Cornell questioned the value of banding (due to the fall off in returns, postulated shock of pesticide sick birds). Fran commented that there is no species with enough banding data and any bird that would die of shock due to banding activities would certainly die anyway. Visits to nests of rare species should be restricted to skilled workers. Migration banding is very important; new information would be forthcoming from an expanded effort and even with limited returns or recoveries much valuable information on sex and age ratios will accumulate. The answering of criticism of banding is very important. The restriction of Bald Eagle banding a few years ago can be traced to unverified assertions which were published only in Modern Game Breeding. We should avoid the repetition of this type of situation. The discussion concluded on some technique questions, particularly on crimping the lock on lock-on bands.

The RRF Pathology Committee is now chaired by Dr. Halliwell of the University of Missouri. It was reported that he has contacted a

a number of people to set up regional centers to do posts on dead raptors, captive or wild. Also discussed was the possibility that the committee might consider the preparation of a small manual for breeders or others with injured raptors which could also could furnish to zoos. Veterinarians with no special background will often use ordinary procedures which are unsatisfactory; such a manual could help where expert aid is not available. Don Hunter and federal authorities in South Dakota have been cooperating in the care of injured Eagles a number of which have been released after care. Some that were too crippled for releasing are available for potential breeding projects.

Although pesticide effects are pathological many aspects of work are different enough to justify a special committee. It will be activated and a chairman announced soon. This committee will try to keep track of what is going on and being found out. Although some standard setting is broader than this group, this committee will have to be involved. Sampling from live raptors was discussed. Fran Hamerstrom thought that sampling should standardize on muscle tissue for two reasons, males often without fat and Dr. Presst's point that the amount in muscle is more important and less variable than that in fat. She demonstrated how the samples are taken; she has done this with Harriers and studied their behavior and is publishing on the harmlessness of the procedure. Dr. Finley recommended standardization by expression in lipid base so comparisons can be made regardless of tissue source. There was further discussion on the adequacy of the laboratory work and the importance of interlab checks. The possibility of finding labs that might develop special interests in this area and general problems of expense were discussed. Because of the expense there should be evaluation of what is most important as in relation to intensive studies and of potential breeders.

Conservation problems were mentioned a number of times. The RRF needs to develop this area; our wide distribution of membership gives us some potential. Several people spoke on further legal protection. Several courses are open: 1) federal authority by adding to Canadian treaty (problem of acceptance by all Canadian provinces and Bricker amendment type problems in U.S.); 2) possible authority by potential Japanese treaty; 3) amend eagle law (this has some unsatisfactory features); 4) special law; 5) leave to states. The rare and endangered status at present provides little basis for tight control. Most states have little interest and are often ineffective. A federal law could have knowledgeable basis if interested persons provide guidance. Special features related to falconry such as commercialism were discussed. Steve Herman felt this quantitatively less important and that over-emphasis could weaken the real case against pesticide poisoning. Although a few falconers can cause trouble Fran Hamerstrom emphasized the important falconry element in raptor work. She told an anecdote about Joe Hickey planning the international conference and sending her a list of 11 important Peregrine workers and enquiring about adding a falconer to which Fran replied that 8 were falconers, 5 of them distinguished in the sport. She also commented on the sport as once

restricted to aristocrats but now restriction by demonstrated skill as the only satisfactory method in a democracy; this idea is difficult for state authorities to grasp. Other problems such as petty vandalism and shortage of federal money were discussed.

The Bibliography Committee is involved with the new Abstracts. This is scheduled to start in April 1970 with literature dated that year and will attempt to include anything of significance on raptors. More will appear in the News soon. Other committees in formation are: Biotelemetry (to serve as a source of information and to solve special raptor problems); Physiology and Anatomy; Taxonomy or Systematics (to identify problems and to provide aid in this area and also in problems of sex and age identification); Membership (now largely handled in George Jonkel's office); International Coordination; Finance and Investment.

The consideration of development of a more formal journal had been discussed at Cornell but a decision on this was reported as postponed. There was some discussion of B.P.I.E. Although this was set up as a very informal way for breeders to try out ideas in place of conversation prevented by distance, most of the material is of the nature of other contents of the News. It was decided to stop the Exchange and put the material in the future in the News. The new office on the University of South Dakota campus and Lee Eberly's new position as part time Executive Secretary were mentioned before the meeting adjourned.