

BLACK-SHOULDERED KITE AND NORTHERN GOSHAWK INTERACTIONS WITH PEREGRINE FALCONS AT SAN MIGUEL ISLAND, CALIFORNIA

BRENT S. STEWART, Hubbs-Sea World Research Institute, 1700 South Shores Road, San Diego, California 92109

ROBERT L. DELONG, National Marine Mammal Laboratory, NMFS, NWAFC, 7600 Sand Point Way, NSA Bldg. 32, Seattle, Washington 98115

Although the Black-shouldered (White-tailed) Kite (*Elanus caeruleus*) has not been known to nest on the California Channel Islands, it was locally abundant in mainland coastal areas of California in the 19th century (Waian and Stendall 1970). The kite population in the Santa Barbara region has increased substantially during the last 30 years, after being reduced to very small numbers by habitat destruction, shooting and egg collecting in the early 1900s (Waian and Stendall 1970, Garrett and Dunn 1981). The species has not been previously reported from San Miguel Island, although there are four recent autumn sightings from nearby Santa Cruz and Santa Rosa islands (Garrett and Dunn 1981).

On 28 October 1982, Stewart observed an adult Black-shouldered Kite hunting near Nidever Canyon on San Miguel Island. The kite was seen again the next morning hunting in the same area. An adult Black-shouldered Kite was seen on 14 November 1982 hunting over the dry lake bed near the west end of the island. Stewart observed the bird for about 20 minutes before a Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*) flew over Green Mountain from the east. The falcon harassed and chased the kite as they both ascended and flew to the south. They disappeared from sight about 15 minutes after the encounter began. A third sighting of an adult Black-shouldered Kite was made near Nidever Canyon on 17 November 1982.

The Northern Goshawk (*Accipiter gentilis*) has been observed occasionally on the southern California mainland in Santa Barbara, Ventura and Los Angeles counties but it has never been reported from any of the Channel Islands (Garrett and Dunn 1981). Peregrine Falcons nested, although apparently in small numbers, on San Miguel Island in the early 1900s but the population was extinct by the 1940s (Kiff 1980). Peregrines have been regularly sighted at San Miguel Island in autumn and winter in recent years (Jehl 1980, Stewart unpubl. data). Most of these sightings are thought to be of transient birds although a few peregrines may have wintered on the island. On 12 November 1982, as we were observing a Peregrine Falcon hunting from a bluff at Harris Point, an adult Northern Goshawk suddenly appeared over the bluff. It flew directly at and began harassing the peregrine. The two birds interacted for about 15 minutes before the goshawk flew off towards the east. The apparent "aerial combat" consisted of the goshawk initially stooping on the peregrine. The birds fell together to within about 1 m of the ground, with the goshawk above the falcon, at which time the falcon countered by chasing the goshawk vertically to about 100 m to 150 m altitude. The birds never made physical contact and the sequence was repeated eight times before the goshawk departed to the east. The peregrine then resumed hunting at the same location.

Later, on 14 November 1982, Stewart observed an adult goshawk (probably the same bird) at the south end of the dry lake bed near Green Mountain and watched it for about 40 minutes before it flew off to the southwest.

These observations are apparently the first records of the Black-shouldered Kite and the Northern Goshawk at San Miguel Island and the first record of the Northern Goshawk on the Southern California Channel Islands.

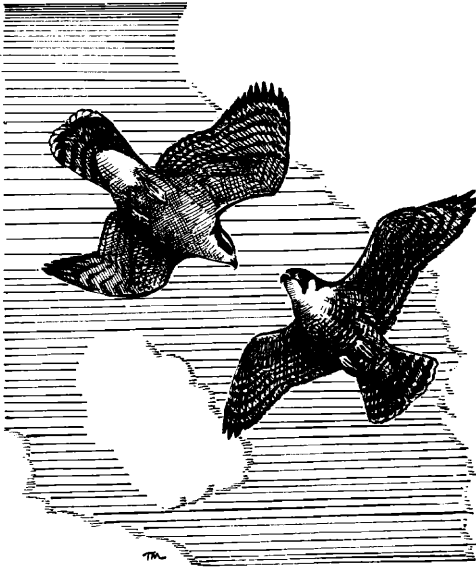
NOTES

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Northern Goshawk and Peregrine Falcon

Sketch by Tim Manolis