

NOTES

COMMUNAL WINTER ROOSTS OF FERRUGINOUS HAWKS IN SAN DIEGO COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

DAVID KING, 836 Stevens Ave., Solana Beach, California 92075

DONALD and MARJORIE HASTINGS, 2564 Bancroft, Spring Valley, California 92077

The behavior of the Ferruginous Hawk, *Buteo regalis*, has not been studied extensively during the non-nesting season. Ferruginous Hawks are less social than most other hawks of the genus *Buteo*. They are not known to flock in migration (Brown and Amadon, 1968, *Eagles, Hawks and Falcons of the World*, McGraw-Hill, New York) and are rarely found in groups in winter. In the only previous report of a communal winter roost of this species, Steenhof (1984, *Wilson Bull.* 96:137-138) described a South Dakota roost in cottonwoods, *Populus deltoides*, being used by one to six Ferruginous Hawks on 11 of 25 mornings during the winter of 1975-76. On nine of the mornings, the roost was shared with Bald Eagles, *Haliaeetus leucocephalus*. We here report two Ferruginous Hawk roost sites on the opposite edge of the species' normal winter range. In all our observations, the roosts were not shared with other species.

On 23 December 1985, while participating on the Lake Henshaw, California, Christmas Bird Count, Hastings and Hastings found nine Ferruginous Hawks roosting in two non-native, 20-meter-tall Pecan trees, *Carya illinoensis*, at the back edge of the golf course in the community of Warner Springs (33°17'N, 116°38'W). The hawks, which were found at first light, approximately 0615, were dispersed throughout the trees, with no bird apparently closer than three meters from another. After approximately 20 minutes, the birds began leaving the roost singly, flying directly away at an elevation of 15 to 30 meters. No more than three birds were seen in the air at any one time. All had left the roost by 0700, which was still before sunrise. After sunset, King, Hastings, and Hastings visited the roost site and found three Ferruginous Hawks in the trees.

No hawks were found using this roost on the Lake Henshaw Christmas Bird Count the following year on 3 January 1987. Before dawn on 21 December 1987, during the next year's count, Emily Durbin and Norma Sullivan found ten Ferruginous Hawks roosting in a cluster of seven Pecan trees and one Monterey Pine, *Pinus radiata* (also non-native), on the opposite side of the golf course. All these trees were approximately 15 meters tall. The behavior of these birds was similar to that described above, with all leaving singly before sunrise. After sunset that day, Alice DeBolt found 13 Ferruginous Hawks in the same trees.

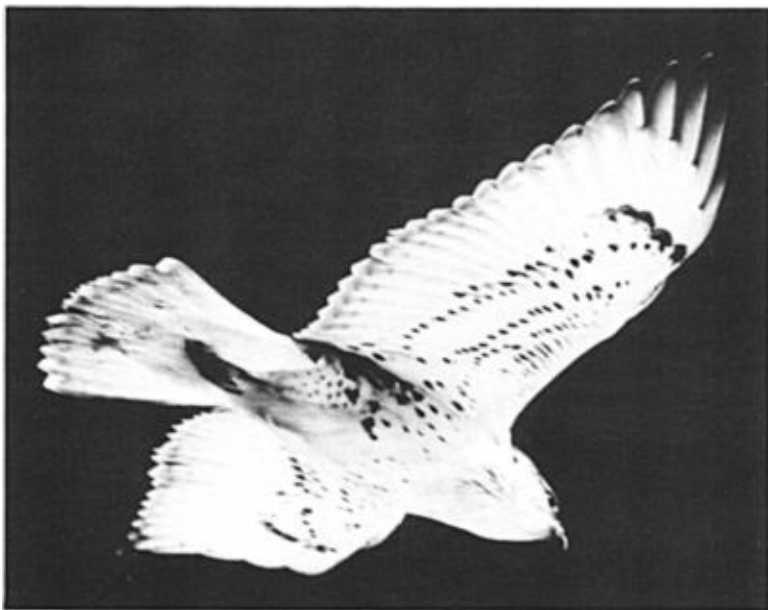
On the next Lake Henshaw Christmas Bird Count on 20 December 1988, using lights, King and DeBolt flushed six Ferruginous Hawks from these trees in the predawn at 0500. That evening King and DeBolt found a second roost site on treeless rolling grassland 5.5 kilometers west of the original location (1.7 kilometers WNW of the Warner Springs Airport at 33°17'25", 116°42'W). Over a 15-minute period around dusk (1645), six Ferruginous Hawks flew in and landed on a series of 20-meter-tall telephone poles. After staying on a pole for a few minutes a bird would frequently shift to a new pole but none left the area. At times they were all on three adjacent poles (approximately 50 meters apart) with up to three birds sharing a 1.5-meter crosstree; at other times the birds were spread out on poles over a distance of 500 meters. Nightfall around 1715 ended observations of these birds. At 1730, King and DeBolt, again using lights, found six other Ferruginous Hawks at the golf course roost.

NOTES

The majority of the Ferruginous Hawks found each winter in San Diego County occur within the Lake Henshaw Christmas Bird Count circle, in rolling grassy valleys at an elevation of around 900 meters. We note that in the three years when the birds were found roosting communally, the count reported high numbers of Ferruginous Hawks (33, 28, and 34, respectively). In the other six years, totals ranged from 4 to 25.

We thank Emily Durbin, Norma Sullivan, Alice DeBolt, and Claude Edwards for their help in supplying information, and Stephen Gustafson for his helpful review of this note. We also thank the Warner Springs Resort and the Vista Irrigation District for yearly permission to bird on their property.

Accepted 15 January 1989



Immature Ferruginous Hawk near Standish, Lassen County, California

Photo by Tim Manolis

IS IT WESTERN OR IS IT YELLOW BELLIED?



SEE the Difference with Bausch & Lomb.

Serious birding demands the ability to determine the often subtle differences in bird features, even at close distance. To accomplish this, quality optics are essential. Bausch & Lomb binoculars offer the finest optical systems available. Choose from over twenty models including the Custom™ line designed with leading naturalists and endorsed by the National Audubon Society, or the new Legacy models, ergonomically styled to meet today's lifestyle.

The Bausch & Lomb binocular family starts with the world famous "Elite" model available in 8x42 or 10x42. The Elite has set the standard by which all other binoculars will be measured.

They are built to the most exacting tolerances demanded by serious birders, fully multi-coated lenses featuring close focus (to twelve feet), and long eye relief.

Every Bausch & Lomb binocular represents over 130 years of optical excellence and state of the art design.

BAUSCH & LOMB

*When it comes to
vision enhancement
the world thinks of
Bausch & Lomb.*



*Photo of Western Flycatcher
by Greg R. Howell*