

SPRIG COLLECTION BY A BROAD-WINGED HAWK

by

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Burns (Wilson Bull. 23:139–320, 1911) states that the Broad-winged Hawk (*Buteo platypterus*) breaks sprigs of fresh greenery to be used as nest material from the tops of trees. No description of Broad-winged Hawk sprig collection behavior exists in the literature. Olendorff (Raptor Res. Repts. No. 1., Part 1, 1971) indicates which raptors collect sprigs but there are few descriptions of collection of material by raptors. I observed an adult Broad-wing collecting sprigs for a nest in a trembling aspen (*Populus tremuloides*) in Lincoln County, Wisconsin in 1980. Observations of the bird were made from a blind placed 7.5 m horizontally from and 1 m above its nest. The same adult Broad-wing was observed making 5 sprig-breaking attempts (three on 22 June, two on 6 July), all in trees about 15 m from the nest. Three attempts were successful, resulting in the collection of 1 sprig from a white birch (*Betula papyrifera*), a trembling aspen, and a red maple (*Acer rubrum*). Prior to two successful collections, the adult attempted unsuccessfully to collect a sprig; once in the nest tree, after which it flew to the birch, and once in the aspen. All collection attempts occurred in the lower halves (4–7 m above ground) of trees. The sequence of collection behavior usually occurred as follows: (1) the hawk flew from the nest to a branch; (2) stepped close to the selected sprig which was always part of the branch on which the hawk was standing; (3) extended its forebody while its feet remained stationary; (4) grasped the sprig near its base with the beak, and (5) tugged while simultaneously flapping until the sprig came free. The sprig was held in the beak and carried to the nest. This behavior is similar to that described for a Goshawk (*Accipiter gentilis*) by Schnell (Condor 60:377–403, 1958), but differs in that the Broad-wing flapped its wings while simultaneously tugging; Schnell reported that flapping followed each tug. Ellis (Wildl. Monogr. 70:94pp, 1979) reported that Golden Eagles (*Aquila chrysaetos*) flapped their wings while gathering nesting materials but he did not specify when the flapping occurred. I suggest that the flapping by this Broad-wing not only helped maintain balance, as suggested by Schnell (1958), but also provided additional “pulling power.”

I thank R. Anderson, M. Fuller, and my fellow graduate students for suggestions on this note.

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The Board of Directors of the Hawk Mountain Sanctuary Association announces its fifth annual award for raptor research.

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Mr. James J. Brett, Curator
Hawk Mountain Sanctuary Association
Route 2, Kempton, PA 19529

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