

BRIEF REPORT ON A HARRIER POPULATION STUDY
IN CENTRAL WISCONSIN

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An average of over three observers worked on this project daily from June 6 through August 16; the observers were Frances Hamerstrom, Wayman Walker, and others. Three aspects of the study were emphasized:

1. Nest finding.
2. Trapping of harriers for individual study and biopsy.
3. Census.

We were only able to find three nests on the 40,000 acre study area and are confident that no other nests brought off young.

In spite of intensive efforts, we caught only six individuals (successful summer trapping is almost exclusively geared to defense of nests). There were forty potential breeders on the study area: 20 males and 20 females; thus we had the potential population for 20 (rather than three) nests. The nesting population has dropped from 25 nests in 1963 to three nests in 1967.

This is a sad report to make. We hear the hum of spray planes almost daily during the growing season. We do not know whether there is a correlation between pesticides and our almost non-producing harrier population. Biopsies were taken from the six harriers caught (4 breeders and 2 non-breeders). Analyses of these biopsies may give us a clue. We have no evidence that either marking or biopsy adversely affected any individual.