

NOTES, NEWS, AND QUERIES

Raptor Research News. Although this issue is behind schedule, the material for the March-April issue is in hand, and we should be able to get it out within the second of those two months. We hope our readers will send us notes of things going on of interest. Harrell has returned from four months in Europe and wishes to thank Lee Eberly for his aid in getting the *News* out in his absence. We hope to have his position filled in the near future and hope you will bear with us until we get more help. Our index plans have changed, but we plan to send out with the next issue a cumulative index for volumes 1-3 and an annual index for volume 4. We have made wider margins this year to make binding easier.

Raptor Research Abstracts. We are gradually accumulating material for the first issue and contacting volunteers with their assignments. Those who have indicated an interest will hear from us by the time you receive this or shortly thereafter. We plan to have this first issue in the mail about the same time as the next issue of the *News*.

Raptor Research Report No. 1. Those who have ordered this paper should have received it before this issue of the *News*. This 111 page report, "Falconiform Reproduction: A Review. Part 1. The Pre-nestling Period" by Richard R. Olendorff is available for \$2.00 for members, \$2.50 for others.

Owl Call Tape Recordings Wanted. In the Department of Systematic Zoology and Zoogeography a special research is being made on the systematics, the distribution and the ecology (including audiophysiology and sound spectrography) of owls. Hence, a collection of tape recordings of owl calls from all over the world is being built up for comparative purposes. But though we have met with great sympathy and considerable help from various private persons and institutions in Europe and overseas, recordings of owl calls (primarily territorial song and contact calls) of a large number of species are still lacking. Of other species, with a large distribution, we are still in need of more

recordings than we already have because of geographical variation in voice, which is an object of our studies too.

We therefore would like to kindly request anyone interested in helping us to complete in as much as possible a varied collection of owl calls from all over the world.

The following list gives some geographical regions, with the corresponding owl genera of which (more) recordings are still needed. **South and Central America:** *Speotyto*, *Ciccaba*, *Strix*, *Glaucidium*, *Otus*, *Lophotrix*, *Bubo*, *Pulsatrix*, *Asio*, *Pseudoscops*, *Aegolius*, *Gymnoglaux*. **North America:** *Strix*, *Otus*, *Nyctea*, *Aegolius*, *Surnia*. **Africa:** *Phodilus*, *Otus*, *Jubula*, *Scotopelia*, *Asio*, *Glaucidium*, *Athene*, *Ciccaba*, *Bubo*. **Asia South:** *Glaucidium*, *Ninox*, *Athene*, *Bubo*, *Ketupa*, *Otus*, *Strix*, *Phodilus*. **Asia North:** *Glaucidium*, *Athene*, *Asio*, *Nyctea*, *Surnia*, *Otus*, *Strix*. **Australasian region:** *Otus*, *Ninox*.

The under-signed persons, who are more particularly doing this research will appreciate any help and cooperation and will, as a matter of fact, give full acknowledgement to all authors of recordings. Dr. Tjalling van Dijk and Dr. Wouter van der Weijden, Biological Laboratory, Free University, De Boelelaan 1087, Amsterdam Buitenveldert, Netherlands.

Raptor News from Finland. Although no data have been systematically collected, Dr. Tuevo Suominen writes that it seems likely that about 10 pairs of Peregrines have been breeding since 1966, frequently successfully. White-tailed Sea Eagles continue to decline in numbers. Accipiters and Ospreys seem to be doing well.

Two Important Publications on Captivity Breeding of Birds of Prey. The *International Zoo Yearbook* Volume 10 (1970) contains a special 37 page section on "Birds of Prey in Captivity." The volume is published by the Zoological Society of London (Regent's Park, London, NW 1) for 135s + 3/6 postage in UK and Eire or \$21 incl. postage Overseas.

Captive Breeding of Diurnal Birds of Prey Volume 1 Number 1 (1970) released by The British Falconers' Club and The Hawking Club of Great Britain has 22 pages of reports. Abstracts of the papers in these two publications will appear in the March-April issue of *Raptor Research News*. We hope to have an address and price for the second publication at that time also.

Bird Protection in USSR. The killing of birds of prey is now prohibited in Lithuania. In 1970 spring shooting was forbidden throughout the Russian Federation, and June was the traditional "month of silence" in the forests of the Ukraine. [From *Kingfisher* 5(5):6, May-June 1970]

Poachers Punished. Three well known German poachers of bird of prey nests, who have already helped to exterminate the lammergeier in Italy, have been sentenced in absentia to six months' imprisonment and a fine of 165,000 lire by a judge at Gaeta, Italy, for trying to rob a peregrine's nest there last year. A second group of poachers are shortly to be tried at Lauria. (Information: Italian National Appeal, WWF). [From *Kingfisher* 5(5):6-7, May-June 1970]

U. S. Strikes Blow for the Condor. The Interior Department has recommended the shelving of a project that would have inundated 1,300 acres of the Los Padres National Forest, last surviving haunt of the very rare California condor, of which only 40-50 remain. The Ventura County authorities, promoters of the scheme, however, apparently remain unconvinced. One supervisor has suggested shooting the rest of the condors to clear the way for the dam complex. (*Audubon Leader* February). [From *Kingfisher* 5(5):7, May-June 1970]

Birds Protected in Texas. Texas has recently passed a law to protect 11 more birds: buzzards or vultures, roadrunners, several hawks, jays, sapsuckers, woodpeckers, shrikes and great horned owls. (*Audubon Leader*, April). [From *Kingfisher* 5(5):12, May-June 1970]

For Our British Readers: Specimens Wanted. Dead peregrines, sparrowhawks, kestrels, barn owls, herons, great crested grebes and kingfishers, for chemical analysis, to the Nature Conservancy, Monks Woods Experimental Station, Abbots Ripton, Huntingdon. Postage refunded. [From *Kingfisher* 5(5):12, May-June 1970]

DDT Wiping Out Maine Eagles. A National Audubon Society study has revealed the bald eagle appears to be headed for oblivion in the State of Maine.

In a recent aerial survey U. S. Game Management Agent William Snow and Audubon biologists Frank Ligas and Eugene Knoder found only 11 young eagles in 30 nests. Three nests contained twins, five a single eaglet each and 22 none, although the adult birds were still attending the nests in a futile attempt at reproduction. "At this rate," said Ligas, "it would take 100 pairs of Maine eagles to produce 35 young. In Florida, the same number of pairs would fledge about 70 offspring, while Wisconsin birds would average 98. Alaska leads the nation in eagle production with an average of 104 young per 100 pairs."

"I know we didn't find every nest in Maine," said Ligas, "but I seriously doubt that there are more than 50 nests remaining in the state. We may be seeing at least two thirds of them. We'd appreciate learning the location of any additional nests anywhere in the state." According to Knoder, unhatched eggs from Maine contain about 23 parts per million of DDT, while eggs from Florida show about 11, Wisconsin 5, and Alaska 2. "You notice" said Knoder, "The highest concentrations of pesticides occur in states with the poorest production of eagles. We have comparable information from various states going back to 1960, and the pattern is becoming very clear."

"It is more than coincidence," observed Ligas, "that two of Maine's most polluted rivers, the Kennebec and Androscoggin, flow into Merrymeeting Bay, and the eagles in that area lay eggs every year but have not hatched a single one since 1963."

In addition to DDT and dieldrin, whose effects on wildlife are well established, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCB's), sold under the trade name of "Aroclor," were more recently recognized as a widespread hazard. North of Maine, in New Brunswick, a Canadian Wildlife Service biologist, Peter Pearce, reports lethal or near-lethal levels of mercury in the eggs of red-breasted mergansers, cormorants, great blue herons and common terns. [From *Conservation News* 35(16):7, August 15, 1970]

PCB's. The Monsanto Company, the only U. S. producer of a group of environmentally persistent chemicals—polychlorinated biphenyls—has announced it is restricting their production and tightening controls over their handling and disposal.

The PCB's have been in use for over 40 years and have been showing up recently with alarming regularity in tests

run on wildlife. In these tests PCB's were confused for some time with DDT which they resemble in chemical structure.

As a result of the public outcry over the wide use of this persistent and possibly toxic chemical, Monsanto says it has stopped all use of the PCB's in what it calls "open systems." They include adhesives, sealants, chlorinated rubber, specialty paints and other like items.

Henceforth, Monsanto says it will use PCB's principally in "closed-systems" such as electrical transformers and capacitors. In addition the company has built a high-temperature incinerator to break down old PCB materials into harmless materials. Monsanto says it will offer its customers the use of the incinerator if they have no other means of disposing of PCB's safely. [From *Conservation News* 35(18):6, September 15, 1970]

California Condor. The California condor is not what you'd call a pretty bird. Its orange-colored head and part of its neck are bald. It is, in fact, an oversized relative of the turkey vulture and like turkey vultures everywhere, stuffs itself with carrion.

Its tendency to gorge itself on carcasses of livestock and deer leads to problems. Often an adult bird—weighing twenty to twenty-five pounds with a wingspread of nine feet or more—is unable to get airborne until a strong friendly wind blows along to give it a push. But once in the air its appearance on the ground is forgotten. Soaring on the thermal air currents high over the Sierra Nevadas the California condor is not so much orangey and bald as it is breathtaking and memorable. Should you be fortunate enough to see one, the fact that the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service estimates there are not more than 60 to 85 California condors left may cause you to stare for a long time.

Part of the California condor's problem is its extreme sensitivity to noise. The slightest amount may drive the big bird permanently from its nest. The California condor's range once extended from Oregon's Columbia River south to northern Baja California, and eastward to southwest Utah and Arizona. But today it is found only in California's southern coast ranges from Monterey County south to the Transverse Mountains, and north in the Sierra Nevada foothills to Fresno County. Further complicating the California condor's plight is a lack of enthusiasm for reproducing itself. Normally, a condor pair raises only one young bird every other year. It develops slowly—flying finally

when it is about one year old—and remains with its parents for a total of three years.

Today about seventy-five percent of the bird's nesting sites are limited to the Sespe Condor Sanctuary which was officially designated a condor haunt in 1965. An annual condor survey was begun in October of the same year in coordination with a Condor Survey Committee representing the California Department of Fish and Game, the U. S. Forest Service, the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife, the University of California, the National Audubon Society, and other condor-concerned conservation groups.

This year's survey, conducted October 21 and 22, confirmed why North America's largest land bird is high on the Interior Department's Endangered Species List. Though poor weather was cited as a factor in the sightings of only 28 individual birds, the fact that the big bird continues to be in big trouble is all too clear. Previous survey counts recorded 38 sightings in 1965, 51 in 1966, 46 in 1967, 52 in 1968, and 53 in 1969.

In March of 1970, Interior Secretary Walter J. Hickel reaffirmed condor privacy by halting all further oil and gas leasing in the Sespe Sanctuary. California penalties for shooting condor include up to a year in jail, a \$1,000 fine, or both. [From *Conservation News* 35(21):11-12, November 15, 1970]

BLM Wants to Save Idaho Raptor Stronghold. The Interior Department's Bureau of Land Management wants to establish a 26,000-acre Snake River Birds of Prey Natural Area along a thirty-mile stretch of the Snake River in Idaho. The area is all publicly owned, and now shelters the largest concentration of golden eagles and prairie falcons in the United States.

In order to protect the area, BLM proposed to "withdraw" the land from the omnipresent threat of mining under the *carte blanche* provisions of the archaic 1872 mining laws. The move is backed by conservationists who have watched pesticide-plagued raptor populations—eagles, hawks, falcons, and owls—dwindle along with their habitat. Approximately 24 pair of golden eagles and 49 pair of prairie falcons nest in the proposed Natural Area which was featured in Walt Disney's "Ida the Off Beat Eagle" and Wild Kingdom's "The Valley of the Eagles."

Resource development now threatens the raptor stronghold and BLM studies indicate that if current plans are

not challenged, the prairie falcon's habitat will be eliminated along with a portion of the golden eagle's feeding areas. The prairie falcons feed on rodents and small birds within the river canyon and nearby plateau lands; the eagles look for blacktailed jackrabbits and cottontails north and south of the Snake. The resource potential at stake is not overwhelming. Though good grade sand and gravel deposits may lie along the river, their inaccessibility makes development a bad economic bet. Recovery of small gold deposits along Snake River bars is not thought worthwhile, and present records don't indicate substantial oil or gas deposits. According to the BLM, "Withdrawal of the land from location and entry under the mining laws, and from leasing under the mineral leasing laws, would have no serious effect on the local economy."

The withdrawal proposal is in fact backed by the Bureau of Reclamation, the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife, the Idaho Wildlife Federation, the Idaho Environmental Council, and Idaho Governor Cecil Andrus. But the endangered raptor populations of the Snake River canyon country aren't home free yet. BLM officials have reported "widespread interest" from many comments both for and against the proposed withdrawal. So the big birds' future will be tossed about during February 26, 1971, hearings in Boise, Idaho. Though statements should be filed by February 24 with the State Director, Bureau of Land Management, Room 334 Federal Building, 550 W. Fort Street, Boise, Idaho 83702, don't hesitate to mail your letter because you can't meet the deadline. It's your land, and the Utah State Director, as well as the BLM Director in Washington, wants to know what you think. Send Washington letters to Boyd L. Rasmussen, Director, Bureau of Land Management, Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C. 20240 [From *Conservation News* 36(6):13-14, February 25, 1971] [The Raptor Research Foundation sent a supporting letter.]

DDT Residues Reduced by Drug for Epilepsy. A medical researcher at the University of Miami, Dr. John Davies, says a drug commonly used in treating epilepsy can significantly reduce the residues of DDT and other organic pesticides in animals and humans.

Dr. Davies is presenting a paper on the subject at the American Chemical Society's Northeast regional meeting.

In an interview Sunday, he said the drug--phenytoin--could be used to reduce residues of DDT in cattle when the concentration exceeds U.S. Department of Agriculture

tolerances.

He said the discovery resulted from an attempt to find a link between mental retardation and high DDT residues in humans.

Dr. Davies said that in testing samples of blood and fat tissues from mental patients in the Miami area, his researchers found that DDT residues in some patients were drastically lower than those of the general population. [From *Vancouver Sun*, October 10, 1970; clipping provided by Steve Hennessey]

Great Eagle Owls. This species, *Bubo bubo*, is of the Old World, inhabiting the forests of Europe, North Africa and Southern Asia and occasionally the semi-deserts where rodents and smaller mammals provide staple fare wherever they are abundant. *Bubo bubo* will grow to about 27 inches.

While some European zoos have had success in breeding them, we are unable to learn of any births in North America. This zoo then becomes unique in this area as the colour photo on the back cover testifies.

Each year for the past three years, our female has laid eggs but none have hatched. On February 18th, 1970, she was observed seeking a suitable nesting site. Although a platform covered by a weather awning was offered, as in the past she rejected it and dug a 6-inch in depth hole in the ground at the rear of the cage where she settled. The keeper, Ralph Legge, then built a dyck around the nesting site to keep out the snow and placed a wooden box over her with one side open to protect her from the elements.

She also rejected all material left near her and instead pulled feathers from herself with which to line her nest.

Eggs were noted and, as the period of incubation is 34 to 36 days, March 29 was circled on the zoo's "stork" calendar. But to no avail! On April 14 the four eggs had to be removed and were found to be rotten.

But strangely enough, on June 21 she again was observed seeking a nesting site and she set to work digging a new hole. This is quite unusual for two nests to be dug in one year. Shortly, two eggs were observed.

On July 20, much to the keepers' surprise, the owl was seen feeding one chick, just a ball of white fluff with a black beak. Ten days later, a second chick was seen, being similarly treated, of course. The diet consisted of mice and chicks; the mother would feed pieces which she had torn up directly to the chicks.

While concern was felt that the earlier chick would get most of the food and the younger one would fail, our fears were proved groundless.

Also, it is noteworthy that the male, who usually kept watch up on his perch, would, on call, fly down to pick up food and take it to the mother owl.

Both chicks are now walking well. They are about one-third the size of the mother as at August 24th and are starting to show adult plumage. [From *Dinny's Digest* 1(5):14, September 1970; this item from the quarterly publication of the Calgary Zoological Society, St. George's Island, Calgary 21, Alberta, Canada, was provided by W. E. McKay, Director, Calgary Zoo.]