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## LETTERS

### RRF—THE FIRST QUARTER CENTURY

“The idea of some sort of organization of persons interested in raptors in a broad sense had been talked about for some time. Existing organizations which include concerned people were considered too general (ornithological societies) or too specialized (falconry associations). It was felt that an organization devoted exclusively to the birds of prey would be desirable. It was also felt that the number of concerned people was getting larger and that the changes going on in the status of many species of birds of prey and their environment justified an organizational approach.”<sup>1</sup> The “Raptor Research Foundation” first met on 2 September 1965 in Madison, Wisconsin, with 12 members from three countries attending.<sup>2</sup> On 9 February 1966 a “Certificate of Incorporation”<sup>3</sup> was issued in Turner County, South Dakota, and thus an organization called The Raptor Research Foundation, Inc. (RRF) was born. In 1991 the organization had been in existence for a quarter century, and so I am including that time period in this annual President’s Report.

According to Article 8 of that 1½ page document, the Certificate of Incorporation, “the number of directors constituting the initial board of directors shall be three; and the names . . . are as follows: Donald V. Hunter, Jr., Paul F. Springer, Byron E. Harrell.” We hereby acknowledge the foresight of these three gentlemen, the official founding fathers. We might say that the organization has digressed, for it had an early “corporate headquarters” (Fig. 1) but no longer has one. According to “Article 3” the stated purpose was listed as, “The purposes shall be to stimulate, coordinate, direct and conduct research in the biology and management of the birds of prey, and to promote a better public understanding and appreciation of the value of these birds.” While the stated purposes have changed somewhat from the stimulating, coordinating, directing, and conducting of research to the disseminating of information on birds of prey, the traditional role of research within the organization has persisted as evidenced by the healthy number of scientific papers given at each of the annual conferences and the research supported by grant monies given out by RRF.

Documents produced by the RRF started with the *Raptor Research News* (Volumes 1–5). In 1967 there was a “minimum contribution”<sup>4</sup> of \$1.00 for receiving *Raptor Research News* which was raised to \$2.00 to meet the cost of production of this mimeographed publication. As the *News* was issued quarterly, this meant that the cost to a member was 25¢ per issue. The production cost now has risen to \$5.50 per issue and the *Journal* is, of course, printed by Allen Press, Inc., one of the leading publishers of scientific documents in the world. The *Journal* has changed from *News* to a refereed scientific publication. It is still, however, edited by an unsalaried editor. *Raptor Research News* became *Raptor Research* (Volumes 6–20), and other publications have included or do include *The Journal of Raptor Research* (Volumes 21 to present), *Raptor Research Reports* (Numbers 1–8), *Raptor Research Abstracts* (Volumes 1[1]–1[2]), *Breeding Project Information Exchanges* (Numbers 1–128), *The Kettle* (even-numbered years since 1984), other information exchanges (17 in all), reports and supplements that have disseminated information in the printed word. All of these documents have been indexed by Olendorff.<sup>5</sup> With regard to the major publication of RRF, *The Journal*

<sup>1</sup> D.V. Hunter, Jr. and B.E. Harrell. 1967. A short history of the Raptor Research Foundation. *Raptor Research News* 1(1) 1–3.

<sup>2</sup> Raptor Research News. 1967. The First General Meeting, September 2, 1965, Madison, Wisconsin. *Raptor Research News* 1(1):3.

<sup>3</sup> Certificate of Incorporation. Filed 9 February 1966 in Turner County, SD.

<sup>4</sup> D.V. Hunter, Jr. and B.E. Harrell. 1967. Editor’s notes. *Raptor Research News* 1(4):1.

<sup>5</sup> R.R. Olendorff. 1989. The Raptor Research Foundation, Inc. bibliographic index (1967–1986). *Raptor Research Report No. 7*.



Figure 1. The early “corporate headquarters” of The Raptor Research Foundation, Inc. This Vermillion (South Dakota) office was an old military facility donated to the University of South Dakota and used by Byron Harrell to conduct early Foundation business.

of *Raptor Research*, Mike Collopy, RRF’s Vice President, was appointed Chairman of an *ad hoc* Committee on Publication Policy and under his excellent leadership a very hard-working committee sent out a lengthy survey form and, based on a very good response from you, the members, drew up some recommendations which were adopted by the Board of Directors and the Regular Members at the general business meeting in Tulsa, Oklahoma. You have already seen one change in the *Journal*, the publishing of the Annual Conference Abstracts so that those who cannot attend the Annual Conference can still keep in touch with what research is being reported at the conference. There are more changes planned.

The membership has grown from 12 members from three countries<sup>6</sup> to about one thousand, including subscription memberships (Fig. 2 and Table 1)<sup>7</sup> from about 40 countries, all sharing an interest in birds of prey. The number of directors on the board has grown from the original three to twelve who are presently from Canada, Chile, England, Mexico and the United States. When it was suggested at the 1982 Annual Conference in Salt Lake City that perhaps The Raptor Research Foundation should add a directorship to represent members living outside of Canada and the United States, there was some pessimism that it probably would not work because of the difficulty for Directors from other lands to travel to the United States or Canada; it was agreed to try it. When the expansion of the Board of Directors from six to twelve was discussed at the 1989 Conference in Veracruz, Mexico, there was also some pessimism about the proposed board of twelve being too large to be workable. At the very successful meeting in Tulsa, Oklahoma<sup>8</sup> (1991), there were board members from the five countries mentioned above, and eleven of the twelve board members making up the current Board of Directors were actively involved in conducting the business of the RRF. Until the

<sup>6</sup> Raptor Research News. 1967. The First General Meeting, September 2, 1965, Madison, Wisconsin. *Raptor Research News* 1(1):3.

<sup>7</sup> Data from RRF Treasurer, J. Fitzpatrick, as of 14 February 1992.

<sup>8</sup> J.K. Schmutz. 1991. 1991 Annual Meeting. *J. Raptor Research* 25(4):148-149.

Table 1. RRF membership for 1991 by country.

COUNTRY	NO. OF RRF MEMBERS	COUNTRY	NO. OF RRF MEMBERS
United States of America	748	Philippines	2
Canada	61	Republic of China	2
England	26	Sweden	2
Germany	19	Zimbabwe	2
Spain	15	Columbia	1
Mexico	13	Cuba	1
Australia	12	Czechoslovakia	1
Japan	8	Denmark	1
Italy	7	Ecuador	1
Norway	7	Hong Kong	1
New Zealand	6	Iceland	1
Scotland	6	Israel	1
South Africa	5	Namibia	1
Argentina	5	Netherlands	1
Brazil	5	Poland	1
France	5	Portugal	1
Chile	4	Tanzania	1
USSR (former)	4	United Arab Emirates	1
Switzerland	3	Yugoslavia	1
Finland	2	<b>Total</b>	986
Greece	2		

1988 conference in Minneapolis, Minnesota, only one Raptor Research conference had been held outside of the USA, and that was the 1981 conference in Montreal, Canada. But in 1989 that changed and the RRF met in Veracruz, Mexico. What has been the result of that meeting in Mexico? Look at your last issue of the *Journal* and you will note that of the 12 articles reported, there was 1 from Paraguay, 1 from Chile, and 3 from Mexico. Increased membership within the RRF from Latin American countries has grown considerably.

I just received a letter that had been sent to Gary Duke urging RRF to consider Costa Rica as a site for a conference, and Gary had penciled on a note saying he thought we should plan a meeting there! The Annual Conference Guidelines Committee under the chairmanship of Michael Kochert has been busy and the 1992 conference will be in Bellevue, Washington, on 10-15 November. There will be an all-day symposium on the Spotted Owl and another symposium on the Burrowing Owl. The 1993 meeting will be in Charlotte, North Carolina, so how about 1994? At the urging of, and the efforts of, At-Large Board Member Robert Kenward, RRF will sponsor a meeting in the U.K., along with The Hawk and Owl Trust, in the second week of September 1993.

This is a very brief look at a few of the activities of the RRF over the first quarter of a century. How about the future?

At this point I shall diverge from the traditional President's Report and ask the members to contemplate what they think the next 25 years will bring to the world of raptors! What will the raptor world be like in the year 2017? In order to stimulate your thinking I shall offer some thoughts of my own. I shall use some information about the past to "project" to the future.

Two major factors that I see directly affecting what that world will be like are a) the ever increasing human population and b) the increasing consumerism within that human population. Since 1966 the human population has grown from 3 336 000 000 to over 5 333 000 000.<sup>9</sup> Examining briefly the interrelationship between humans and raptors in a general way we can see (Fig. 3)<sup>10</sup> that raptors have suffered disproportionately with regard to endangerments.

<sup>9</sup> United Nations. 1990. Demographic yearbook. U.N. Department of International Economic and Social Affairs, Statistical Office, New York.

<sup>10</sup> Compiled from several sources but mainly G. Nilsson. 1986. The endangered species handbook. The Animal Welfare Institute, Washington, DC.

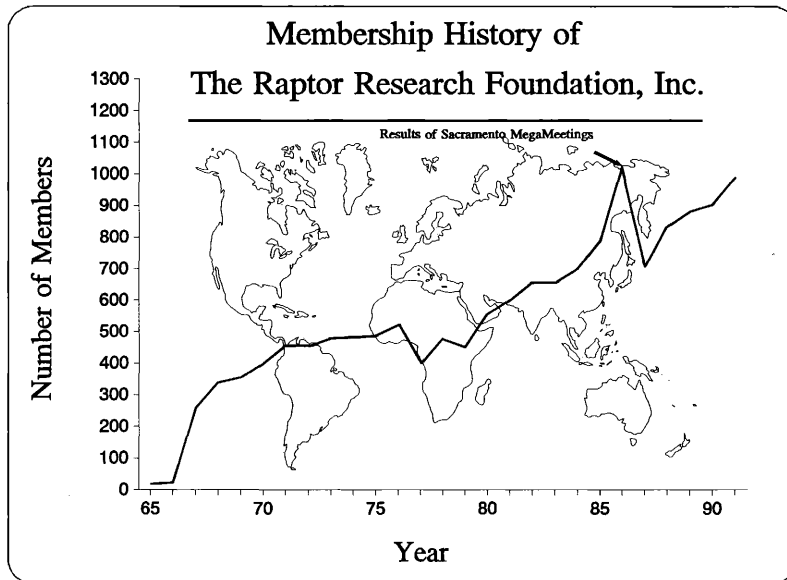


Figure 2. Membership history for The Raptor Research Foundation, Inc., for its first quarter century.

That humans have been either the direct or indirect causes of these conditions can be seen by looking at the documentation for the demise of the species that have become extinct or that are teetering on the edge. This depauperization of raptor populations by humans is not confined to raptors but goes to flora and fauna in general. It has been projected that “by the end of this century, species will be vanishing at the rate of 100 per day, due largely to the destruction of tropical rain forests.”<sup>11</sup> Put another way, “researchers estimate that as many as 25 percent of all species inhabiting earth in the mid-1980s will have disappeared by 2015 if current deforestation trends hold.”<sup>12</sup> As just mentioned, it is proceeding at a most rapid rate in the tropics. Consider the fact that “although closed tropical forests cover only 7% of the earth’s land surface, they contain at least half—and possibly up to 90%—of the world’s species. It is impossible to estimate the exact proportion of species that reside there, since so little is known about tropical organisms and ecosystems. Perhaps only 10% of all tropical species have been described to date. Current estimates place about half of all vascular plant and vertebrate species in tropical forests, and among invertebrates, the percentage may be considerably higher. Species diversity in temperate forests differs strikingly from that in tropical forests. Typically, 40–100 species of trees occur on a single hectare of tropical rainforest, compared to only 10–30 on a hectare of forest in the eastern United States. Some 700 species of trees can be found in 10 ha in Borneo, the same as in all of North America. One tree in Peru may contain as many species of ants as occur in all of the British Isles.”<sup>13</sup> Extinctions have gone on previous to man, of course, but “humanities’ impact on species extinction rates goes back thousands of years, but over the last century—especially over the last several decades—the human factor has increased dramatically. For instance, among all birds and mammals, we would expect an extinction only once every 100 to 1000 years in the absence of humans. However, the actual extinction rate for birds and mammals between 1850 and 1950 was one per year—as much as 1000 times greater than the background rate. Predicting future extinction rates in response to the massive habitat disruption that accompanies deforestation is difficult at best. However, a useful rule of thumb is that if a habitat is reduced by 90% in area, roughly half of its species will be lost.”<sup>14</sup>

<sup>11</sup> L. Kaufman. 1987. Why the ark is sinking? Pages 1–41 in L. Kaufman and K. Mallory [EDS.], *The last extinction* MIT Press, Cambridge, MA.

<sup>12</sup> K.R. Miller, W.V. Reid and C.V. Barber. 1991. Deforestation and species loss: responding to the crisis. Pages 78–111 in J.T. Mathews [ED.], *Preserving the global environment: the challenge of shared leadership*. The American Assembly, Columbia University. World Resources Institute, Washington, DC.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

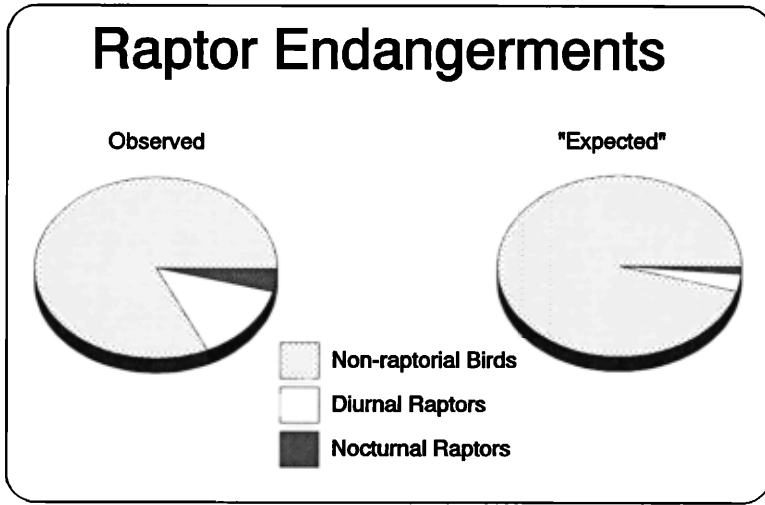


Figure 3. The numbers of raptor species that are currently endangered as compared to birds in general. This shows that raptors are especially vulnerable to endangerment resulting from their need for large home ranges and especially susceptible to the results of biomagnification.

“Overconsumption by the world’s fortunate is an environmental problem unmatched in severity by anything but perhaps population growth . . . measured in constant dollars, the world’s people have consumed as many goods and services since 1950 as all previous generations put together.”<sup>15</sup> That the “haves” contribute disproportionately to the environmental degradation caused by overconsumption, as compared to the “have nots” is attested to by the statement that “about 1 billion people do most of their traveling, aside from the occasional donkey or bus ride, on foot, many of them never going more than 100 kilometers from their birthplaces.”<sup>16</sup> Hopefully none of the “haves” would object to the sharing with the “have nots” those basic needs for survival beyond that of subsistence level existence but on the upper end of the scale for the “haves” it should be noted that “beyond the environmental costs of acquisitiveness, some perplexing findings of social scientists throw doubt on the wisdom of high consumption as a personal and national goal: rich societies have had little success in turning consumption into fulfillment. Regular surveys by the National Opinion Research Center of the University of Chicago reveal, for example, that no more Americans report they are ‘very happy’ now than in 1957. The share has fluctuated around one-third since then, despite a doubling of personal consumption expenditures per capita.”<sup>17</sup>

What lies ahead? I recall vividly an evening that I spent talking with William C. Dilger. Bill was into wine making and so we were sampling some of the wines that he had made. Our conversation turned to where the world was heading, with regard to the human population, and he suggested an analogy. In making wines, he related to me, you determine whether you get a dry wine or sweet wine by the amount of sugar that is in the mixture. With an excess of sugar the yeast organisms multiply rapidly and when the population reaches a point where the metabolic wastes of the very large numbers start killing off the organisms, they will all eventually be killed from the metabolic waste and the remaining excess remains and the resulting wine is a sweet one. If there is insufficient sugar in the mixture to allow the population to reach a point where metabolic wastes kill off the population those organisms thrive to the point of all of the sugar being utilized, the organisms then die of “starvation” and the resulting wine is a dry one. Which do you prefer? A sweet wine or a dry one?—**Richard J. Clark, President.**

<sup>15</sup> A. During. 1991. Asking how much is enough. Pages 153–169 in *State of the world 1991—a Worldwatch Institute Report on progress toward a sustainable society*. W.W. Norton and Co., New York.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*