

## NEWS AND REVIEWS

**Trends in European Goshawks (*Accipiter gentilis*): an overview** by R.G. Bijlsma. 1991. *Bird Census News*. Vol. 4:3–47.

The goshawk (*Accipiter gentilis*) is a large, forest-nesting raptor found across the northern hemisphere. This species occurs year-round in a wide variety of habitats in Europe, including forests, woodlands, agricultural and rural-residential areas. These habitats are subject to a diversity of land uses and environmental fluctuations. As the author indicates, the study of goshawk population trends can provide information on local environmental conditions, such as loss of habitat, environmental pollution, human persecution, or declines in other species (goshawk prey). The objective of this article was to indicate trends of breeding goshawks in Europe.

Goshawk population data from 25 countries was examined (Germany is divided into 8 areas, for a total of 32 areas). A discussion and supporting figures are presented for each country, including study area size, goshawk density estimates and environmental factors influencing trends when available from each literature source. Current goshawk population numbers for each country is estimated. The author's summary of population trends by country is displayed in tabular format, for the time period between 1950–90.

This article is an impressive review of literature on the European Goshawk covering population information and environmental threats. Overall, the conclusions of this article appear well supported by references spanning 40 yr. The reader must have faith in the author's interpretive abilities as not all the materials necessary for critical analysis are provided.

The sources referenced are published articles covering a range of study areas, habitats, methodologies and study objectives. Thus, a comparison of nesting densities among studies is not possible. The author's approach is to examine trends in individual populations, and to bring together all available information to make conclusions regarding trends over larger areas. The author admits that this task has its challenges. For example, information on changes in habitat or land use over the length of the study was not always provided by each source. In addition, systematic survey and experienced observers may not have been used in all cases.

The reader might find it difficult to assess the reliability of each source from this article. The original study objectives and methodologies are not presented in all cases, and these original references are not likely to be available to most non-European readers. The author periodically lends his professional judgment as to whether the cited findings were realistic with respect to population trends.

The discussion for each country is supported by a graph of goshawk population trends. The graphs are not always well labeled with country names. Units of measure are used inconsistently in graphs and text to describe goshawk densities and study area size, which makes reading challenging. I would have appreciated the inclusion of a map of the continent depicting countries and study locations.

The author summarizes environmental factors which were cited as affecting European Goshawk populations for three periods over the total 40-year span. Factors mentioned include pesticides, human persecution of goshawks, and changes in habitat and prey availability.

Data available from the period prior to 1955 suggest a slight to strong increase in goshawk populations, possibly a response to prohibition of persecution. In northern Europe, goshawk trends during this period appear to have been to a large extent a response to tetraonid population cycles. The use of persistent pesticides is cited as the cause of dramatic declines in goshawk populations throughout Europe, during the period between 1956–70. This trend was also seen in other bird-eating raptors. The impacts of hunting or persecution on goshawks are difficult to assess but are believed by some to have caused local declines and extinctions during this period. In most European countries the use of persistent pesticides was discontinued by the early 1970s, and goshawk population trends throughout the continent during this period are strongly positive. Densities in western Europe often appeared to peak in the 1980s followed by a decline and stabilization at a lower population level.

Changes in habitat are cited in relatively few sources as causing goshawk declines and cited in fewer cases as resulting in increases. A reduction in forested habitats was due to various causes, which included acid rain, clear-cutting, the use of "modern forestry" practices, forest fires, and conversion of forests to non-native plantations. The maturing of forests and habitat diversification was cited at the potential cause of recent goshawk population increases for one study.

Fluctuation in prey populations was cited as a factor in goshawk population trends. In the boreal forest of northern Europe, cyclic trends in food availability were considered to cause similarly cyclic trends in goshawk numbers. In one reference, adverse forestry practices were believed to be the cause of prey population declines, especially forest tetraonids,

which in turn were believed to cause declines in goshawk numbers. Agricultural and other rural land practices were also suspected causes of depleted prey resources.

The conclusion of the review is that without further large changes in habitat, food supply, or persecution, European Goshawk populations should remain stable in the future. A summary of research over the past 10 yr suggests that 19% of the countries or areas under consideration have goshawk populations that exhibit at least a probable decreasing trend. Forty percent of the areas have goshawk populations that are suspected to be stable or increasing. The remaining areas have goshawk populations which appear to exhibit variable trends (16%) or have populations for which no reliable information exists (25%). The primary contribution of this article may be to focus attention on European Goshawk populations that appear to be declining or for which little is known.—**Karen K. Austin**

**The International Osprey Foundation (TIOF)** is seeking applications for its fourth grant to support research activities of a graduate student primarily focusing on ospreys. Work with other raptor species may be considered, however. The award recipient will be expected to provide a report on his or her research and use of the funds within a year of receiving the grant.

Applicants should submit a proposal outlining their

project and the intended use of the funds by December 31, 1992. The grant will be awarded on March 31, 1993. Please send a project description of no more than two pages. Also provide an itemized estimate of expenses and the name, address and phone number of the graduate supervisor. Send applications to: **TIOF, Endowment Fund, P.O. Box 250, Sanibel, FL 33957-0250.**

#### MANUSCRIPT REFEREES

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## NEWS

## 1991 STEPHEN R. TULLY MEMORIAL GRANT RECIPIENTS

**Keith J. Merkel**

Keith J. Merkel is a native and resident of Marshfield, Wisconsin, where he is employed as a Quality Control Supervisor in a manufactured housing production facility. He is an active outdoorsman who enjoys backpacking, canoeing/kayaking, travel, and photography. He also is an avid amateur ornithologist and bander, with a special interest in raptors. Currently he is researching the diet, breeding habitat, nesting success, range, and distribution of several raptor species in central and northern Wisconsin. As part of these long term studies he has installed over 100 nest boxes and platforms for American Kestrel and Eastern Screech, Northern Saw-whet, Barred, and Great Gray owls. Annual visits to these nesting structures yield data on clutch size, brood size, prey species, fledgling success rates, fledgling dispersal, and nest site fidelity. In 1988 Wisconsin's first documented nesting Great Gray Owls successfully fledged four young from one of these platforms, establishing that this species does, at least occasionally, breed in the state.

**Neal D. Niemuth**

Neal D. Niemuth was born and raised in Stetsonville, Wisconsin, where his early raptor experience involved erecting kestrel nest boxes and climbing for local banders. After earning a Bachelor of Science degree in English from the University of Wisconsin at Stevens Point, Neal taught high school for five years before beginning work on a Master of Science degree in zoology at the University of Wyoming. For his thesis Neal is testing the role of nest predation in Sage Grouse lek formation, as well as the effect of nest density on predation of Sage Grouse nests.

In addition to his Sage Grouse study, Neal continues to work with raptors. He is currently studying natal dispersal of Osprey, philopatry and productivity of kestrels, and population ecology of Saw-whet Owls in northern Wisconsin.