

BOOK REVIEW

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A Hawk in the Sun: Adventures Studying Hawks.

By Leon R. Powers. 2003. Dimi Press, Salem, OR U.S.A. xvi + 190 pp., 6 color photos, numerous line drawings. ISBN 0-931625-40-8. Paper, \$14.95.—This book relates Leon Powers' experiences studying Ferruginous Hawks (*Buteo regalis*) in northwestern Utah and adjacent Idaho from 1972 to 1974. The Ph.D. project was supervised by Chuck Trost at Idaho State University. Rich Howard began a companion study of the hawks' basic ecology and is prominently mentioned as a friend and research collaborator, as is Tim Craig, a volunteer assistant.

The objective was to document thermoregulatory adaptations that enable Ferruginous Hawks to survive in this hot desert environment. The approach included observations from a blind and the use of time-lapse cameras and temperature-sensitive transmitters, which was cutting-edge technology, as the author calls it, for that time.

Even though I have studied Ferruginous Hawks for about 20 yr, I found many new things in this book. I kept coming back to the pages to find out how the coordinated nest defense against a coyote would end, how adults and young coped with 108°F (42.4°C) heat at the northern fringe of the Great Basin, whether Ferruginous Hawks hunt during moonlit nights, and so on. I learned that males share in incubation, but otherwise do not dawdle at the nest; that females discard leftover prey and, surprisingly, pellets some 100–300 m from the nest; that the hawks cache food, and more. There is a heartbreaking description of a female losing the battle over her nestlings against a coyote while her mate was away, presumably hunting.

The book is enlivened by handsome drawings and photos. There are no tables, very few numbers, and few references. The ideas presented and the research described did not follow a hypothesis-testing approach, but were more akin to a naturalist's inquiry. This approach is deliberate.

A nagging fear permeates the presentation: the concern that observations from a blind >100 m away may cause nest failure. Powers repeatedly refers to Ferruginous Hawks as sensitive to disturbance. However, knowing that the hawks' tolerated his entering and staying in an observation blind—only some of the time accompanied by a second person walking away—suggests otherwise. What the hawks apparently found less tolerable was the time-lapse cameras about 8 m away. The author relates one event where the male made three prey deliveries after the camera was installed, but the female refused to return to feed her young by nightfall. One chick perished, and the death of the others was narrowly avoided through good judgment on the author's part. I suspect, individual differences aside, that many other North American raptors would be equally prone to desertion under the circumstances.

The writing style is direct and "from the heart." Straightforward reporting is interspersed with vivid prose stimulating the reader's imagination. However, parts of the book suggest a cursory attention to the literature. For example, contrary to the author's assertion, courtship behavior has been described, albeit briefly, and large-area population estimates with random sampling have been carried out in Alberta and North Dakota (Bechard and Schmutz 1995, Ferruginous Hawk (*Buteo regalis*). In A. Poole and F. Gill [Eds.], *The birds of North America*, No. 172. The Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia, PA, and American Ornithologists' Union, Washington, DC U.S.A.). Ferruginous Hawk band recoveries are not universally of the one-in-one hundred ratio, but 3.7% in one study (Schmutz and Fyfe 1987, *Condor* 89:169–174), and even higher in others.

Notwithstanding these minor blemishes, the book is enjoyable and informative. Leon Powers states that "If you are one whose heart can still be stirred by the presence of wild things or by the sight of remote, wild landscapes, then perhaps I have written this story for you."—**Josef K. Schmutz, Centre for Studies in Agriculture, Law and the Environment, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, SK S7N 5A8 Canada.**