

Red-shouldered Hawk Nesting Survey of
Winona and Wabasha Counties, Minnesota.
by Mark D. Nelson

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to present the results of my field research of the nesting of Red-shouldered hawks in Winona and Wabasha counties, Minnesota. There have not been any recorded Red-shouldered hawk nests in these two counties for many years (David H. Johnson pers. comm.). Because of the sightings by myself and others during the spring and summer of 1981 I felt that Red-shouldered hawks probably nest in these counties. David H. Johnson, who accompanied me during some 1981 sightings, persuaded me to research the Red-shouldered hawk in southeastern Minnesota. I was further directed in my research approach by the Minnesota DNR Nongame Wildlife Office who funded this project.

METHODS

The field research consisted of driving my automobile in potential habitat areas to observe any Red-shouldered hawk activity. I made periodic stops to look and listen for Red-shouldered hawks. I made further observations in locations of previous sightings and potential habitats by hiking into lowland wooded areas along the Mississippi and Whitewater River bottom lands.

During late May, 1982, David H. Johnson and I used a prerecorded cassette tape of a calling Red-shouldered hawk to locate territories and nest sites. The one nest we found was located by soliciting visual and auditory responses from previously undetected birds, using the taped calls.

Red-shouldered hawk sightings from other observers were obtained through telephone conversations with Bob Bilder (Winona, Minnesota) and through personal visits with Bill Drazkowski (Winona, Minnesota) and Dave Palmquist (manager White State Park, Minnesota). David H. Johnson (DNR Forestry) was my major source of general habitat data and project recommendations.

Following is a table of all compiled Red-shouldered hawk observations from Spring, 1982.

1. Spring 1982: "Some" R.S. hawks seen by Bob Bilder (Winona, Minnesota) on Prairie Island, Winona, Minnesota s 1/2 Sec. 1, T107N, R8W Winona County, Minnesota (pers. comm. - spring 1982).
2. May, 1982: two (one pair) R.S. hawks seen and heard acting in courtship behavior by Bill Drazkowski (Winona, Minnesota), just north east of Winona, Minnesota along the Mississippi River bottoms in Wisconsin Sec. 15 T107N, R7W, (pers. comm. - spring 1982).
3. February 13, 1982: One R.S. hawk seen by Dave Palmquist (manager Whitewater State Park) NW 1/4 SE 1/4 Sec. 2 T108N, R10W Winona County, Minnesota (pers. comm. - April 15, 1982).

4. March 27, 1982: Four R.S. hawks seen by myself SW 1/4 SE 1/4 Sec. 15 T108N, R10W, Winona County, Minnesota.
5. April 9, 1982: Two R.S. hawks heard but not seen by myself SE 1/4 Sec. 35 T109N, R10W Winona County, Minnesota.
6. May 7, 1982: Two R.S. hawks seen and heard calling by myself SW 1/4 SE 1/4 SW 1/4 Sec. 36 T109N, R10W Wabasha County, Minnesota.
7. May 8, 1982: One R.S. hawk seen by myself SW 1/4 Sec. 27 T108N, R8W Winona County, Minnesota.
8. May 28, 1982: One R.S. hawk seen and heard (responded to taped call) by myself and David H. Johnson (DNR Forestry) NW 1/4 NW 1/4 NW 1/4 NW 1/4 Sec. 31 T109N, R9W Wabasha County, Minnesota.
9. May 28, 1982: One R.S. hawk heard but not seen by myself and David H. Johnson (DNR Forestry) SE 1/4 SE 1/4 SE 1/4 NE 1/4 Sec. 2 T108N, R10W, Winona County, Minnesota.
10. May 28, 1982: One R.S. hawk seen by myself and David H. Johnson (DNR Forestry) NW 1/4 SE 1/4 NW 1/4 Sec. 1 T108N, R10W Wabasha County, Minnesota.
11. May 30, 1982: One R.S. hawk seen (responded to taped call) by myself and David H. Johnson (DNR Forestry) NW 1/4 NW 1/4 NW 1/4 NW 1/4 Sec. 31 T109N, R9W Wabasha County, Minnesota.
12. May 30, 1982: Four young (locals) R.S. hawks seen in the nest and one adult R.S. hawk seen flying once past the nest by myself and David H. Johnson (DNR Forestry) SW 1/4 SW 1/4 NE 1/4 NW 1/4 Sec. 31 T109N, R9W Wabasha County, Minnesota. See attached maps and nest record.
13. May 30, 1982: One R.S. hawk seen by myself and David H. Johnson (DNR Forestry) SW 1/4 SW 1/4 SW 1/4 NW 1/4 Sec. 11 T108N, R10W Winona County, Minnesota.

DISCUSSION

I was successful in locating one Red-shouldered hawk nest which contained four locals. The nest was located at Dorer Pool number three within the Whitewater Wildlife Management Area. Complete details are present in the attached maps and nest record form.

I am not confident in delineating specific territories of other birds using the data I have. Except for the territory of the nest site I did not knowingly observe individual birds more than once in any one area. From the number of individual birds seen during the nesting season (late May) I would estimate that three territories including the known nest were present along the Whitewater River in the area between Dorer Pool #3 and junction 30 (Beaver, Minnesota) along state highway #74. There may have been more territories in this area but I did not have a sufficient number of observations to determine this.

There may also be territories along the Mississippi River between Weaver and Winona, Minnesota. Bill Drazkowski's (Winona, Minnesota) sightings across the river from Winona (in Wisconsin) indicate that the Mississippi River bottomlands habitat contains Red-shouldered hawk territories.

I recommend more field research be done on Red-shouldered hawks in southeastern Minnesota. The use of prerecorded cassette tapes was valuable to me and I recommend their use, with caution, to locate territories and nests.

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