

## STATUS OF THE RED-SHOULDERED HAWK IN ALABAMA

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During the period of June 7 to September 15, 1976, we undertook a study of the distribution and relative abundance of hawks in west-central Alabama. Part of the impetus for conducting this study was concern over the Red-shouldered Hawk expressed by its appearance under "special concern" status in Endangered and Threatened Plants and Animals of Alabama (1976).

During this project we used several search methods which might be characterized as follows:

1. Hiking through swamps and river flood plains with or without use of a hawk call.
2. Visitation to lookout towers.
3. Periodic stops while driving. These were of two types:
  - a. stopping every  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile
  - b. stopping at selected spots

Initial work was done without the benefit of a hawk call which was purchased later in the project. The call was an Olt G-7 which is easily obtainable and mimics the Red-shouldered Hawk quite well. Approximately one and one-half hours were spent on each visitation to a lookout tower. Care was taken to visit coastal plain, Appalachian plateau, and ridge and valley physiographic provinces.

Using the method of stopping every  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile and using a call, we found 33 Red-shouldered Hawks in 39 stops (coastal plain), and 40 Red-shouldered Hawks in 123 stops (Appalachian plateau). Hiking without use of a call produced 16 Red-shouldered Hawks in 15 miles of river bottom forest and no hawks in 3 miles of Appalachian plateau. Retracing 4 miles of the bottomland with a call produced 11 Red-shouldered Hawks in 4 miles. Observation at lookout towers produced 13 Red-shouldered Hawks at 11 coastal plain sites, 2 at 2 ridge and valley towers and 3 at 2 Appalachian plateau towers. Not included in the above was one visit to a plateau tower with the hawk call which produced 4 Red-shouldered Hawks.

Other miscellaneous observations pushed the total count of Red-shouldered Hawks to 150. Using the hawk call, one can easily locate 15-20 Red-shouldered Hawks in a morning. Why was this bird placed in "special concern" status by the Symposium on Endangered and Threatened Plants and Animals of Alabama? We believe that there are two problems involved. First, the Red-shouldered Hawk is a forest bird and most abundant in swamps. Thus, they are not obvious to most people. The second problem is that there is a lack of quantitative data on hawks in Alabama. We believe that use of a hawk call is extremely helpful in locating hawks. Red-tailed Hawks and Broad-winged Hawks responded to the call during our study period. The observation period produced 14 Broad-winged Hawks, 9 Red-tailed Hawks and 3 Cooper's Hawks. These three species were not numerous enough to include quantitatively. We believe that the Red-shouldered Hawk is doing well in Alabama and should be removed from special concern.

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