

## SEATTLE COOPER'S HAWK PROJECT: 2018 ANNUAL REPORT

Once again, a crazy-busy Cooper's Hawk season has ended, and 4:30 AM alarms have been replaced by leisurely mornings with coffee and the newspaper. In the past eight months I made over 700 site visits, with over 400 more from our growing team of volunteer observers.

The 2018 season totals: 46 nest-building pairs, 41 incubating pairs, 40 nests with hatching, 40 pairs with fledged young, and 145 fledglings. Nesting density continues to increase: one nest per 1.8 mi<sup>2</sup> this year, compared to one nest per 3.0 mi<sup>2</sup> in 2013. The most popular nest tree species were again Big Leaf Maple (12), Douglas Fir (10), White Pine (8), Alder (5), Sycamore (3), and Madrona, Hemlock, Norway Spruce, Deodar Cedar, Atlas Cedar, and Oak (1 each).

Despite untold frustrating hours, collaborator Martin Muller and I color-banded only 17 juveniles and 2 adults, compared to 20 juveniles and 5 adults in 2017 by Martin alone. In better news, we have color-banded 228 birds since 2012, with 198 subsequent band sightings on 89 individual birds, an excellent return rate of almost 40%.

In November 2017, I attended the annual international Raptor Research meeting in Salt Lake City, a wonderful opportunity to network with other researchers, see the great "elders" in the field, and hear presentations on birds of prey. In July 2018, I spent an invigorating half-day trapping and banding with two great raptor biologists, Brian Millsap and Jeep Pagel, who study the dense Cooper's Hawk population in Albuquerque, NM. This year they are monitoring 89 nests in 26 mi<sup>2</sup> (3.4 nests/mi<sup>2</sup>), a density many times that of Seattle. Of course, given our vast study site, we may be missing a few nests... I also got another lesson in attaching radio transmitters to Cooper's Hawks, something we hope to do in Seattle someday.

Over the year I gave nine talks on the Cooper's Hawk Project: six Audubon chapters, the citizen-science symposium at Puget Sound Birdfest in Edmonds, a class at the University of Washington, and the annual conference of the Washington Falconers Association in Moses Lake. Martin and I also hosted two UW classes on biology field methods at Cooper's Hawk nest sites, giving students an opportunity to practice observation and measurement skills on nest trees and territories. I'll also give talks in 2019 at the Seattle Audubon Master Birder class (April 29) and Spokane Audubon (May 9).

I'm excited about the recent publication of two books on raptors: *Urban Raptors*, edited by Clint Boal & Cheryl Dykstra (Island Press), where I am honored to be a coauthor on the chapter on Peregrine Falcons, and *The Cooper's Hawk*, by Bob Rosenfield (Hancock House).

Breaking news: Martin Muller, Patti Loesche, and I took the big step of forming a nonprofit corporation, Urban Raptor Conservancy. We have just received official 501(c)(3) status! With PAWS Wildlife Center, our first research goal is to document the occurrence of anticoagulant rodenticides (blood-thinning rat poisons) in urban raptors, at a cost of about \$20,000. PAWS staff is donating their time and are already collecting samples. We are grant writing and fundraising to pay for the cost of toxicology testing. Here's a recent TV spot on our study:

<https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/rat-poison-is-suspected-in-deaths-of-washington-raptors/858561694>

Thanks to our superb volunteers for another exciting and productive season, and thank you all for your interest, hospitality, and reports on sightings. Spring nesting surveys start in March 2019. See you then!

Ed Deal | Seattle Cooper's Hawk Project | Urban Raptor Conservancy | 9251 39<sup>th</sup> Ave S., Seattle 98118  
falcophile@comcast.net | 206-713-1546

**Photo credits.** Top left: Two children meet their first Cooper's Hawk, Wedgwood (Jesse Drogin). Top right: Star Davis monitoring nest in West Seattle (Jeremiah Holt). Bottom left: second-year female, West Seattle (Jeremiah Holt). Bottom right: Patti Loesche and adult male, UW (Martin Muller).



## URBAN RAPTOR CONSERVANCY



We wish to acknowledge the many hours of observation by Star Davis and Jeremiah Holt on their West Seattle neighborhood nest. The adult male died from a window hit when the three chicks were 3 weeks old. A review of the literature found two reports of a female abandoning her young when the provisioning male died. We were happy to find that the female (bottom left) took over hunting duties and successfully fledged all three chicks. We will be exploring whether to submit this observation for publication.