

## SEATTLE COOPER'S HAWK PROJECT: 2019 ANNUAL REPORT

The 2019 Cooper's Hawk season got off to a rough start.

The "Queen of Seattle", who successfully nested at the same site for nine consecutive years, started courting and nest building at the same nest for the tenth year. Sadly, she died in late March from a collision with a car. In her nine known breeding seasons, she produced 38 fledglings. We mourn her loss not only personally but also professionally: a tenth consecutive successful season would have been a world record for a Cooper's Hawk.

In late April we lost our long-term breeding male at the UW campus (purple 1 over 3) to a window collision. He was born on the UW campus in 2014 and was nesting only 400 meters from his natal nest. Compounding this loss, he died while his mate was incubating eggs. Without a male to provision her, she abandoned her eggs. We hope she will locate a new male to occupy the UW territory.

Despite these early losses, it was yet another record year for the expanding Seattle Cooper's Hawk population: 56 nest-building pairs, 46 successful nests, and 174 fledglings. Nesting density is now one nest every 1.5 square miles. Contrast this to 2012, my first year with the study: 26 nest-building pairs; 22 successful nests; 68 fledglings and a density of one nest for every 3.2 square miles. We also had an excellent banding season: Martin Muller and I, with banders-in-training Jake Burroughs and Patti Loesche, color-ID banded 47 birds (46 juveniles, 1 adult). In our project's eight years, we have now color-ID banded 279 birds, with 227 subsequent sightings on 99 different birds, a return rate of 35%.

The importance of color ID banding was reinforced with two early dispersal sightings.

- A banded female (orange 7-M) found her way 1100 m into a neighboring nesting territory at only 3.5 weeks post fledging (see photo). We wonder whether she came over to play with the neighboring kids or to mooch food off the adults.
- A banded juvenile male (purple 8-3) dispersed 1060 m to a neighboring nest territory, where he was photographed on 7/29 in an altercation with the resident 1-year-old male (purple 2-4). Amazingly, these two probably shared the same father (purple 3 over 7) from their nest in Laurelhurst. Martin banded three of purple 2-4's (the presumed father's) offspring: the first time we have banded three generations of a family. Purple 8-3 continues his wanderings, most recently photographed on 8/14 by Dennis Paulson in his yard in North Seattle.

Once again, the 56 pairs of nest-building Coops picked a diverse list of nest tree species. Three new species were added to the long list: Ponderosa Pine, Sequoia, and Eucalyptus. Perennial favorites were well represented: Big Leaf Maple (28), Douglas Fir (11), White Pine (7), Alder (50). We found a total of 73 nests (two pairs built three nests, and 13 pairs built two nests). Most nest sites are in City of Seattle parks and greenbelts (37), followed by private property (14), cemeteries (3), and UW (2).

Of course the Coops administered their annual lesson in humility. We visited a 2018 nest site seven times this March; "no Coops nesting here." On a return visit in July, we were greeted by four food-begging fledglings.

In June, I spoke on the Seattle Cooper's Hawk Project at the International Urban Wildlife Conference in Portland, Oregon. Upcoming talks are scheduled in November at Black Hills Audubon (Olympia) and in January at Whidbey Audubon (<https://urbanraptorconservancy.org/upcoming-events/>).

I am looking forward to attending the annual Raptor Research Foundation meetings in November, in Fort Collins, Colorado: a heady three days of talks and a chance to meet with other Cooper's Hawk researchers.

We at URC give thanks for all the love and support we received from the bird community over the past year!

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Seattle Cooper's Hawk Project

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Top, L-R: Capitol Hill juvenile male who dispersed 11 miles from home 6 weeks post-fledging (Terry Olmsted); fight between two banded males who turned out to both be from the same nest in consecutive years (Joyce Chase); juvenile female orange 7-M, 1100 meters from home only 3.5 weeks post-fledging (Martin Muller). Bottom, L-R: rare nest in Wisconsin with 7(!) young (Bob Rosenfield); 1-year-old female who landed 10 feet away in pursuit of food she dropped (Jeremiah Holt).