

THE STOOP

The Official Newsletter of the Colorado Hawking Club



JULY 2005

Caretakers of Wild Raptors – Comanche National Grasslands Survey

I would like to start out by giving a warm-hearted thanks to Dave and Brenda Daniher with Cecelia Barrocas, Josh and Kim Rose, Alan and Deanna Curtis, Darren and Beth Mayers, and my sponsor Pete Rodas. Thanks are also in order for Gordon Grenfell for putting together the Caretakers of Wild Raptors Program and making the initial contact with the USFS.

The USFS expressed great gratitude for our efforts. Darren stated that he would not have a fraction of the data collected without our help. Even though collecting and analyzing this type of data is part of the charter of the USFS, Darren spends a lot of his time performing “other duties as assigned”. This summer meant spraying tamarisk in addition to other fun-in-the-sun labor activities (imagine 105° in La Junta), rather than counting birds. He truly appreciates our help, and wished that he could give us something for our efforts.

I told the USFS that our primary objective was to insure that we maintain a healthy population of raptors in the Comanche National grasslands. If we can help with the population of Swainson’s, Ferruginous, or Loggerhead Shrike, then our mission is accomplished.

We are all closer having experienced this survey together. The camaraderie and teamwork was among the best that I have experienced. This is not only true among the CHC volunteers, but also true with our relationship with the USFS and Darren Mayers.

The Daniher’s twice compiled data that I would have thought only accessible through some type of psychic medium. We mortals turned in

a lot of good data based on our observations. Myself, I found it difficult to cover so much territory while providing relevant data in the time allotted. The grasslands are huge and take a lot of time and effort to cover. I did learn a lot about GPS, 7.5 minute maps, North American Datum (NAD) from 1927, and had a truck-scratching adventure in Minnie Canyon.

When discussing the time allotted with Josh and Kim, we determined that it may be better to have more time. Especially critical we think to have more time at the beginning and the end of the day. To facilitate this, we would have to have an overnight plan; one where we had a “night before” meeting with CHC and USFS to plan the events of the following day.

We are thinking of asking volunteers to spend the night in La Junta prior to the survey effort. Camping and low-cost hotels are options that interested volunteers will need to discuss. I want to make sure that we are all in agreement on the best course of action.

Overall, I found it to be a great success. This was our first effort, meaning that our subsequent efforts should gain efficiency as we progress. We brought together CHC members and the USFS for a synergistic effort that resulted in a positive outcome for the birds that we all care for.

Please answer the call when we ask for volunteers. We really need your help!

Thanks,
Paul Bicknell

Caretakers of
Wild
Raptors

