



Newsletter of the

Neotropical Raptor Network

NRN Advisory Board Convenes in Panama

On the first and second of November 2004 The Peregrine Fund convened the first ever meeting of the Advisory Board (AB) for the NRN. The Advisory Board to the NRN consists of ten volunteers working with raptors in the Neotropics and representing or with an interest in Neotropical countries. The members of the first NRN Advisory Board are: Sergio Seipke, Sharon Matola, Cesar Sanchez, Rick Watson, Keith Bildstein, Jaime Jimenez, Marc Bechard, Jorge Albuquerque, and myself the coordinator Cameron Ellis.

The objectives of the meeting were to establish the Bylaws and identify the direction, activities and

character of the NRN. Our first order of business was to work out a mission statement of the NRN. After some tinkering we came up with one modeled on a similar and successful organization in Asia, the Asian Raptor Research and Conservation Network (ARRCN): *The NRN is a membership based organization aimed to enhance the capacity and effectiveness of people working with raptors in the Neotropics. Its goal is to aid the research and conservation of Neotropical raptors by promoting communication*

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II Neotropical Raptor Conference and Symposium on Raptors of the Southern Cone

Iguazu, Argentina
June 11-14, 2006

See pages 6 and 10

Fall Raptor Migration

by Cesar Sanchez

Every year millions of birds escape the cold weather of North America, and travel south into the tropics where they spend sometimes more than six months of the year, and raptors are no exception. Around 30 species of diurnal raptors are known to migrate through the Americas. Some owl species are known to migrate, although the information available for the Neotropical region is scarce.

Southward movements can be seen as early as late August. The migration begins with species such as Swallow-tailed (*Elanoides forficatus*) or Mississippi Kites (*Ictinia mississippiensis*) and it continues until early December, when the most predominant migrating species are late migrating Turkey Vultures. Due to the large numbers of late migrating Turkey Vultures (*Cathartes aura*), Broad-winged (*Buteo platypterus*) and Swainson's Hawks (*Buteo swainsoni*), the majority of these movements occur during October and November. These species form large dense flocks of several thousands of birds as they pass through narrow migration corridors in Mexico and Central America. The migration routes cover a wide variety of habitats including savannas, tropical rain forests, and even cloud forest in the top of mountain ranges; still, accurate route information for individual species is often poorly known or unavailable.

During the past years, strategically placed raptor watch sites have been established to monitor the movements of raptors through the Neotropical region. The 2004 Fall migration marks the most recent chapter in this continuing investigation. Raptor counts were carried out in Mexico, Costa Rica and Panama. Here, included are total counts for the migratory season in Veracruz, Mexico and Kéköldi, Costa Rica.

Veracruz, River of Raptors

Rafael Rodríguez:

vrrmonitoreo@pronaturaveracruz.org

Kéköldi

Pablo Porras:

Migration Counts in Mexico and Costa Rica

Common Name	Scientific Name	México	Costa Rica
Turkey Vulture	<i>Cathartes aura</i>	2,148,329	1,025,289
Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>	2,232	2,214
Hook-billed Kite	<i>Chondrohierax uncinatus</i>	225	65
Swallow-tailed Kite	<i>Elanoides forficatus</i>	143	1,175
Snail Kite	<i>Rosthramus sociabilis</i>	-	2
Mississippi Kite	<i>Ictinia mississippiensis</i>	184,948	262,129
Plumbeous Kite	<i>Ictinia plumbea</i>	-	239
Northern Harrier	<i>Circus cyaneus</i>	106	4
Sharp-shinned Hawk	<i>Accipiter striatus</i>	2,218	17
Cooper's Hawk	<i>Accipiter cooperii</i>	1,688	5
Northern Goshawk	<i>Accipiter gentilis</i>	4	-
Common Black Hawk	<i>Buteogallus anthracinus</i>	8	-
Harris' Hawk	<i>Parabuteo unicinctus</i>	7	-
Gray Hawk	<i>Buteo nitidus</i>	612	-
Red-shouldered Hawk	<i>Buteo lineatus</i>	14	-
Broad-winged Hawk	<i>Buteo platypterus</i>	2,080,931	1,117,733
Short-tailed Hawk	<i>Buteo brachyurus</i>	1	-
Swainson's Hawk	<i>Buteo swainsoni</i>	1,025,619	449,771
Zone-tailed Hawk	<i>Buteo albonotatus</i>	173	44
Red-tailed Hawk	<i>Buteo jamaicensis</i>	129	14
Ferruginous Hawk	<i>Buteo regalis</i>	3	-
Golden Eagle	<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>	6	-
American Kestrel	<i>Falco sparverius</i>	3,256	6
Merlin	<i>Falco columbarius</i>	134	207
Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>	677	3,219
Unidentified Raptor		42828	2,650
Total		5,494,291	2,864,783

Call for Future Articles

This is the first of the NRN's biannual Newsletter. The idea for this newsletter was put forth at NRN Advisory Board meeting in November of 2004. For this reason we did not have a chance to call for contributions from the broader membership of the NRN, and the articles were written primarily by members of the Advisory Board. However, this newsletter is a chance to share the projects and experiences of all NRN members. If you would like to write an article for the next NRN Newsletter please send it to me by June 27th 2005. Articles can be about any subject so long as it pertains to the theme of the NRN, and we encourage them to be light and easy to read. Please contact me if you have any further questions or you would like to submit an article.

contact: cellis@neotropicalraptors.org



The NRN Logo Comes to Life

By Cameron Ellis

Almost half a year ago the first round of NRN logo artwork was received with some amount of dissent. The dissent was due largely to the fact that whatever bird was depicted in the logo, it only represented the interests of some among the roughly 140 members of the NRN. This difficulty is to be expected in a region as large and diverse as the Neotropics, where no raptor exists to mirror exactly, impar-

could not address the wide range of raptors that can be found in the 47 distinct biogeographical provinces of the Neotropical Realm.

Frustration mounted in the logo search, until finally it brought the issue under a whole new light. attempting to describe the NRN, it is impossible to ask one raptor, or even several raptors, to stand in for the whole of raptor species in the Neotropics. The most biogeographically diverse realm on the

efforts of people dedicated to the of this diverse, varied, elusive and raptor-rich Realm.

Rather than allude to what is known, certain and universal about Neotropical raptors, we have chosen to allude the mystery, adventure, thrill, and ultimately the hard work that is common to all of us working with raptors in the Neotropics.

The Black and Chestnut

(Isidor's) Eagle, high in the Andean cloud forests, represents those characteristics and embodies the elusive and sovereign nature of Neotropical raptors.

The logo exists in two forms.

The extended version of the logo includes the Black and Chestnut Eagle



Neotropical Raptor Network

tially, and uniquely the Neotropical bio-geographical realm. Indeed, the Neotropical Realm means humid forests to some, soaring mountains to others, arid plains to still more, and the list goes on.

We then expanded our vision of the logo to include several birds. Several birds allowed some flexibility to address the different habitats and varied species of the Neotropics... but that approach diluted the artistic and symbolic value of the logos, and still, no matter which birds were chosen, they

planet is not so easily captured! While perhaps a feather in the cap of Neotropical researchers and conservationists, it makes a 'common denominator species' approach singularly difficult and poses an interesting dilemma for any organization attempting to address the entire Realm. This diversity of habitats and species can be seen as an impossible puzzle of fracture lines breaking the region into so many distinct units, but in the same breath it reveals a different sort of unity. It reveals a unity in diversity. It reveals a unity among the conservation, investigation and exploration

with a fanciful depiction of the South and Meso-American land masses. The condensed form is in a circular shape, depicting mountains, forests and water, presided over by the Black and Chestnut Eagle. The logo was selected by the Advisory Board to the NRN.

The artist is Frederick Pallinger of Brazil. He is a good friend to the NRN and he has been very generous in producing this wonderful artwork!

Contact Frederick about his art at: fpallinger@yahoo.com.br



Harpy Eagle Releases in Belize

by Sharon Matola

As the Belize coordinator for The Peregrine Fund's Harpy Eagle Restoration Program, it is good to report that both captive bred birds hard released in northwestern Belize in early June of this year, within the protected forests of the Rio Bravo Conservation Management Area, are doing well.

The female was reported eating a Coati (*Nasua narica*), on the 31st of October. The male has yet to be noted hunting independently, but he has avoided the lodge/research station area which is not far from his release site.

The Rio Bravo hard release site has a robust prey base. Deer, peccary, various birds and reptiles are plentiful and the feeling is optimistic that the released eagles will thrive in this area.

In December, the project received a visit from ornithologist and author of the Birds of Belize, Dr. Lee Jones. He is also part of an effort to assess the prey base along a river system which cuts through this tropical forest.

Another female Harpy captive bred and released is hunting independently, however, in a forested area south of the Maya ruins of Caracol, in a hard-to-access area. This highly-karstified region of Belize makes it difficult to trap the bird for transfer to the hard-release site, and there is some concern about her being too close to the Guatemalan border where potentially dangerous conflict with people could occur.

Posters featuring an immature Harpy Eagle are given out continuously in Belize, and a few



Photo: Russell Thorstrom

have been posted in the Darien region of Panama as well. The Belize Zoo is working to develop a t-shirt to popularize the Harpy Eagle in Belize. Plans for the 4th Hoodwink the Owl children's book about the Belize Harpy Eagle Restoration Program are now being initiated and it is projected that this Harpy Eagle conservation program will have a heightened profile and receive much attention, both in Belize, and outside the borders of this nation.

Garganta de San Martin, Iguazu!!!



Photo:
Rick Watson



...NRN AB Meeting

and collaboration among biologists, ornithologists, raptor enthusiasts and other conservationists working in the Neotropics.

After establishing the NRN Mission Statement and addressing the structural aspects of the NRN, the Advisory Board went on to identify the limiting factors for raptor research and conservation in the Neotropics.

Not surprisingly, funding and training were named among the primary limiting factors for researchers and conservationists. To address this and other issues related to the effectiveness of scientific and conservation work in the Neotropics, the NRN Advisory Board outlined a series of projects in the NRN Bylaws, the governing document of this fledgling organization.

The NRN Bylaws identify five organizational projects and a flexible capacity to engage in further scientific and conservation oriented projects. The Organizational Projects make up the core of activity for the NRN, they are: An NRN List-server, a periodic Neotropical Raptor Conference, an NRN e-Newsletter, an NRN webpage and an updated guide to the NRN Neotropical Raptor Research and Conservation Priorities. The Bylaws produced at the recent NRN-AB meeting also include a capacity to directly engage in scientific and conservation projects, as they are approved by the Advisory Board and in keeping with the NRN Mission Statement, these are the NRN Scientific and Conservation Projects. Check out the website for a more in depth look at the different aspects of the NRN.

The final activity of the NRN-AB meeting was to begin planning for the next Neotropical Raptor Conference. It will be held in June of 2006 in Iguazu, Argentina. An article in this



newsletter deals specifically with the conference and preparations. See pages 7 and 10.

Overall, the meeting was a success and as coordinator of the NRN it is a thrill to work with the Advisory Board as well as the broader membership of the NRN. This recent meeting has given structure and commitment to what began as a simple notion at the 2002

Neotropical Raptor Conference and Harpy Eagle Symposium. The idea behind the NRN is collaboration, and we are committed to wielding the NRN in such a way that it best benefits all members. So please, do not hesitate to contact me for any for any reason with questions or suggestions, we are working for you and we would like to hear how we can do better!



The 2006 Neotropical Raptor Conference and Symposium on Raptors of the Southern Cone

Today, considering worldwide concern over threats to the environment, and considering the large array of species and habitats included in the Neotropical region (here defined as all Latin America and the Caribbean) it is not surprising that Neotropical conservation issues frequently reach the world stage. The immense diversity of habitats in the Neotropics are home to many of the world's most impressive raptors, including the Andean Condor (the world's largest flying bird), the Harpy Eagle (possibly the world's most powerful bird of prey), rare falcons and owls, and many species that are still unstudied. For centuries the raptors of the Neotropics have sparked the enthusiasm of naturalists, falconers, scientists, and other conservationists worldwide. Even prior to that, they had prominent roles in the myth and social fabric of Pre-Columbian cultures.

However, raptors are more than just interesting and charismatic animals. They are important components of ecosystems, and at the top of the food chain they are excellent indicators of environmental health. Long before the forests are clear-cut and lost or a contaminant precipitates extensive environmental harm, symptoms of a damaged ecosystem often appear first in the animals at the top of the food chain. Peregrine Falcons alerted the world to the dangers of the pesticide DDT, and recently a crisis facing three species of *Gyps* vultures in Asia has uncovered the first ever known case of a pharmaceutical drug causing widespread environmental impact. Raptors have been likened to the 'canary in the coal-

miner's cage,' they provide us with an early warning of declining environmental conditions and ecosystem health. As such, they are uniquely valuable animals and if properly executed, raptor research and conservation can be an important tool for expanding knowledge and our protective capacity of Neotropical biodiversity.

Encouraged by positive results and enthusiasm among attendees of the first Neotropical Raptor Conference, held in Panama City, Panama in 2002, The Peregrine Fund helped establish the Neotropical Raptor Network (NRN) to en-

hance the research and conservation capacity of Neotropical raptors and provide for regular Neotropical Raptor Conferences every four years.

Since its inception, the NRN has become a unifying element for the raptor research and conservation community across the Neotropics; and as a young organization we are now gearing up for the Second Neotropical Raptor Conference, to be held in Iguazu, Argentina on June 11th-14th, 2006. The Neotropical Raptor Conferences are of great importance for sharing information and ideas, and establishing working relationships between scientists, raptor enthusiasts,



...2006 Neotropical Raptor Conference, continued.



policy makers and other conservationists working in the Neotropics. Due to its location and focus, this conference will be of singular importance to the issues, species and habitat of South America and the Southern Cone in particular.

The Second Neotropical Raptor Conference is a collaborative project, coordinated by the NRN and sponsored by The Peregrine Fund (USA), the Sheraton International Iguazu Resort (Arg.), Aves Argentinas/AOP (Arg.), Hawk Mountain Sanctuary (USA), Museo de la Plata (Arg.) and Guira-Oga (Arg.). The 2006 Neotropical Raptor Conference will be attended by over 200 professionals and students from throughout the Neotropics and around the world.

Further support will be central to the success of the 2006 Neotropical Raptor Conference. We are currently offering several distinct levels and forms of involvement from direct financial support of conference costs, to travel assistance for students and prospective conference attendees, to in-kind, logistical and material support from those organizations disposed to help. All assistance will be received with profound thanks and contributions will be acknowledged in conference literature on a special sponsor-



SAICR I: First Argentine Symposium on the Investigation and Conservation of Raptors

by Sergio Seipke

In the last 10 years we have been fortunate to see a notable proliferation of investigators and conservationists working with raptors in Latin America; and scientific conferences have proved to be among the best means to encourage interaction and promote communication between those scientists and conservationists.

The first Neotropical Raptor Conference (NRC) and Harpy Eagle Symposium, convened by The Peregrine Fund in Panama City, Panama, in October of 2002, was a significant moment in the history of collaboration and communication between investigators and conservationists of Neotropical raptors. Argentina had a regrettably small presence at this important conference; however, this country is actually home to a large number of phenomenal people actively dedicated to this area of study and conservation.

In light of this strong group of people, and with the goal of formalizing a community dedicated to the conservation and investigation of raptors in Argentina, we celebrated in La Plata, Buenos Aires, the First Argentine Symposium on the Investigation and Conservation of Raptors (SAICR I) on the first and second of October 2004. This event was attended by more than 100 people, among them researchers, conservationists, students, falconers, directors of NGO's, as well as residents of Chile, Brazil, and Uruguay.

Twenty six oral presentations were given in sessions according to subject matter, these presentations were complimented by five thematic tables (discussion groups and theme-specific workshops) and three moderated debates. The debates addressed relevant issues such

as the creation of an Argentine NGO bringing together people working in fields related to raptor research and conservation, the frequency for the SAICR conferences and the possibility of hosting the next Neotropical Raptor Conference in Argentina in 2006.

The SAICR I produced strong results and has laid a foundation for future work: SAICR I promoted direct communication between researchers, students, conservationists and other related people; it initiated the creation of a national organization; it agreed to a two year frequency of SAICR meetings; and finally it has put together a great atmosphere for sharing experiences. All the attendees of the conference

received a Proceedings Book that includes extended abstracts of each presentation, these proceedings are currently out of stock, but soon will be converted to PDF and available on the internet.

The first SAICR made an indelible impression on those who participated in it. It can be said that the 'raptor community' of Argentina acquired a solid and optimistic vision of itself, one that was previously almost non-existent. It was, without a doubt, proof of both the capacity of its participants and the relevance of the field.

Perhaps one day in the not too distant future every country in the Neotropical Realm will celebrate its own raptor conference. In each country, and in the Neotropics as a whole, that day will be a triumph for both the people who dedicate their energies to the understanding and conservation of raptors, and a triumph for the birds themselves.

...more falls in Iguazu NP

Photo: Rick Watson



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compiled by Cesar Sanchez

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June, 11th–14th

Location: Iguazu, Argentina

The Neotropical Raptor Network invites you the Second Neotropical Raptor Conference, with a Symposium on Raptors of the Southern Cone. Join scientists, conservationists, resource managers, falconers, representatives of zoos, government and non-government organizations and other persons and institutions with an interest in the research and/or conservation of birds of prey in Latin America and the Caribbean to participate in a meeting to share knowledge, interests, and concerns and help develop a network of practitioners in the fields of raptor conservation, research, captive breeding and falconry.

The meeting will include a symposium dedicated to research and conservation of raptors of the Southern Cone, invited speakers on raptor biology and conservation, contributed papers and posters on raptor biology and conservation, workshops (some still [open to suggestion](#)) pertain-

ing to raptor research and conservation, as well as a host of social activities and the constant lure of the Iguazú Falls and National Park.

This conference will mark four years since the first Neotropical Raptor Conference held in Panama City, Panama in October 2002. The Advisory Board to the NRN chose Iguazú, Argentina for several reasons. Among them the NRN and the NRC are for all people working with birds of prey in the Neotropics, the biogeographical region that extends from Mexico to the end of Tierra del Fuego. Argentina brings this conference across the equator and closer to many of its members... and species!

Argentina and the Southern Cone were also identified as regions with a burgeoning population of enthusiastic individuals entering the field of raptor biology and among the goals of the NRN is to empower this growing potential. Argentina's varied landscapes and climates, from sub-tropical to sub-Antarctic, offers a wide range of habitats inhabited by many species and an important opportunity to address aspects of Raptor biology and conservation in the Neotropical realm, outside the tropics.

Iguazú is on the border with Brazil and Paraguay, it constitutes a part of the Atlantic Forest, a threatened biome which harbors several species of raptors, some of which are rare endemics. The Mantled Hawk

(*Leucopternis polionota*) featured in the conference image are among the most rare and threatened raptor species in the Americas.

...and, of course, Iguazú Falls are a world renowned tourist destination that absolutely everyone with a passion for our natural world must experience!

Editor: Cameron Ellis

Art:: Frederick Pallinger, Aldo Chiape

Photos: Rick Watson, Angel Muela, Jaime Jimenez, Russell Thorstrom

Contributors: Cesar Sanchez, Sharon Matola, Sergio Seipke

Translation: Sergio Seipke, Cameron Ellis, Christian Polar

Newsletter Contact info:

Phone: 208.362.3716

Fax: 208.362.2376

email: cellis@peregrinefund.org

www.neotropicalraptors.org

www.peregrinefund.org

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