



Conference Report

Prepared by: Kate Davis, RRF Conference Chair
Joseph Dane, HawkWatch International, Co-Host

Co-Hosts: The Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute
Texas A&M University Campus, Kingsville
HawkWatch International, Salt Lake City, Utah

Location: Emerald Beach Hotel
Corpus Christi, Texas

Number of Attendees: Total = 216
Members = 105
Non-members = 36
Students = 50
Sponsors/Comps = 25
**One-day only = 11 (included above)*

Conference Planners:

Kate Davis, Conference Chair
Joseph Dane, HawkWatch International Co-host
Tom Langshied, King Ranch, Kleberg Institute Co-host
James Dwyer, Scientific Program Chair
Dan Varland, former RRF Conference Chair
Rick Harness, RRF Board and Symposium Leader
David Stelling, Texas State Aquarium
Joe Platt, Raptors and Wind Energy Workshop
Barbara Rapstein, Volunteer Coordinator Extraordinaire

(A total of 14 conference calls with planners,
agenda for each call and notes of results)

Background

This was our first stand-alone, stateside conference in three years and Texas was selected as RRF President Clint Boal is based in Lubbock. Corpus Christi was chosen because of the proximity to the Hazel Bazemore County Park, a migration site operated by HawkWatch International and known for the highest concentration and numbers of migrants in the country. The dates were chosen to coincide with prominent peak passage of the Broad-winged flight, and the associated “Celebration of Flight” festival hosted at the Hazel Bazemore Park site.

Clint connected Kate with Tom Langshied and Fred Bryant, Director of the Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute, who co-hosted this conference. Kate also contacted HawkWatch International to be a co-host, and worked Joseph Dane to handle finances and registration. Both groups served as co-hosts equally.

The Kleberg Institute generously offered a \$10,000 sponsorship. They also included a Friday night dinner and tour of their facilities free of charge. We added a \$20 fee to pay for transportation of two buses. Kleberg also declined the sharing of final profits from the conference. Tom Langshied left his position at the Kleberg Institute and was employed by the near-by King Ranch, but still continued his duties as local host. Packages from vendors were shipped to the King Ranch rather than the hotel prior to the conference.

We hired Kathy Webber at *Experient*, a conference planning company. *Experient* was paid \$2,000 by RRF and received a portion of room fees from the hotel. They negotiated a good discount on room rates (\$99/night) and reduced conference rental space. Kathy was present at the conference for on-site registration and oversaw the hotel set-up and details. She also smoothed out some problems, including final banquet numbers.

Audio-visual Rental

We hired Encore Event/Technologies to handle all audio and video requirements. They were less expensive than other local A/V companies and were far more responsive with providing a detailed quote. On Wednesday, we had two workshops rooms, two ECRR rooms, and the Board Meeting room. We rented screens and projectors for all five rooms and laptops for the workshops. Presenters brought their own laptops for the ECRR workshops and Board meeting. A/V technicians helped connect computers and projectors.

During the rest of the conference (Thur-Sat), we rented two microphones, screens, projectors, and laptops. We did run into major glitches the first day and had to call Encore technicians to return for troubleshooting.

Volunteers were responsible for uploading speaker documents onto computers prior to oral presentations and dimming lights. Moderators ran all paper sessions, introduced speakers, took time, and fielded questions.

Program Book, Publicity

Kate Davis created the conference logo from a photo of a White-tailed Hawk by Rick Harness. She also made a higher resolution RRF logo using a Prairie Falcon photograph by Rob Palmer. James Dwyer handled all abstract submissions, review, and copy layout. Joseph Dane designed and created the final program book with photos provided by Rob Palmer, Nick Dunlop, and Kate.

200 conference books were printed by Pyramid Printing in Missoula, Montana and shipped to Tom at the King Ranch express UPS mail. Using Pyramid saved us \$1,000 from bids received in Corpus, and we were able to review a proof before printing.

We received some fantastic media exposure for the conference, which made the sales reps at the Emerald Beach Hotel very happy.

- An interview on a local television station with a raptor handler from the Texas State Aquarium discussing the conference with a Caracara on hand
- A front-page story in the Corpus Christi Business News on the conference
- A two-page story in the local paper the Corpus Christi Caller Times featuring the story “Conference Lands in City” with photos from the ECRR workshops and Hazel Bazemore.

Food and Beverage, Hotel

The hotel contract stated that we needed to spend at least \$8,000 in F&B. Kate came up with the menu for all of the breaks and the three receptions. Kathy Webber suggested we order everything from the *A la Carte* menu, and a wide variety (with excellent prices, she said.) The hotel contract was met with breaks and icebreaker, ECRR mixer, and Poster reception. The Banquet menu was just a choice of meat or vegetarian. We had a mix-up about final numbers of prime rib dinners, and Kathy solved that problem with the hotel.

The hotel gave us one complimentary room for every 45 occupied, revenue-producing rooms, used by Kate Davis and Joseph Dane. Local host Tom Langshied got a room Saturday in addition. Rooms numbered around 100 for Wed., Thurs., and Fri. nights.

Volunteers, Poster Boards, Appreciation

Barbara Rapstein of Coastal Bend Audubon and the King Ranch was asked by co-host Tom Langshied to coordinate the local volunteers. She had never worked on a conference before and yet assembled an excellent and professional fleet of around 20 volunteers from the area to help in A/V needs, registration, and answering questions about conference details and local birdwatching opportunities. They were allowed to attend paper and poster sessions. Barbara was instrumental in the Kleberg Friday tour/dinner as well, and she and another super-volunteer were given banquet tickets.

We were quoted a rental price of \$3,400 for 8 poster boards for the Thursday session by the same company that did our A/V. Instead, Tom Langshied secured home-made poster boards free of cost from Texas A&M in Kingsville.

In appreciation of their contributions, Kate sent gifts to the volunteers, the Kleberg Institute, and staff at Emerald Beach Hotel—photographs, cards, books and artwork (a snake and hawk print for the Serpentarium).

Special Presentations, Workshops

Wednesday:

Main Conference rooms

Morning

- Avian Power Line Interaction Committee (APLIC) Workshop – Sherry Liguori
- Raptor field and in-hand ID, ageing & sexing, molt and it's use in aging, and recent taxonomic changes in raptors – Bill Clark

Afternoon

- Avian Power Line Interaction Committee (APLIC) Workshop, cont.
- Wind Energy and Raptors Workshop – Joe Platt

Small rooms (Early Career Raptor Researchers/ECRR)

Morning

- Harnessing raptors with transmitters
- Techniques for handling, auxiliary marking, measuring and blood sampling raptors after capture
- BOARD MEETING

Afternoon

- Raptor trapping and handling techniques for scientific research
- Raptor Necropsy
- BOARD MEETING
- Safely accessing raptor nests (off site at climbing gym-all day)

Evening

- Icebreaker in separate rented room

Thursday:

Morning

- Keynote address, "Welcome to Texas Raptors" – Grainger Hunt

Evening

- Early Career Raptor Researcher Mixer (6-8 pm at outdoor bar)

- Poster Session in break rooms
- PowerPoint – “Eagle Quest” – Bill Clark
- Video – “Megaflocks and Peregrines: Chaos in the Sky” – Nick Dunlop
- PowerPoint – “Burrowing Owl to Bald Eagles” – Rob Palmer
- PowerPoint – “Raptors of the Rockies” – Kate Davis

Friday:

Afternoon

- Business meeting – open to all

Evening

- Kleberg Institute Tour/Dinner - Texas A&M Kingsville

Saturday

Afternoon

- Keynote address, “A Lifetime of Migration” – Steve Hoffman

Evening

- Banquet, Awards, Photography Competition

Sunday:

Field Trips

- Shuttles to Hazel Bazemore County Park migration site
- King Ranch birding field trip
- Texas State Aquarium Bird Rehabilitation Center (all week)

Symposia, Papers and Posters

Raptors and Energy Development
American Kestrels
Coastal Raptors of the Rockies
Anderson Award

We enjoyed two concurrent paper sessions with a total of 74 oral papers , and 32 posters.

Photography Competition

As far as we know, this was a first-time event with Joseph accepting photo submissions via email up until the afternoon of the banquet. We had 98 entries, judged by Rob Palmer, Nick Dunlop and Kate Davis. Nick and Kate created the PowerPoint just before the banquet, modeled after the original idea by Kim Caldwell of the IAATE (Avian Trainers and Educators) who helped with the format. It was presented after dinner, and has been suggested that we cut the total time if we continue the tradition. A \$100 gift certificate to Buteo Books was the grand prize, awarded to Erik Hedlin, and a new rule could be, “must be present to enter.”

Results

We found out late in the game that the AOU conference was scheduled the same week as ours, which of course created some conflicts. Several researchers attended both.

The conference was still well attended, with very generous sponsorships and record-breaking profits (exceeding past meetings by nearly \$19,000.) Profits were split equally between RRF and HawkWatch International, Kleberg declining a portion. Profits are important, but friendships, relationships, jobs, and research ideas that are launched at these annual RRF conferences are what keep us coming back and looking forward to the next RRF conference.

Kathy Webber of *Experient* wrote in an email the week after the conference:

“Thanks so much for the opportunity to play a part in the 2014 RRF conference. What a nice group of people! And what I've mentioned repeatedly since I have been back, of all the conferences I have attended and while many have had an enthusiastic audience I don't believe I have found one so into their agenda as the Raptor folks!”

Financial Report

Total Revenue was \$60,128. Total Expense was \$30,779. Leaving Net Revenue at \$29,349 (\$14,675 – RRF; \$14,674 – HWI).

HawkWatch International (HWI) was responsible for all registration and financial duties for the 2014 conference. As a benefit through their Guidestar (Gold Participant) affiliation, they received no fees using the Eventbrite Gold Level platform for registration and ticket sales. The only fee incurred for all ticket sales (registration, banquet, field trips, etc) was a 3% credit card processing fee. Other platforms HWI was considering for the conference was Paypal (2.3% credit card processing fee, plus a \$0.30 per transaction fee), and Eventbrite Silver Level (3% credit card processing fee, plus \$.99 per transaction fee).

Full refunds were allowed up until September 15 (about 15 days prior to conference). Partial refunds were allowed after that point (50%) due to the fact we had to submit numbers to the hotel for planning.

Number of Registrants				
	Before 07/15	After 07/15, Before 09/01	After 09/01	Total
Total Registrations	66	76	74	216
RRF Members	43	47	15	105
Non-members	12	12	12	36
Students	11	17	22	50
Sponsor/Comps			25	25

** 11 Single-day registrants total, which are included in full conference registration totals.*

Cost of Registration & Events				
	Before 07/15	After 07/15, Before 09/01	After 09/01	Total attendance
RRF Members	\$180	\$200	\$250	105
Non-members	\$220	\$240	\$300	36
Students	\$90	\$90	\$100	50
Single Day (members/non)	\$90	\$95	\$100	9
Single Day (students)	\$50	\$50	\$50	2
Saturday banquet	\$40	\$40	\$40	118
Friday Kleberg dinner/tour	\$20	\$20	\$20	66
Hazel Bazemore field trip	\$10	\$10	\$10	45
King Ranch field trip	\$60	\$60	\$60	18
APLIC workshop	\$60	\$60	\$60	10
Wind Energy & Raptors workshop	\$0	\$0	\$0	11
ECRR social	\$0	\$0	\$0	43
ECRR: Techniques for Handling, Auxiliary Marking, Measuring, and Blood Sampling Raptors after Capture: A Bird in the Hand is	\$20	\$20	\$20	6
ECRR: Safely Accessing Raptor Nests	\$20	\$20	\$20	5

ECRR: Raptor Trapping and Handling Techniques for Scientific Research	\$20	\$20	\$20	8
ECRR: Raptor Necropsy	\$20	\$20	\$20	6
ECRR: Raptor field & in-hand ID, ageing & sexing, molt and its use in ageing, and recent taxonomic changes in raptors	\$40	\$40	\$40	7
ECRR: Harnessing Raptors with Transmitters	\$20	\$20	\$20	12

** 11 Single-day registrants total, which are included in full conference registration totals.*

Revenue		
RRF Seed Money	\$1,500	2.49%
Registration fees	\$28,350	47.15%
Vendor fees	\$400	0.67%
Sponsorship	\$18,000	29.94%
Saturday banquet	\$4,720	7.85%
Friday Kleberg dinner/tour	\$1,320	2.20%
APLIC workshop	\$600	1.00%
ECRR workshops	\$900	1.50%
Field trips	\$1,910	3.18%
Silent auction	\$573	0.95%
T-shirts	\$1,800	2.99%
Mugs	\$55	0.09%
Total Gross Revenue	\$60,128	100%
Total Net Revenue	\$29,349	

Expenses		
RRF Seed Money	\$1,500	
Room/Venue Rental (Emerald Beach Hotel)	\$1,050	
Food & Beverage (Emerald Beach Hotel)	\$11,955	
Experient Conference Planners	\$2,000	Kathy Weber
Keynote Speaker (Steve Hoffman)	\$1,000	
Keynote Speaker (Grainger Hunt)	\$1,000	
King Ranch Field Trip	\$900	
Program Book	\$968	program printing \$806.72; shipping \$161.60
Daisy Charters & Shuttles	\$1,229	Kleberg Dinner/Tour transportation
Encore Event Technologies	\$2,831	audio and visual rentals
America's Best Apparel, Inc.	\$3,246	120 shirts, 190 totes, 216 mugs
Avis Car Rental	\$232	ECRR workshops (passenger van rental)
Stripes	\$23	ECRR workshops (fuel)
Avis Car Rental	\$490	Hazel Bazemore field trip (passenger van rentals)
Stripes	\$110	Hazel Bazemore field trip (fuel)
Jasons Deli	\$252	Box lunches
Tom Lanschied	\$272	U-haul rental and mileage reimbursement for poster board delivery
Kate Davis	\$178	misc expense reimbursement (\$77.54 phone bill; \$100 for Buteo Books certificate for photo competition winner)
Misc expenses	\$80	\$16.52 UPS mug mail; \$21 cab; \$25.59 name tags; \$6 checks; \$10.67 square device;
Barbara Rapstein	\$376	tile sales reimbursement
Credit card processing fees	\$1,088	Eventbrite 3%
Total Expenses	\$30,779	



PHOTOS BY TODD YATES/CALLER-TIMES

Bill Clark, a leading authority on raptor identification, gives participants of the Raptor Research Foundation Conference a lesson on identifying marks of broad-winged hawks during his session Wednesday. The conference will run through Sunday at the Emerald Beach Hotel on Shoreline Boulevard.

Conference lands in city

Raptors take center stage at gathering

By David Sikes
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361-886-3616

While 40,000 broad-winged hawks soared over the Coastal Bend on Wednesday, hundreds of bird lovers and biologists gathered below for the Raptor Research Foundation Conference on the Bayfront.

Most of this week's conference activities, co-sponsored by the Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute at Texas A&M University-Kingsville, are scheduled for the Emerald Beach Hotel on Shoreline Boulevard. The event loosely coincides with



IF YOU GO

What: Celebration of Flight Corpus Christi Hawk Watch

When: Friday through Sunday

Where: Hazel Bazemore County Park, 4343 County Road 69 in Calallen.

Admission: Free
Info: Annual migration of thousands of birds of prey flying over the park. Morning and afternoon programs and presentations are scheduled all three days.

Contact: Email Joel Simon at joel.simon44@yahoo.com.

Online: www.ccbirding.com



Lianne Koczur, a student from Texas A&M University-Kingsville, gets a lesson on how to place a transmitter on a raptor from Brian Millsap, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, during one of the workshops Wednesday.



TODD YATES/CALLER-TIMES

Stephanie Szarmach (center) and other participants of the Raptor Research Foundation Conference scan the skies at Hazel Bazemore County Park for raptors Wednesday during one of the conference's workshops.

RAPTORS from 1B

the Celebration of Flight at Hazel Bazemore County Park in Calallen. The annual International Hawk Watch celebration is staged along the Nueces River in the path of hundreds of thousands of birds of prey, which migrate

through South Texas during summer and fall, attracting skyward gazing spectators from around the world.

"We held the conference in Argentina last year," said Kate Davis, with Raptor Research Foundation. "But since then I visited Texas and realized this is the place to be."

The three-day conference features presentations and

workshops by renowned researchers and scientists representing the Montana Audubon, The Peregrine Fund, along with Bill Clark, author of the Peterson Field Guide to North American Hawks. A visit to the King Ranch also is planned.

Wednesday's program included a workshop on handling raptors and affixing them with electronic tracking devices. This was specifically geared to students,

who Davis referred to as early career raptor researchers, or ECRRs.

Flights of hawks usually begin arriving to the Coastal Bend in early August, but the peak of migration runs from Sept. 22-30. When it's over, Hawk Watch International officials estimate about 700,000 kites, hawks, falcons, vultures and even a few eagles have flown over.

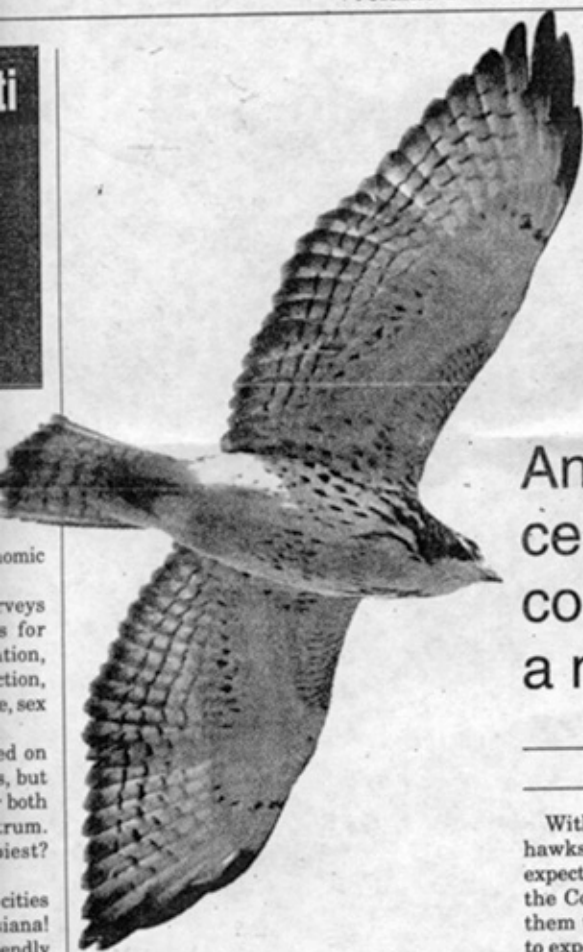
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Business News

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HAWK WATCH HAPPENINGS

Annual migration draws birders, celebrations, international conference of experts and almost a million raptors to Coastal Bend

By Suzanne Freeman

With wings spread wide, close to a million hawks, falcons and other migratory birds are expected to float along the thermal winds over the Coastal Bend this month, bringing with them thousands of human admirers anxious to experience the largest migration of its kind.

During the migration's peak — the last eight days of September — two major events will bring in even more tourists and experts than usual. Locally, the annual Celebration of Flight held at Hazel Bazemore Park begins with a special Native American ceremony Sept. 27. Tours, education programs and family activities are all day long and continue into the next day.

Also, scientists and educators will meet Sept. 24-28 during the Raptor Research Foundation's

2014 Conference at the Emerald Beach Hotel in downtown Corpus Christi. The event is open to the public for a small fee. This is the first time in three years the conference has been held in the United States and the first time ever in Corpus Christi, the "birdiest" city in the nation.

"This is the site with the highest numbers of raptors during the fall migration than anywhere else," said Joseph Dane of Hawk Watch International, which is a partner in operating Hazel Bazemore Park. The park is one of Hawk Watch's eight migration sites. "Texas boasts the highest counts of any site in the country. It's a big deal, and everyone around the world knows it."

The second-largest raptor migration route goes over Detroit, where only 200,000 birds are counted each season.

Hawk Watch International counts birds

See HAWK / PAGE 10

A broad-winged hawk rides a thermal wind as it migrates over Hazel Bazemore Park in Corpus Christi. Almost a million raptors converge on the Coastal Bend each fall on their way south, the largest raptor migration in the nation.

DOWN FOR THE COUNT

Raptors don't actually fly when migrating, Simon said. They spread their wings and ride thermal winds up to 200 miles a day to conserve their energy. As they travel from the upper United States and Canada, they funnel through the Coastal Bend on their way to Central and South America for the winter. Unwilling to fly over water, they hug the coastline of the Gulf of Mexico in kettles (groups of hawks), setting down for the night before taking off again at about 9 a.m. each day.

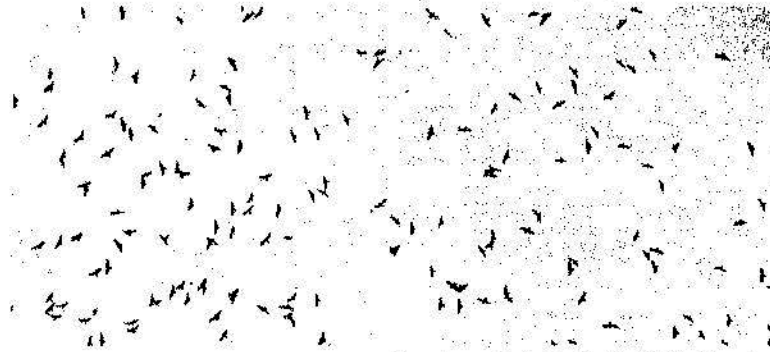
"We generally have about three significant setdowns in this area a season," Simon said. By significant, he means 40,000 at a time landing in the foliage of Hazel Bazemore Park. "When that happens, we get the word out for the resulting liftoff the next morning when they come out of the trees. The thermals start at about 9 a.m."

Seventy percent of the season's migrating raptors will be in South Texas during the last eight days of September. Most years, at least one of those days will have more than 100,000 birds in the sky over Hazel Bazemore.

"There's no place else where that happens," Simon said. "We can't tell you which day it will be because it all depends on the weather. It's usually a day or two after a front comes through."

Although many other species of birds migrate through the area each year, nothing rivals the majesty of the raptors, at least not for Tom Langschie, coordinator of the Raptor Research Conference and nature tour coordinator at King Ranch in Kingsville.

"It's a spectacle to witness these birds in the fall," Langschie said. "Amazing numbers of birds circle in kettles — remarkable numbers. It makes it a challenge to count, but



Courtesy photo by Patty Waits Beasley

A kettle of broad-winged hawks circle above Hazel Bazemore Park in Corpus Christi during a previous migration. The best time to view the largest number of birds is usually the last eight days of September.

those who go out and witness it will see people from Hawk Watch International counting the birds."

The migration draws more than researchers and scientists. Everyone seems to want to get a look as the sky darkens with these majestic birds of prey.

"The thing about hawks, they are fairly big, and you can see them soaring overhead, riding the wind thermals," Langschie said. "Or you can see them drop down and catch

something. The power involved in catching prey is something people really enjoy witnessing."

They also represent the essence of what it means to be American.

"They are symbols of strength and freedom, independence," Simon said. "They are some of the largest birds in the sky. They have a sense of wildness that's just not the same as a songbird. They are symbolic and iconic in the sense of what strength and freedom is."

WHAT: Hawk Watch International Raptor Migration Count

WHERE: Hazel Bazemore Park, FM 624

at County Road 69 in Corpus Christi

WHEN: 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Aug. 15-Nov. 15

WHAT: Celebration of Flight

WHERE: Hazel Bazemore Park, FM 624

at County Road 69 in Corpus Christi

WHEN: 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Sept. 27-28

WHAT: Raptor Research Foundation 2014 Conference

WHERE: Emerald Beach Hotel, 1102 S. Shoreline Blvd.

in Corpus Christi

WHEN: Sept. 24-28

FOR MORE:

www.raptorresearchfoundation.org www.hawkwatch.org