



2013 Spring Banding Report—Anne Schnell, Banding Director

There are a lot of special things that happen when you spend time in one of the hawk banding stations, or blinds, at BBRR. Anyone who hunts from a duck blind or deer stand can attest to the fantastic view one has of nature...when it doesn't know you're watching. Although our hearts belong to the hawks, for which we patiently wait day after day, there is no doubt a thrill in the experience of seeing the elusive fox or coyote hunting the nearby shrubs, or the small group of turkeys cautiously pecking for insects in the grass. On occasion, we look to the sky with excitement as a group of ancient looking Sand Hill Cranes makes their way overhead or we hear the whisper of swan wings lifting their large bodies on their way to nearby ponds. Although these experiences would be enough to draw us day after day to the blind, there is much more to this annual endeavor.



One of the six Merlins banded this spring. — Photo by David Mathiason

Time in the blind gives us a chance to catch up on the news of the other banders, who return to their normal lives outside of hawk season. At the main banding station, there is a reunion every year as the familiar faces of our regular visitors join us to witness the spectacle of the spring migration firsthand. New recruits to the world of hawks join us after visiting the hawk watch, where they may see their first kettle or wild Bald Eagle.

Catching and banding the migrating birds, although exciting, serves a greater purpose which is adding to the national database of information. While BBRR's hawk watch numbers, recorded by our hawk watcher each year, are reported to the Hawk Migration Association of America (HMANA), our banding data is submitted to the Bird Banding Lab at the USGS Patuxent Wildlife Research Center. There is clearly a large difference in the numbers of birds counted at the hawk watch versus the number banded at our stations. Our most numerous migrant, the Broad-winged Hawk, is rarely captured at our stations, and the route taken by the birds along the lakeshore shifts with wind direction easily. Also, we simply do not have enough traps to catch them all!

However, we do *see* the birds as they sail past us not even noticing our presence. As disappointing as it can be to watch the birds zip past, fly too high, or simply ignore our attempts to lure them down, it is exhilarating at the same time. This also allows us to collect another kind of information - anecdotal in nature, but still valuable as it can be shared with others who monitor migrating hawks. This year, for

Spring 2013 Raptor Banding Totals				
SPECIES	March	April	May	TOTAL
Red-tailed Hawk	22	47	7	76
Red-shouldered Hawk	0	5	0	5
Sharp-shinned Hawk	4	294	46	344
Cooper's Hawk	5	32	2	39
Northern Goshawk	0	7	1	8
American Kestrel	0	27	0	27
Merlin	0	2	0	2
Broad-winged Hawk	0	0	1	1
Bald Eagle	0	1	0	1
TOTAL	31	415	57	503

example, we all noted an increase the numbers of American Kestrels and Northern Harriers moving through. Over recent years, anecdotal information has suggested a decline in the kestrel population, and harrier's remain on the state threatened species list. We are encouraged by our observations, and recognize that in even one more way, the blind is a special place to be.