

The Winter Raptor Survey Project, sponsored by ECBA, enjoyed its 20th survey season last winter, a true milestone for a citizen science based project! Originally an Oregon based project, it got its start during the winter of 2004-05 with 79 routes surveyed around the state. Enthusiasm was so high that within 6 years, the number of routes nearly doubled.

At this point, I felt the need to expand and moved the project into ID. In another 6 years, ID was basically filled with routes and the project took off even more to the point that by the end of our 20th season, we enjoyed a total of 572 active routes spread out through all of WA, OR, and ID, the northern tier of CA and UT, and throughout western MT. We now have over 34,000 miles of transects surveyed monthly by over 460 primary project volunteers ! For this coming season, 11 new routes have already been added, it just keeps growing :)

The purpose of the project is to understand how the various species wintering in the NW are doing each winter and over time. We have been providing our project data to The Peregrine Fund each winter to include in their worldwide raptor data base, they now have all 20 years worth of data. A few years back, folks with TPF did a deep statistical dive into our survey results and released a paper of the results of their analysis. Overall, all but a few species were holding their own over the project period.

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If you are interested, [here is the link for that paper.](#)

Our data has also been made available to folks dealing with projects that could affect raptor use in their areas. A few years back, I was contacted by a group that was fighting the FAA's decision to consider building a new major airport in the Enumclaw, WA area. I have a route there and putting an airport in that area would have greatly affected raptor use. I supplied data for that route but never heard back from them as to how their efforts turned out. Also a few years back, I supplied our project data to a group that was fighting installation of a wind farm west of the Tri-Cities area in SE WA. I didnt hear back from them either. Recently, I was contacted by a group that is fighting the installation of a very large wind farm NE of Twin Falls, ID. An update received last week implied that our data was instrumental in stalling the permit approval process and that further environmental evaluation needs to take place before approval can be given. All this to say that our data has been useful in assisting with decisions regarding impacts on birds of prey in areas of the project. Responding to future requests will be made for projects deemed adversely influential on birds of prey populations in our project area :)

We have also developed an online data reporting process in conjunction with the development of a project data base that will soon have all 20 years of data (involving more than 20,000 individual surveys) included. Our volunteers can now supply their survey results directly into the data base. Instead of me doing the data entry work, all I have to do now is vet their entries which takes much less time, allowing me to more effectively deal with the day to day operations of the project. One of the main things that I do during the survey season is communicate with each volunteer on a monthly basis after receiving their survey data. This hands on approach I feel has created a family atmosphere that encourages our volunteers to return year after year to continue their survey work. In fact, this project enjoys at least a 90-95% return of volunteers

once they have gotten involved with the project. To me this is an incredible testament to the interest that our volunteers have for this wonderful family of birds that we enjoy each winter :)

In summary, surveys in this project continue to supply enjoyment to all its participants while collecting valuable data to allow us to see how these birds are doing from year to year. I have been amazed, and very grateful, for the volume of effort our volunteers have provided and we will continue to keep this project going for as long as folks wish to be involved. I never thought 20 years ago that this project would become such a big part of my life, I count my blessings that I have nearly 500 people that I can call my friends that I never would have met without the project! I am looking forward to what this winter will reveal through the surveys we will be doing!! :)