

Griffith Park Raptor Survey Volunteer Training Workshop



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Workshop Outline

Introduction

- Goals of Griffith Park nest monitoring program
- Natural history of raptors in Los Angeles

Monitoring Methodology

- Overview of Nest Monitoring Program
- Collecting and submitting data
- Best Monitoring Practices

2019 Survey Results!

Field Monitoring Practice

- Golf Course
- Old merry-go-round

History of Griffith Park Wildlife Monitoring Program

- Before 2007: Local resident sightings
- Early 2007: Baseline data collected on wildlife in general
- May 2007: Griffith Park Fire
- 2007 – 2008: Pre/Post fire surveys by Cooper Ecological
- 2008: Griffith Park Wildlife Management Plan
- 2008 - 2016: Opportunistic/contract surveys (multi-species)
- 2017: Inaugural Griffith Park Raptor Survey

Long-term Raptor Monitoring Program Goals

- Develop baseline
- Encourage and facilitate research
- Minimize human-wildlife conflict while still encouraging recreation
- Use the information to inform management
- Expand dataset of nesting raptors
- Contribute to regional species assessments



Photo: DeeDee McGann



Why Study Raptors?

Top predators

- Control prey populations
- Natural exterminators & clean up crew (vultures)

Important environmental indicator species

- Human disturbance
- Environmental toxins (rodenticides/insecticides)
- Climate

Eco-tourism & bird watching activities



Natural history - breeding raptors in Los Angeles Area

- **7 Raptor Species that Nest in Griffith Park**
 - **4 Diurnal Nesters**
 - **3 Nocturnal Nesters**
- **Plus several regularly wintering raptors, and influx of migrants**



Diurnal and Nocturnal Regular Breeder/Nesters of Griffith Park

Hawks, Eagles, Kites, Falcons

- Red-tailed Hawk
- Red-shouldered Hawk
- Cooper's Hawk
- American Kestrel
- Peregrine Falcon?
- Turkey Vulture? (suitable nest sites not found yet)

Owls

- Great Horned Owl
- Barn Owl
- Western Screech Owl



Regular Wintering and/or Transient Raptors

Hawks and Falcons

Sharp-shinned Hawk

Merlin

Osprey

Swainson's Hawk

Northern Harrier (rare)

Prairie Falcon (rare)

Bald/Golden Eagle (rare)

Owls

Burrowing Owl (rare)

Northern Saw-whet Owl (rare)

Long-eared Owl (rare)





American Kestrel



Peregrine Falcon



Red-shouldered Hawk



Red-tailed Hawk



Cooper's Hawk

Red-tailed Hawk

Buteo jamaicensis

- Year-round, common
- 16 subspecies
- Highly variable plumage
- Very territorial especially during breeding season (starts January)
- Mates stay paired throughout the year
- Several nests from previous year may be visited and repaired before they finally choose
- Nest in all woodland/urban habitats
- Common: nests have unobstructed access & good view of surrounding environment



Photos by Gerry Hans



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Cooper's Hawk

Accipiter cooperii

- Medium-sized hawk
- Long tail with 3-4 broad blackish bands
- Urban dwelling
- Preys on small birds, mammals, and reptiles
- Formerly nested in riparian & oak woodland
- More recently, in ornamental trees – ficus, eucalyptus & ash





Red-shouldered Hawk *Buteo lineatus*

- Year-round resident
- Uncommon breeder, locally rare
- Feeds on small mammals, reptiles, and amphibians
- Nest building may occur as early as November
- Reuse same nest for many years





Great Horned Owl

Bubo virginianus

- Year round resident
- Large owl with ear-tufts & yellow eyes
- Prefers open, broken woodlands and parks
- Nocturnal hunter, but can hunt in daylight as well
- Diet is 90% mammals
- Can nest in old nests of other species such as hawks, crows, ravens, etc.
- Most nests are only used 1 season



Barn Owl

Tyto alba

- Widely distributed throughout U.S.
- Favors lower elevations/flat areas
- Cavity nester/tolerant of disturbance
 - In study area, nest in palm trees
- Generally monogamous
- Feeds on small mammals
- Nocturnal but can hunt in low-light conditions



Raptor Breeding Behavior I

- **Typically Mate for Life**
- **Most species only 1 clutch**
- **Breed mostly in Spring-Summer**
Begins as early as fall
Continues to at least late summer
- **Nest Substrates**
Trees
Structures (towers, etc.)
Cliffs



Raptor Breeding Behavior II

- Hawks will begin incubating as soon as the 1st egg is laid
- Females develop a “brood patch” that is a featherless area on the abdomen
- Brooding = female sits on chicks to keep them warm until they have enough feathers
- Branching = young climb out onto tree branch
- Fledging = short flights out of nest



Photos by Gerry Hans

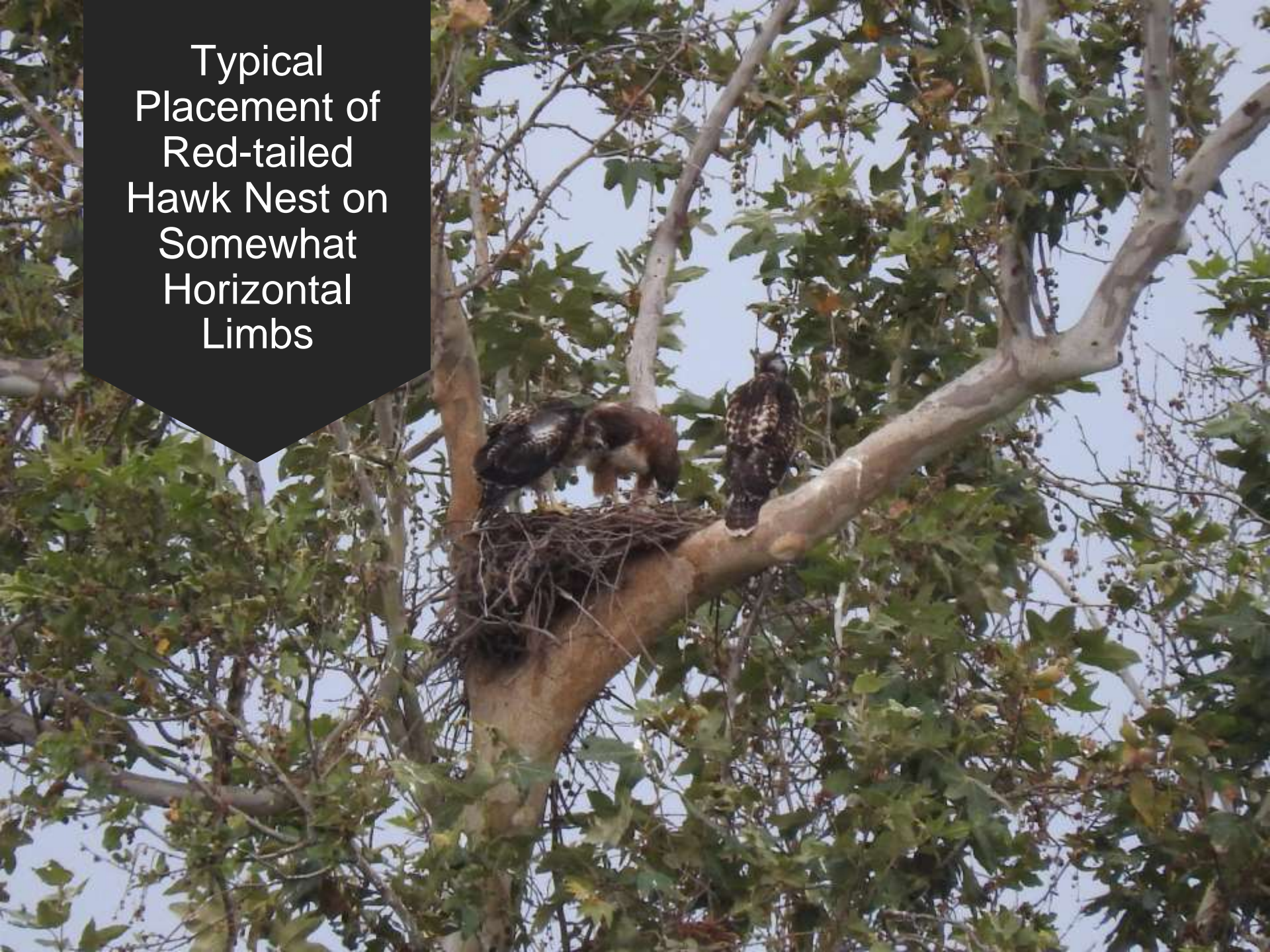


What Am I?

Red-tailed hawks

- Typically Large, Broad and Flat Nest – Saucer or Large Cup Shape
- Nest mostly in PINES but can use Willows, Oaks, Eucalyptus, Sycamores, Cliffs, and Power Towers.
- Nest usually on hillside overlooking valleys
- Nests can be hard to spot sometimes

Typical
Placement of
Red-tailed
Hawk Nest on
Somewhat
Horizontal
Limbs



Typical
Saucer
shape
(Red-tailed
Hawk Nest)



Red-shouldered hawk

- Medium Cup or Saucer Shaped Nest
- Typically Nests in Sycamores, Willows, Oaks, Eucalyptus and other Non-Natives, and Palms
- Nests usually more concealed than Red-tailed hawk
- Nest in low-lying areas



Red-shouldered Hawk



**Red-
shouldered
Hawk
(almost
cone-
shaped)**



Cooper's hawk

- Typically Cup Shape
- Nest in FICUS, Eucalyptus, other Non-Natives, & Sycamores
- Nests are in well leafed out trees and in low lying areas
- Nests are usually difficult to spot



Cooper's Hawk



**Active Cooper's Hawk Nests
Have Lots of Down Feathers Attached**

**Cooper's
Hawks
Typically
Prefer
a Well-
Leafed-Out
Tree**





Photos by Gerry Hans

Typical Raven – use other raptor nests, white trash in nest

Raptor Monitoring Methodology

Surveys conducted on foot using binoculars & spotting scopes



Active nests are monitored regularly to document egg laying, incubation, hatching and fledging

Overview of Monitoring Process

1

Volunteer workshop
and training held in the
beginning of season

2

Volunteers are
assigned nests to
monitor nest 2 times a
month from February
through July

3

Collect data on
supplied data form

4

Submit data to Raptor
Survey Team within 1
week of visit

GP Raptor Monitoring Protocol

Materials

- Map & directions to nest location (provided)
- Monitoring datasheet (provided)
- Binoculars
- Spotting scope (if necessary)
- Clip board, sharpie, pens/pencils
- Cell phone
- Parks & Rec contact info (for emergencies)
- Standard outdoor gear/provisions (water, hat, sunscreen, sturdy shoes, cell phone, long sleeves/pants, snacks)
- GPS unit (preferred, but optional)

GP Raptor Monitoring Protocol

- Monitoring in public places – “Enter at your Own Risk”
 - Do not need to alert us of your intent to monitor BUT...
 - Let someone know where you are going and when you expect to return
 - Follow local park rules
 - Griffith Park Ranger Dispatch (323) 644 - 6661
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- Avoid, when feasible, attracting the attention of others to the nest location
 - Stay on existing trails as much as possible
 - Bring non-survey volunteers but make sure they are not distracting, avoid loud conversations

GP Raptor Monitoring Protocol

Minimizing Disturbance/Impacts

- Remember, you are also creating a disturbance by observing these birds
- Minimize time spent at the nest—just enough to determine nesting status.
- Leave or back off if you flush a raptor from its nest or if you think you are disturbing either the adults or chicks.
- The use of audio playback to induce a visual observation or vocalization is prohibited.
- Participants should not linger at nest site unnecessarily or use this program as an opportunity to pursue other interests like wildlife photography.

What to do when you find a new nest

- Be aware of the nest stage and raptor sensitivity
- Collect data
 - Photo of nest & nest tree (iphone photo OK)
 - Tree ID
 - Nest stage (incubating, chicks, nest building)
 - Raptor ID
 - Location – GPS coordinates
 - Any relevant notes or observations

NEST	Observers	Date	Hours	Nest Number	Visitation	Species	UTM	Rearing behavior	# of chicks	Nest condition	Notes
RTHA-LA-131 (Debs Park Nursery)	[REDACTED]	3/3/18	12:30-1:15	RTHA-LA-131	1st	RTHA		incubating	n/a	good	1 hawk sitting on nest for most of the time (couldn't see directly into the nest but saw the hawk coming and going). She left briefly to fly with another hawk.
		3/6/18	9-9:15am	RTHA-LA-131	2nd	RTHA			n/a	good	No hawks visible but I heard one calling out from the vicinity of the nest when some ravens flew overhead. I am guessing that it was in the nest as the same thing happened last time.
		3/13/18	11-11:30am	RTHA-LA-131	3rd	RTHA		incubating	n/a	good	Observed both hawks sitting on the nest. Looks like the branches shifted so I got a clearer view into the nest. One stayed in the nest the entire time I watched while the second one visited the nest briefly. (or maybe they switched places, I couldn't tell)
		3/20/18	9:45-10am	RTHA-LA-131	4th	RTHA		probably incubating	n/a	good	I didn't see any hawks in the short time I had to observe but I did hear one call out from the vicinity of the nest.
		3/27/18	10-10:15am	RTHA-LA-131	5th	RTHA		incubating	n/a	good	
		4/3/18	5:45-6:45pm	RTHA-LA-131	6th	RTHA		incubating	n/a	good	
		4/13/18	6:30-6:45pm	RTHA-LA-131	7th	RTHA				good	one RTHA was standing on edge of nest for the entire observation period.
		4/20/18	8:30-8:45am	RTHA-LA-131	8th	RTHA		chicks being fed		2 good	Observed RTHA bring prey to the nest and feed to at least 2 chicks.
		5/6/18	7-7:15pm	RTHA-LA-131	9th	RTHA		chicks stretching and flap		3 good	The chicks have lost their white fuzzy feathers and grown in brown feathers. The adult brought what looked like a branch to the nest.
		6/3/18	5-5:15pm	RTHA-LA-131	10th	RTHA		none		0 good	No activity at the nest.
UNK-89 (Bard St)	[REDACTED]	3/21/18	6:30-6:45pm	UNK-89	1st	RTHA		incubating	n/a	good	Nest was clearly visible from Bard St with one hawk sitting on nest and the other one perched nearby, then flying and perching right next to the nest.
		3/31/18	1:15-1:30pm		2nd	RTHA		incubating	n/a	good	
		4/20/18	4:30-4:45		3rd	RTHA		incubating	n/a	good	
		5/6/18	10:45-11am		4th	RTHA		fuzzy white chick (s) in th	1	good	
		6/1/18	4-4:15pm		5th	RTHA		1 chick with brown pluma	1	good	
UNK-90 (Landa St)	[REDACTED]	3/21/18	6:50-7:05pm	UNK-89	1st	none		none	none	none	I didn't see a nest in any of the trees near the GPS coordinates or any raptor activity. I will check again next week.
		3/31/18	2-2:30pm		2nd	none		none	none	none	Didn't see anything. Heard a loud bird noise coming from nearby trees that could have been a hawk.
		5/6/18	10:30-10:45am		3rd	none		none	none	none	no observed activity.
UNK-85 (Fletcher/Glendale)	[REDACTED]	3/22/18	6:30-7:15pm		1st	RTHA		none			I watched a red tailed hawk perch on several trees in the area but couldn't locate a nest yet, due to low visibility from hills/trees/rain/sunset. I spoke to a neighbor who said the hawk has been around for years and has a mate.
		3/25/18	2-3pm		2nd	RTHA		courting, nest building			Observed 2 hawks flying together, one with legs hanging below. One hawk brought a stick to a pine tree located above Glendale Blvd. No nest visible but could be hidden in the branches.
		4/4/18	7-7:30pm		3rd						watched suspected tree, didn't see any activity

Send Data

- Send data within a week of your monitoring efforts
- Scan your data sheet OR
- Enter data into excel and send in
- griffithparkraptors@gmail.com

What do I do if I am unable to monitor??

LET US KNOW! Please email us so that we may go out and monitor your nest to avoid large gaps in data.

2017 Survey Results

Over 100 confirmed
or potential nests

60 active & identified
to species

32 fledged nests
(>50%)

Red-tailed hawks
most common (22
nests)

Cooper's hawks 2nd
most common (17
nests)

Great Horned owl &
Red-shouldered
hawk (5 nests)

Pine trees
represented 40% of
the nest substrate,
ficus important as
well

Lack of nests in
Griffith Park interior

2018 Survey Results

Over 100 confirmed
or potential nests

55 active & identified
to species

Red-tailed hawks
most common (29
nests)

45 fledged nests
(>75%)

Cooper's hawks 2nd
most common (16
nests)

Great Horned owl (4)
& Red-shouldered
hawk (6)

Pine trees
represented 45% of
the nest substrate,
euc. and syc.
important as well

Lack of nests in
Griffith Park interior

2019 Survey Results

Over 100
confirmed or
potential nests

60 active &
identified to
species

High fledge rate of
86%

Red-tailed hawks
most common (33
nests)

Cooper's hawk
and Great Horned
owl 2nd with 11 &
12 active nests

Red-shouldered
hawk least
common with 4
active nests

Non-native trees
important nesting
habitat

Nest re-use high
(47%)

