

HAWKS ALONG THE DELAWARE

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This article follows the trail blazed in *Cassinia* by "Ducks Along the Delaware" by Dale Coman in 1944 and "Shore Birds Along the Delaware" by Edward Manners in 1945, .

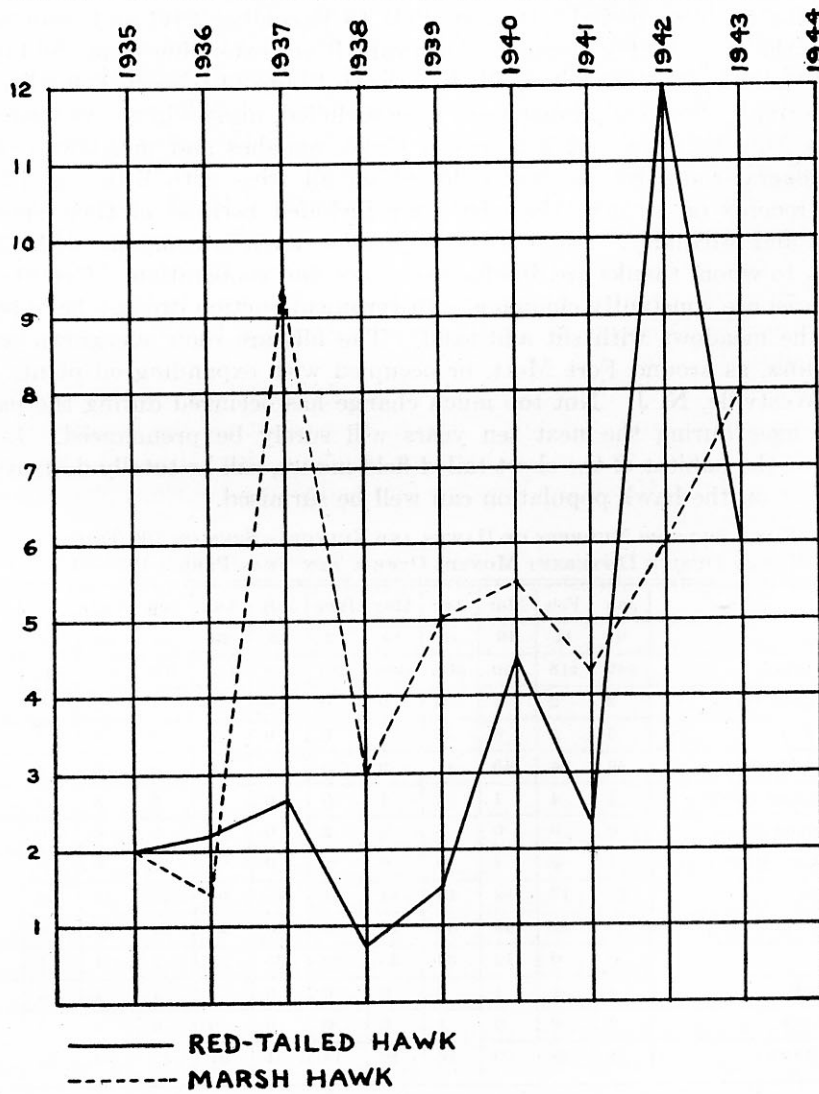
The area covered by this study is slightly more restricted than that covered in the previous studies. The hawk and vulture counts were made during the ten year period—January 1935 to December 1944 and were confined to the low country along the Delaware River extending from the lower edge of Camden, N. J. to Salem, N. J. between Route 44 (Crown Point Road) and the river. Some adjoining areas were included, mostly in Salem County, such as Marshalltown and Manington Creek marshes and meadows. The same general route by car was followed on all trips with little variation. A few records on or near the edge were included because of their special interest and proximity. Most of the trips were taken in company with Dale Coman, to whom thanks are due for assistance and cooperation. Conditions in the area are constantly changing. Government suction dredges have been filling the meadows with silt and sand. The fills are soon overgrown with *Phragmites*, as around Fort Mott, or occupied with expanding oil plants, as below Westville, N. J. Not too much change has occurred during the past, but changes during the next ten years will surely be pronounced. Lush meadows, the habitat of the short-tailed field mouse, will be totally destroyed. The effect on the hawk population can well be surmised.

TABLE SHOWING NUMBERS OF HAWKS AND VULTURES SEEN ON 196 TRIPS
TAKEN DURING DIFFERENT MONTHS OVER A TEN YEAR PERIOD 1935-44.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
No. of trips	9	11	19	16	19	12	15	20	16	23	27	10
Turkey Vulture	340	118	440	506	386	225	218	134	404	384	543	119
Sharp shinned Hawk	2	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1
Cooper's Hawk	5	2	6	1	1	0	0	6	2	3	14	2
Red-tailed Hawk	46	24	45	17	9	0	1	0	0	5	71	52
Red-shouldered Hawk	2	4	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	3	3	2
Broad-winged Hawk	0	0	0	4	3	2	0	2	0	0	0	0
Rough-legged Hawk	4	3	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	6
Blad Eagle	34	17	52	16	14	21	17	64	12	39	48	16
Marsh Hawk	33	22	49	36	19	8	13	24	67	93	120	33
Osprey	0	0	12	58	23	22	25	22	7	1	1	0
Duck Hawk	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	5	1
Pigeon Hawk	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Sparrow Hawk	51	23	70	46	16	14	21	21	35	59	52	35

TABLE AND GRAPH TO SHOW YEARS OF ABUNDANCE OR SCARCITY OF HAWKS OVER A TEN YEAR PERIOD 1935-44 USING AVERAGE NUMBER OF RED-TAILED HAWKS AND MARSH HAWKS SEEN IN NOVEMBER OF EACH YEAR AS EXAMPLES.

Nov.	trips	Red tailed Hawks	average	Marsh Hawks	average	Nov.	trips	Red tailed Hawks	average	Marsh Hawks	average
1935	1	2	2	2	2	1940	2	9	4 1/2	11	5 1/2
1936	5	11	2 1/5	7	1 2/5	1941	6	14	2 1/3	26	4 1/3
1937	3	8	2 2/3	28	9 1/3	1942	1	12	12	6	6
1938	4	3	3/4	12	3	1943	1	6	6	8	8
1939	4	6	1 1/2	20	5	1944	0	0	0	0	0



It is the aim of this article to place on record the present status of the hawks in this area along the Delaware as observed by the writer and furnish data for a comparative study about ten years hence.

STATUS OF THE VARIOUS SPECIES

Turkey Vulture: This vulture is the most common and the most conspicuous raptor in this area. It is a permanent resident. This bird is apparently commonest during the months of March, April and May. Sixteen trips in April during the ten year period resulted in a count of 506.

Black Vulture: One was seen in the area by Joseph Jacobs and Edward Manners near Fort Mott on November 7, 1943. The vulture was among a large company of Turkey Vultures. Richard F. Miller found one at Alloway, N. J., just outside the area November 18, 1939. (Cassinia 1938-41, p. 48).

Goshawk: We have only one record for the area for the ten year period. Dale Coman had a fine view of one at Fort Mott, December 9, 1944, as it passed by at eye level at a distance of thirty feet.

Sharp-shinned Hawk: Only eight Sharp-shinned Hawks were recorded during the period and none of these during the breeding season. During a northwest gale at Hancock Bridge, N. J. (just outside the area), October 31, 1937, twelve were counted during a short time. This may be the point where hawks cross the Delaware River after working up the bay shore from Cape May against the wind.

Cooper's Hawk: This hawk breeds in the area and was seen every month of the year except June and July. The highest count for one month was six in November 1941. It is apparently less common than either the Sparrow Hawk or the Marsh Hawk as a breeding bird and thus takes third place among the breeding hawks.

Red-tailed Hawk: Several nests of this hawk have been discovered in the area, and it is quite safe to say that the Red-tailed Hawk is a year around resident. It seems to have largely replaced the Red-shouldered Hawk in recent years as a breeding bird. The Red-tailed Hawk frequents the river meadows and can usually be seen perched on some exposed tree patiently scanning the ground for field mice. The highest count of the period for any one month was in November, when 71 were recorded.

Red-shouldered Hawk: This hawk was not noted very frequently but was seen every month in the year except June, July, August and September. The Red-shouldered Hawk is a rare resident. Edward Manners found a nest of this species at Wenonah, N. J. (on the edge of the area) in April, 1944. A high count of four was made during the months of February.

Broad-winged Hawk: The Broad-winged Hawk, although a breeding bird in the area, is not at all common. There are few suitable woodland areas that provide the nesting requirements of this hawk. It was not observed earlier than April or later than August during the study.

Rough-legged Hawk: This hawk occurred infrequently in the area. Before the Fort Mott fill was established the Rough-legged Hawk could be

seen nearly every winter with reasonable certainty. December produced six records for the period.

Bald Eagle: The Bald Eagle is a permanent resident in the area, and as late as 1948 there were at least four occupied nests in or close to the area in Gloucester and Salem counties, N. J. Before the Fort Mott area was filled, it was a fine feeding place for eagles, and on August 1, 1937, sixteen eagles (immature birds) were counted. It was here also that an eagle was observed capturing a wounded Black (?) Duck. As the eagle approached, the ducks with one exception rose from the water. The eagle hovered and made a pass at the duck which dived. This performance was repeated several times. Finally the duck came up exhausted. The eagle easily snatched it from the surface of the water. The legs of the duck could be seen paddling the air as the eagle made off with it.

Marsh Hawk: The Marsh Hawk ranks next to the Sparrow Hawk in abundance as a breeding bird. It is a permanent resident and seems to be most common in November. Ten Novembers produced 120 Marsh Hawks.

Osprey: The Osprey appears in March and can be seen throughout the summer and fall although rarely in November for which there is a lone record, November 7, 1943. It nests in the area. The nearest nest to Philadelphia is one at National Park (White Bridge). Ten years' data indicate April as being the best month for Ospreys. Fifty-eight were seen in ten trips during ten Aprils.

Duck Hawk: Duck Hawks may be seen almost any time of the year, although they are far from common. Twelve records for the period show the Duck Hawk to be most numerous in November.

Pigeon Hawk: This falcon apparently is a rare migrant in the area. There are only two records, one in April and one in October.

Sparrow Hawk: This little falcon is the most common resident hawk. A telephone pole or wire seems to be the usual place for it to perch. Nineteen trips in ten months of May resulted in a low count of sixteen Sparrow Hawks; eighteen trips in ten months of March accounted for seventy—the high count.