

Bird Field Note
Common Poorwills, Raptor Migration, Osprey Telemetry, and Raptor Breeding
5/16/15
Compiled by: Debbie Leick



Two runaway mules from a neighboring property visited this week. Their owner enticed them back home with a feedbag of grain.

Common Poorwill Update

Kate Stone

This week we captured four male Common Poorwills. To catch them we set up mist nets and played an audio lure in a known territory. This poorwill approached our net array and audio lure while it was still light. He easily maneuvered around our nets, and then sat on the ground next to our speaker. He flared his white throat patch and made low grumbling and hissing noises. When he tried to fly away, he flew right into our net. We've seen this aggressive behavior twice.



Poorwills have a huge wingspan for a bird that weighs less than a robin. Males have bright white tail tips, like those seen here.



Common Poorwills exhibit several interesting features, such as a mouth structure adapted to swallowing insects and a combed middle toe. The function of their toe structure is unknown.



The poorwills were generally calm during processing, though they sometimes hissed at us.





Most poorwill roosts we documented were on the ground near the base of a shrub. After a rainstorm, Mat found one roosting a few feet off the ground in a deciduous shrub.





This poorwill roosted just off of Whaley Draw road. Two poorwills tracked in this area appear to be roosting near females, suggesting that they are close to nest initiation. Mat found one potential nest scrape and roosts that show signs of repeated use.



Raptor View Research Institute
Adam Shreading
Spring Migration Summary
5/16/15



We concluded our spring count this week, with a season total of 1,317 migrating raptors, compared to 1,097 in 2014, and 2,237 in 2013. In general, species totals were similar to 2014, with the exception of more Cooper's Hawks, Red-tailed Hawks and larger-sized falcons counted this year, but fewer Golden Eagles and American Kestrels.

Spring Migration Count Totals				
		2015	2014	2013
Eagles	Golden Eagle	45	52	127
	Bald Eagle	16	19	51
	Unknown Eagle	4	8	4
Accipiters	Sharp-shinned Hawk	183	178	319
	Cooper's Hawk	222	158	185
	Northern Goshawk	4	1	11
	Unknown Accipiter	45	40	72
Buteos	Red-tailed Hawk	322	205	476
	Rough-legged Hawk	48	64	197
	Swainson's Hawk	16	10	36
	Broad-winged Hawk	2	1	11
	Ferruginous Hawk	3	1	7
	Unknown Buteo	54	32	58
Falcons	American Kestrel	68	100	156
	Merlin	2	4	9
	Peregrine Falcon	7	4	6
	Prairie Falcon	11	4	6
	Unknown Falcon	4	2	2
Other	Northern Harrier	65	52	149
	Osprey	46	51	85
	Turkey Vulture	117	101	223
	Unknown Hawk	33	10	47
	<i>TOTAL</i>	<i>1,317</i>	1,097	2,237

A Tree Swallow momentarily perched at the count site.

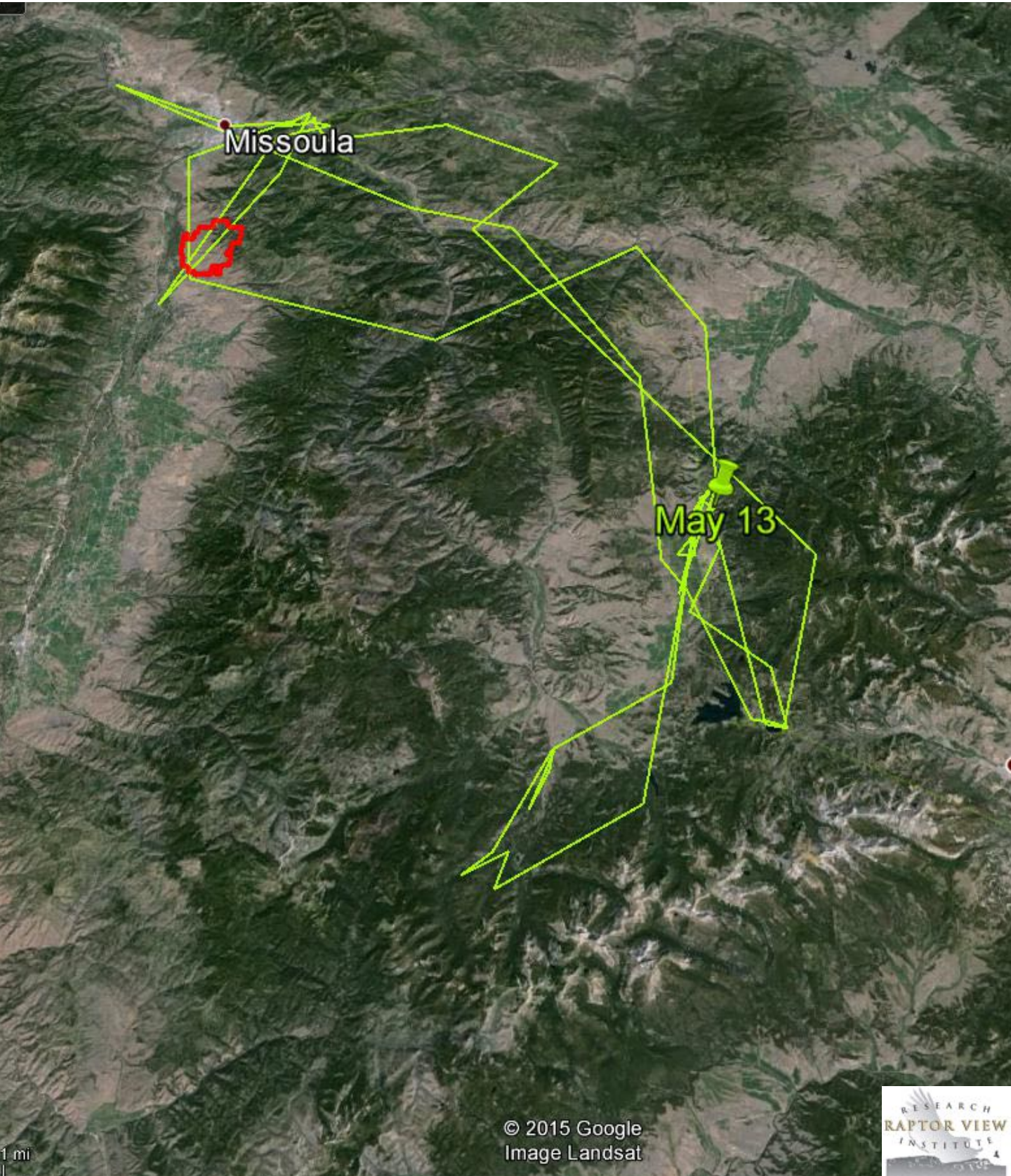


Red-tailed Hawks are the most frequently counted species in both our fall and spring counts.



Osprey Satellite Telemetry Update

Rapunzel's nomadic behavior from last summer seems to have resumed this spring. Since arriving in Montana from her Texas wintering grounds at the end of April, she hasn't remained still for more than a couple of days. So far, her journey has been confined to Western Montana, including two stops near MPG Ranch. Currently, she is near Philipsburg,



Summer Raptor Breeding Projects

Red-tailed Hawks

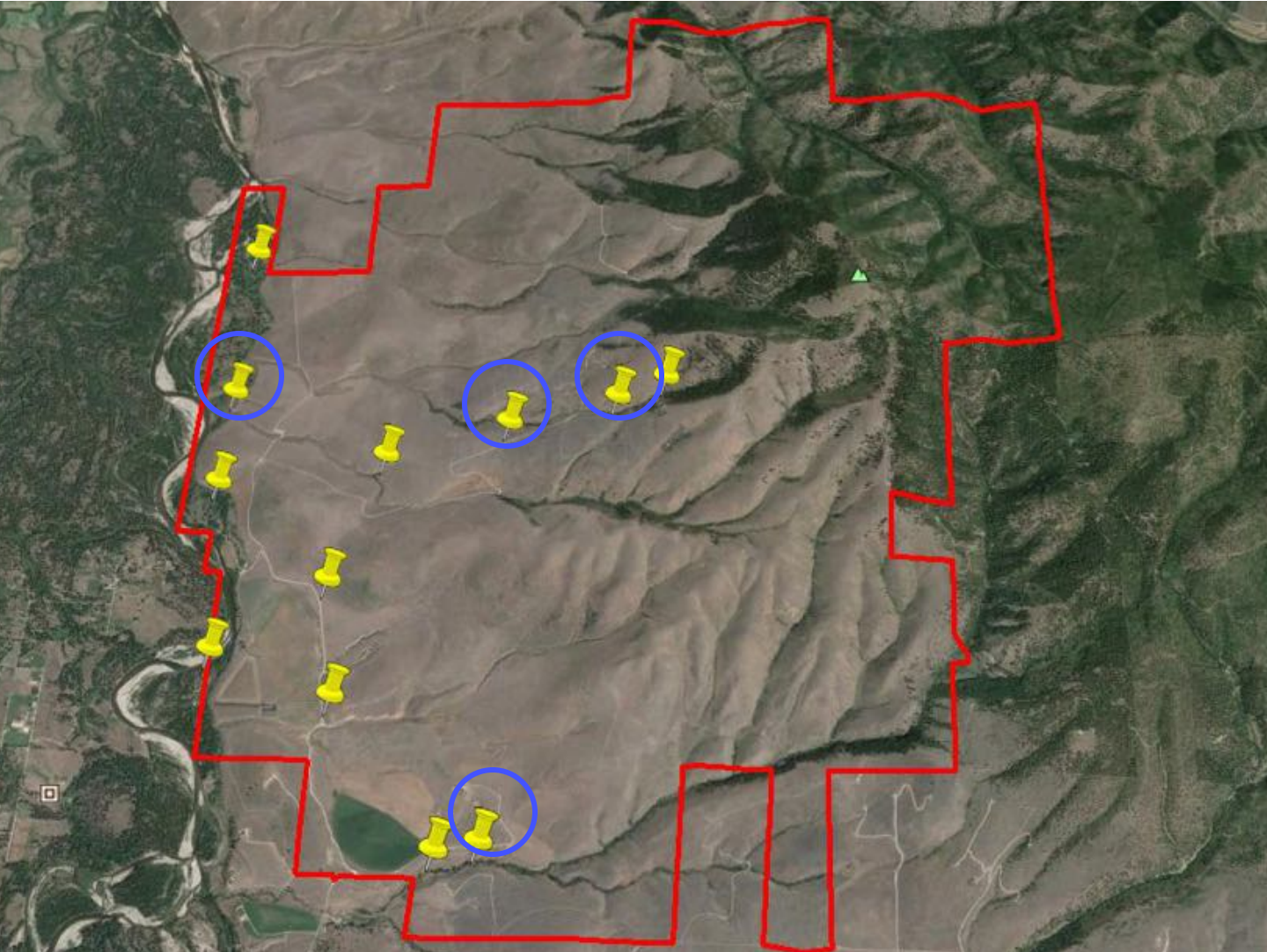
As spring migration comes to a close, most of the raptors that breed here have returned to their territories. These week-old chicks in Lower Woodchuck were the first Red-tailed Hawks to hatch on the ranch. This year we will begin tracking Red-tailed Hawks to learn how their territories relate to each other, where they spend winters, and which migratory routes they use.



Summer Raptor Breeding Projects

American Kestrels

American Kestrels began arriving in early April, but only recently settled into their territories to lay eggs. So far, we detected pairs of American Kestrels at the 12 territories marked with yellow pins on this map. We documented eggs at the four circled territories.



The lack of a distinct, black trailing edge on the tail of this American Kestrel helps identify it as a female.



We reencountered six American Kestrels banded in previous seasons. We banded this adult male (top right) in the summer of 2012. Since then, we have documented his nesting efforts in each successive breeding season.



We captured this adult male at his nest north of the Clubhouse Pond last year, and saw him in a nearby area this week. We expect to encounter more banded birds during the next few weeks.



This year we will investigate where MPG American Kestrels go during the winter. Our color-marking efforts show that breeding kestrels return to the ranch each season. This makes the species a good candidate for pin-point GPS transmitters. Pinpoint data requires recovery of the transmitter. To maximize success, we will favor the individuals we see most frequently, like female AK-62, who has used the same nesting territory for the past three years.



We hope to put these GPS units on 15 American Kestrels this summer. Because this is our first time tracking the species, we will closely monitor AK-62 over the next two weeks before outfitting other individuals.

