

**Raptor View Research Institute**  
**Research Update**  
**MPG Ranch**  
**4/3/15**



Winter Eagle Trapping.....	2
Spring Migration	
• Raptor Counts.....	7
• Satellite Telemetry .....	10

## Winter Eagle Trapping

We concluded our fourth winter of eagle research in the second week of March. We captured a total of 20 eagles this season, 11 Golden and nine Bald. We outfitted four adult Golden Eagles with satellite transmitters and marked six younger Golden Eagles with wing tags. We marked all nine Bald Eagles with colored leg bands. We took blood samples from each eagle and tested it for concentrations of lead. As in previous years, the majority of individuals had elevated blood-lead levels; to date, approximately 90% of the eagles captured on the MPG Ranch had blood-lead levels higher than what we would expect from the environment alone.



After giving it a colored leg band, we released this young Bald Eagle.



We also collected parasites from 13 eagles, which will be identified by colleagues at Oklahoma State University. We spend the same amount of time on each region of feathers to standardize the amount of effort between individuals. Currently, we know very little about the type and amount of parasites Golden and Bald Eagles carry.



This young Golden Eagle was the last bird captured this season. To date, we have captured a total of 70 eagles on the MPG Ranch!





Earlier this winter, we shared the story of an adult female Golden Eagle originally captured on January 7, 2013 and outfitted with a satellite transmitter. After spending the summer in Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, the eagle returned to the MPG Ranch in the winter of 2014. We recaptured it on December 27. We removed the transmitter (which was nearing the end of its life cycle), outfitted the bird with wing tags, and sent it on its way. On January 21, a camera set up by Alan Ramsey and Craig Jourdonnais captured the eagle feeding on an elk carcass on the Bolin Ranch, near Stevensville, MT. Apparently, being captured twice on carcasses hasn't deterred this individual from scavenging!



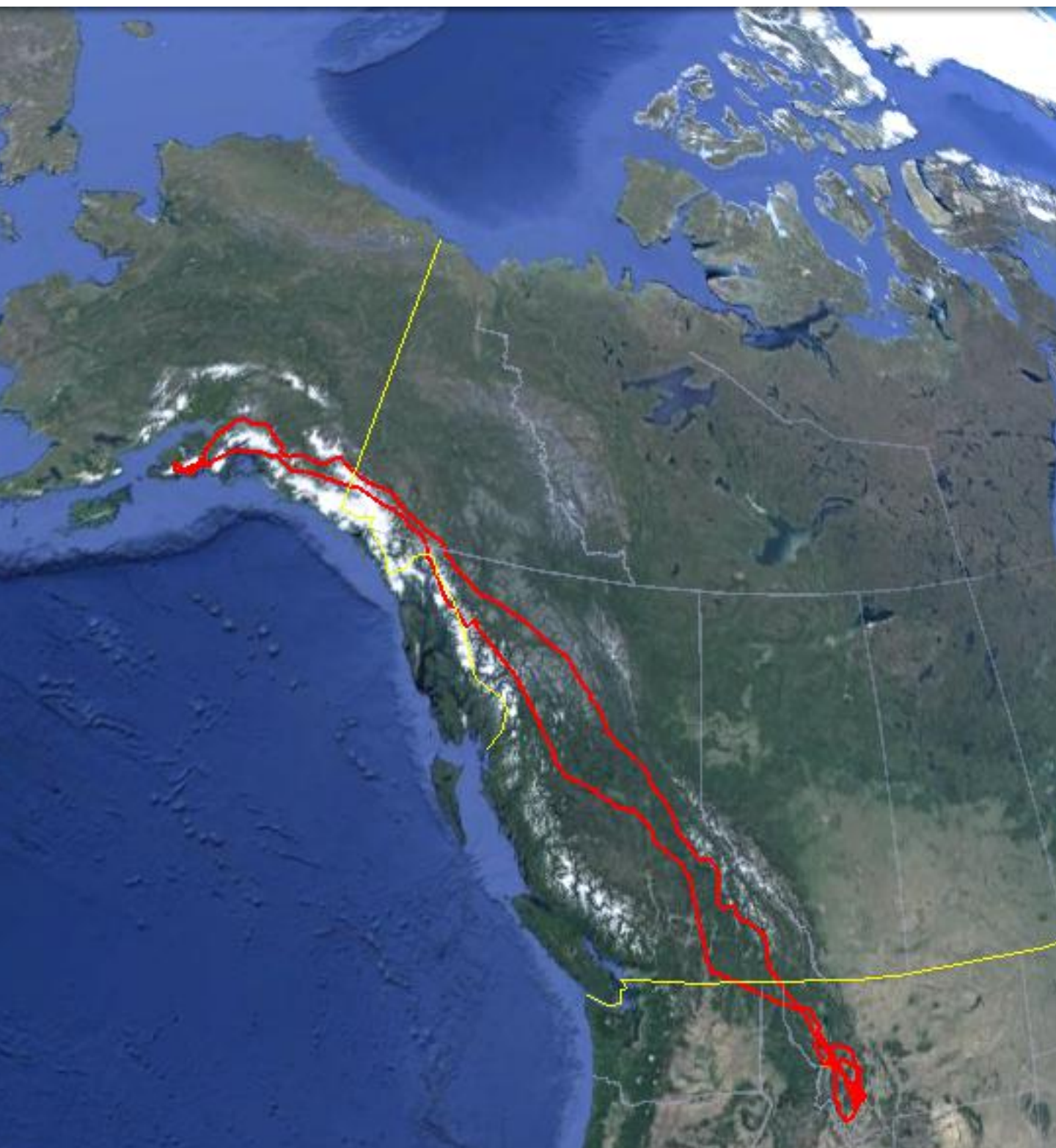
December 27, 2014, MPG Ranch



January 21, 2015, Bolin Ranch



On March 1, 2015, the transmitter on a male Golden Eagle stopped moving near Dillon, MT. We originally captured the eagle on the MPG Ranch February 7, 2014, and, after spending the remainder of the winter in the Dillon area, it traveled to southeastern Alaska for the summer. The eagle returned to Montana this winter, dividing it's time between the Bitterroot and Beaverhead Valleys, before it's signal stopped moving in early March.



This path shows the movements of the male Golden Eagle from February 7, 2014- March 1, 2015.



Though the GPS units provide locations accurate within 25 meters, their small size can make them a challenge to find. The sparse vegetation at the location of the downed transmitter made searching fairly easy. We found the transmitter in view of McCartney Mountain, an area the eagle frequented. Upon inspection, we saw that the break-away harness had functioned just as it was designed. Our goal is to have the birds drop the transmitters after one to three years of wear, before the units stop functioning. Then we can recover and refurbish the transmitters for future use, and the eagle isn't saddled with the device for its entire lifetime, which could be upwards of 30 years!



McCartney Mountain, near Dillon, MT

## Spring Migration: Raptor Counts

On March 15, we began our fifth consecutive season of monitoring the spring hawk migration over the MPG Ranch. This year's counters include Kerr Rasmussen from MPG Ranch, and Cherin Chapman, John Csoka, and Jessica Taylor from Raptor View Research Institute. So far, they have counted a total of 250 raptors. As in previous years, Red-tailed Hawks, Golden Eagles, and Rough-legged Hawks dominate the early-season migrants.

Spring 2015 Seasonal Raptor Totals (3/15-3/31)		
		Season Total
Eagles	Golden Eagle	<b>34</b>
	Bald Eagle	<b>9</b>
	Unknown Eagle	<b>4</b>
Accipiters	Sharp-shinned Hawk	<b>1</b>
	Cooper's Hawk	<b>13</b>
	Northern Goshawk	<b>1</b>
	Unknown Accipiter	<b>1</b>
Buteos	Red-tailed Hawk	<b>112</b>
	Rough-legged Hawk	<b>16</b>
	Swainson's Hawk	<b>0</b>
	Broad-winged Hawk	<b>0</b>
	Ferruginous Hawk	<b>0</b>
	Unknown Buteo	<b>25</b>
Falcons	American Kestrel	<b>3</b>
	Merlin	<b>0</b>
	Peregrine Falcon	<b>0</b>
	Prairie Falcon	<b>1</b>
	Unknown Falcon	<b>0</b>
Other	Northern Harrier	<b>8</b>
	Osprey	<b>0</b>
	Turkey Vulture	<b>15</b>
	Unknown Hawk	<b>7</b>





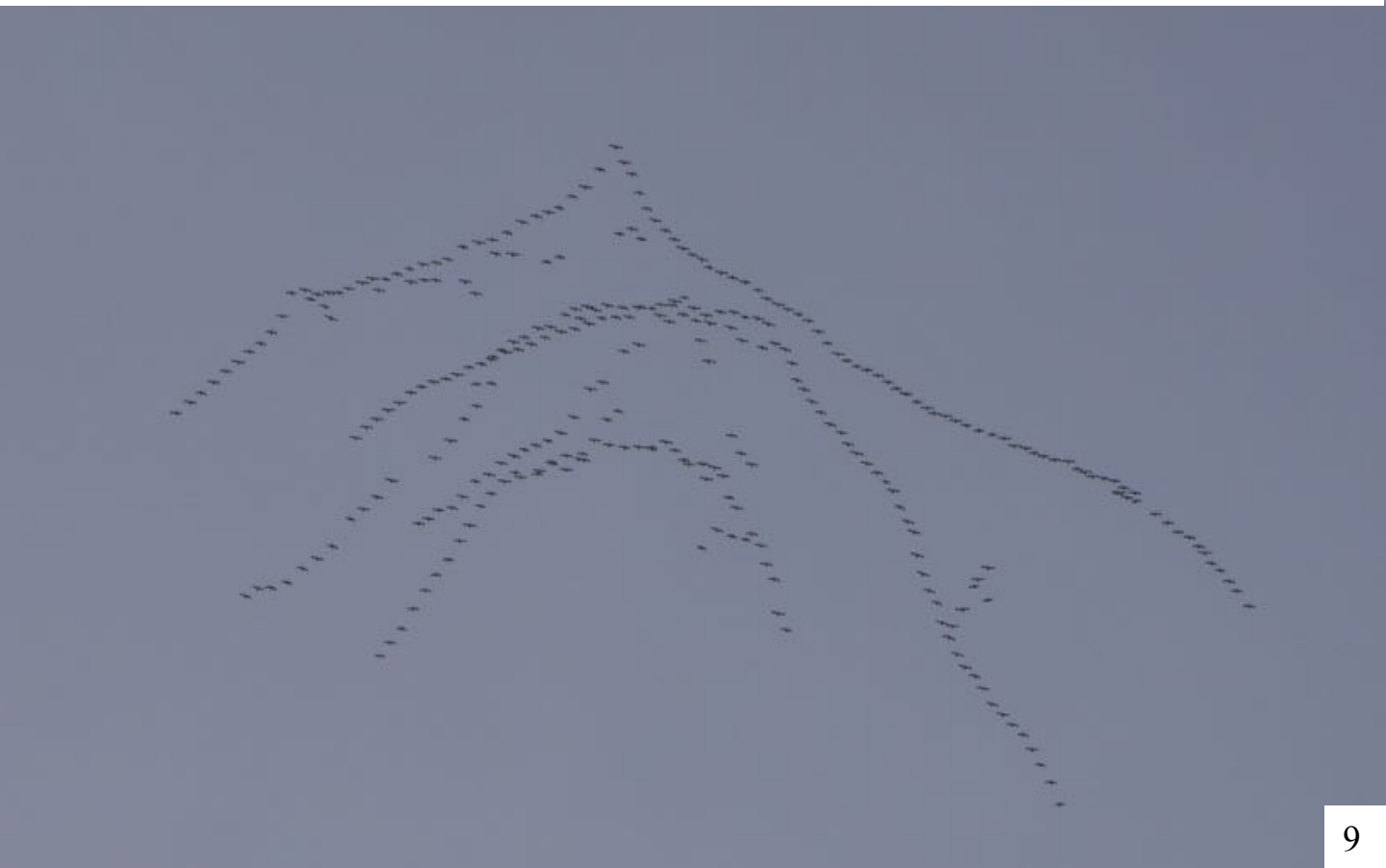
We have already seen diverse weather conditions this season, from warm and sunny, to cold with rain showers.





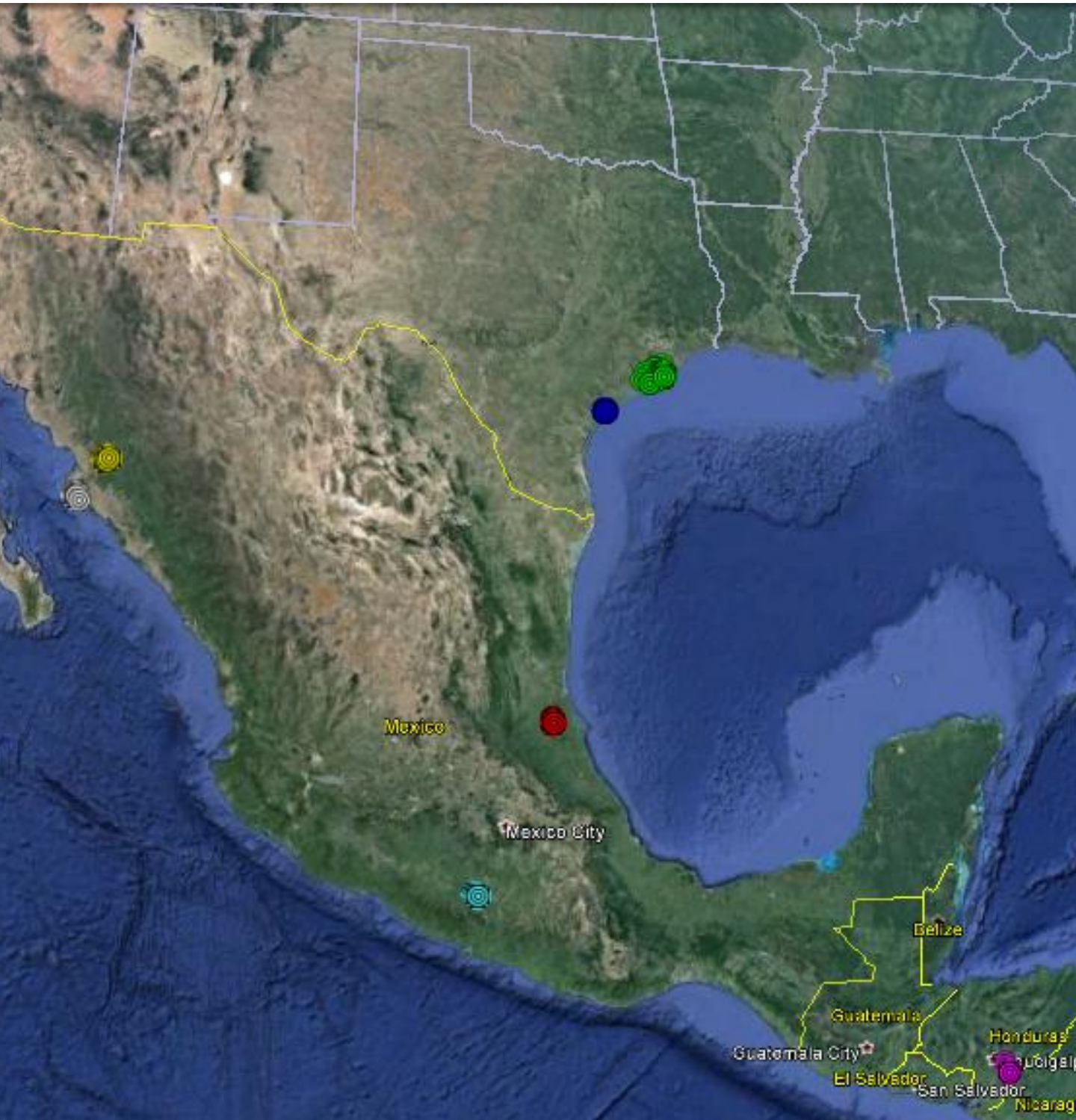


We frequently see large flocks of Snow Geese, especially early in the season.



## Spring Migration: Satellite Telemetry

Spring migration is an exciting time to monitor our satellite tracked birds. To date we have instrumented 18 Golden Eagles and 16 Ospreys with GPS units. We currently have eight Golden Eagle and seven Osprey transmitters active. As of April 1, 2015, none of the Ospreys started their spring journeys; we don't expect them to start moving until the first or second week of April.



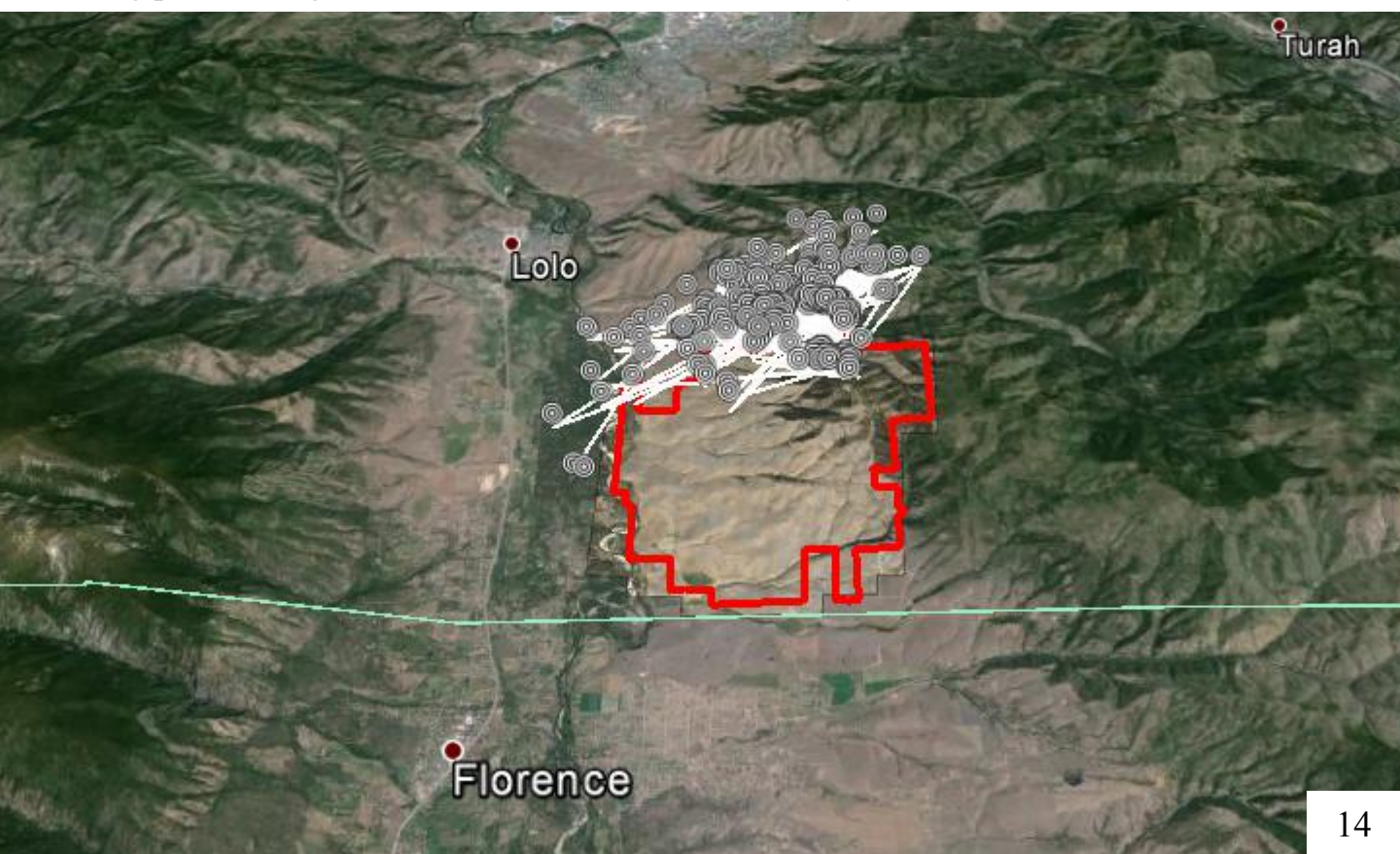
All seven of the Ospreys we are tracking are still on their wintering grounds.



This adult male Golden Eagle seemed to be migrating since his capture on January 7, 2015. Currently, he is near McBride, British Columbia, where he has been since February 26. We do not expect him to travel any further north.



We captured this adult female Golden Eagle this past winter. She appears to be part of a breeding pair nesting on MPG Ranch’s northern boundary.





Golden Eagle migration is well under way. After spending the winter near Craig, Colorado, this adult male Golden Eagle started heading north on March 8. So far, he has completed approximately 2/3 the journey to where he spent last summer.

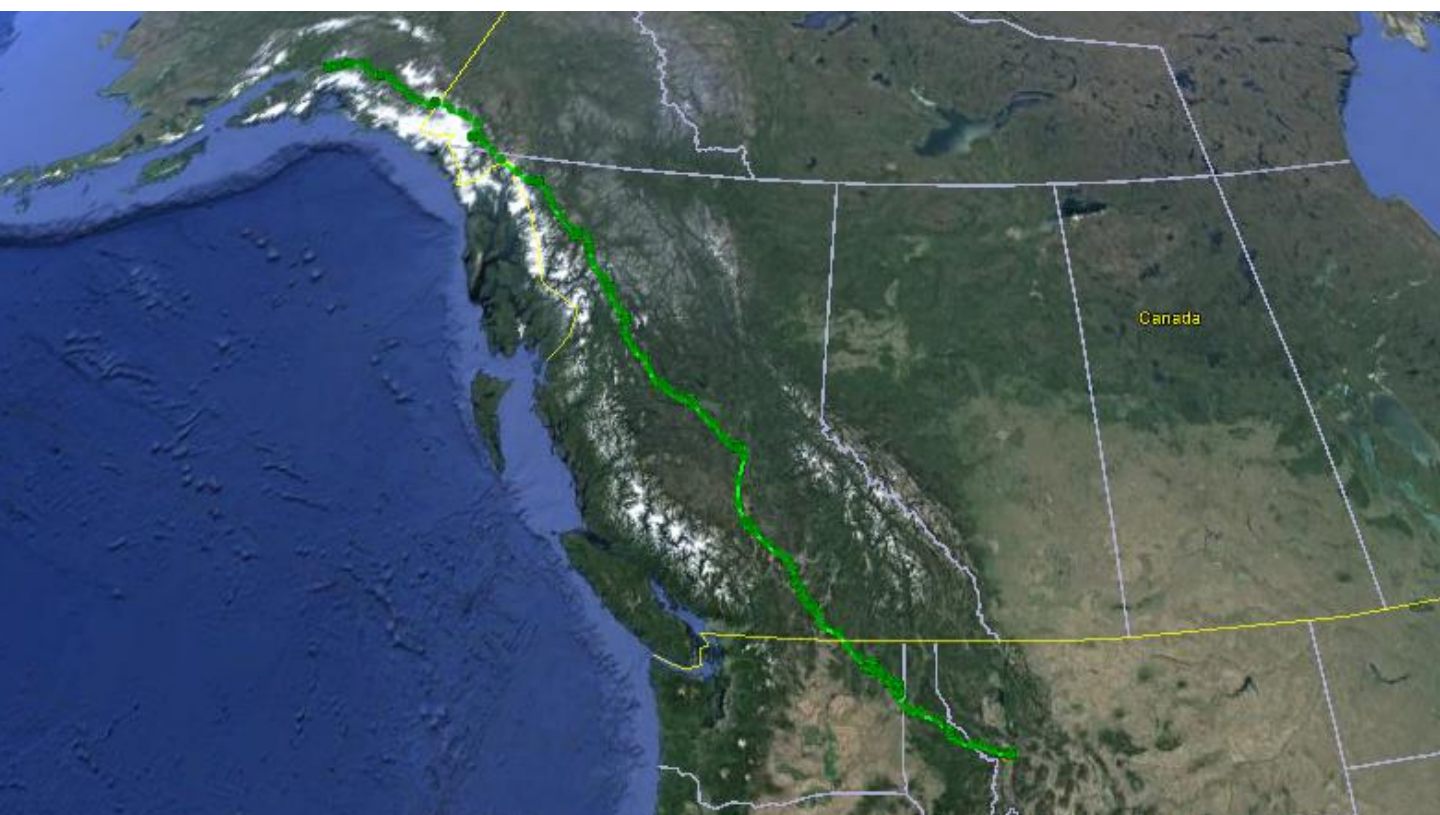


This adult male Golden Eagle is a Montana resident, and has adhered closely to the Skalkaho Creek drainage for over a year. Though we were unable to find a nest in the area last summer, we will try again this season.





This adult female Golden Eagle is currently further north than any other tracked individual. She left the Bitterroot Valley on February 15, and reached her summer range on March 24. She used the same summer range last year.



We banded this male Golden Eagle as a third-year bird on January 30, 2014. He should be of breeding age this year. We look forward to seeing how his movements this summer will compare to that of last summer, when he ranged all over Alaska.





This adult male Golden Eagle has remained on a territory in southern Canada for over a year. It is unlikely he will leave this area during the coming months.



This adult male Golden Eagle remained in the Bitterroot Valley for three weeks after capture on February 15, 2015. On March 9, he moved southeast to towards Whitehall, where he stayed approximately one week before heading north. Currently he is in southern British Columbia, continuing to move north.

