

MACALESTER COLLEGE

SAINT PAUL, MINNESOTA 55105

■ DEPARTMENT OF BIOLOGY

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Subject: BIRDS of PREY at ORDWAY.

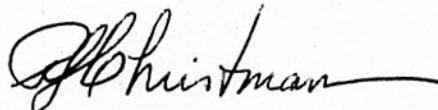
Perhaps the most frequently-seen bird of prey at Ordway is the Red-tailed Hawk (Buteo jamaicensis). In the autumn he is rather active, soaring over the grasslands seeking an opportunity to entalon some hapless Meadow Vole, themselves very busy with the imminent advent of the wintry season; or he sits on one of his four or five "hunting lookouts" and majestically surveys the surroundings. One of his perches is in a Pin Oak tree alongside the footpath and it is not unusual to cause him to fly away from this perch to one more remote so he can continue his lookout unmolested. Quite my favorite vignette of this bird is the sight of him on a gossamer-autumn day as he does his wing-overs in an ascending spiral until he drifts from sight.

The smaller Sparrow Hawk (Falco sparverius) often sat in the "Old Tree" in front of the Station building, revealing the reddish sheen of his hunting-coat as he preened himself in the interims between his scanning and his occasional sorties for prey. (Often overlooked is the fact that his 'prey' is made up mostly of grasshoppers.)

Winter usually sees a few appearances of the Rough-legged Hawk (Buteo lagopus), the same size as the Red-tailed and somewhat similar in his hunting habits although this hawk sometimes hovers in flight in a way which is unlike his relative hawks.

For three years now we have observed the presence of Bald Eagles (Haliaeetus leucocephalus) at Ordway late each winter. The last was was last winter (early March) when one sat on the edge of the ice floe on River Lake and foraged in the open reaches of water. These birds are a part of the wintering-flock from Read's Landing (in Wabasha County) and they appear to move up the River in search of open patches of water where they can find their winter subsistence (fish) occasionally.

The owls, because of their nocturnal hunting habits, are not nearly so easy to observe although an early morning walk in early summer is apt to give one a ghostly glimps of a Barred Owl (Strix varia), scudding out of the pre-dawn trees. For one rain-sodden week in October an unexpected guest lurked around near the building, taking shelter beneath a half-fallen Box Elder which served as his roost day and night. It was a Great-horned Owl (Bubo virginianus), who had injured himself and was incapable of sustained flight. Apparently he had crashed into a telephone wire or other structure and suffered a sever bruise.



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