

# Threats to Raptors during the Migration and Non-breeding Season in Mexico

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## INTRODUCTION

Many raptors that breed in Greenland, Canada and the USA migrate through Mexico or spend some of the non-breeding season there (Bussjaeger et al. 1967; Andrieu 1968). This paper briefly reviews some of the threats to migratory raptors in Mexico.

## THREATS

*Deforestation:* - In Mexico, extensive grazing, cultivation, clear felling and other timber exploitation are conducted without management plans and with only a minimum of restrictions (Fernandez & Tarrío 1983; Ramos 1985). At least 400,000 ha of forest are cut each year in Mexico (Villa 1978; Gonzalez 1983), affecting migratory forest raptors such as the Sharp-shinned Hawk (*Accipiter striatus*), since much natural wintering habitat and habitats used as migration stopovers have been destroyed or extensively modified.

*Pollution:* During 1969-1979, Mexico used more than 42,690 tons of DDT for agricultural purposes, and this pesticide is still used throughout the country (FERTIMEX 1981). Our studies of Black Vultures (*Coragyps atratus*) in Chiapas and four other species of diurnal birds of prey in southern Mexico (Albert, unpubl. data) have demonstrated that the numbers of these resident species have seriously declined due to high levels of organochlorines. Because some Nearctic migrant raptors spend more than half of their life cycle along migration routes and on wintering range, they can accumulate high levels of pesticides during the non-breeding season (Henny & Blus 1981).

*Trade:* In most Western Hemisphere countries, direct bird exploitation by people inhabiting rural areas is not a problem, but in Mexico the nationwide trade in diurnal birds of prey is a threat to the conservation of resident and migratory raptors (Iñigo 1986a). The traffic in Falconiformes for the pet and falconry trade has increased during the last six years, even though this trade is prohibited by Mexican law (Iñigo 1986b). In Mexico City during 1983 and 1985 (i.e. 22 months of study), approximately 400 American Kestrels (*Falco sparverius*) were sold (Iñigo 1987). The Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*) is another migrant raptor traded in the national and international market (Iñigo 1986b). Most Peregrines are captured during autumn migration in the lowlands of the Gulf of Mexico.

## CONSERVATION MEASURES

Researchers have to stress not only their studies on the ecology of migrant raptors but also they must convey their findings to the public, since most of the time lay people are not aware of the adverse effects of environmental manipulation. Attention should be directed to the government agencies and decision makers. In accordance with the 1980 World Conservation Strategy, we think that in addition to the many attempts to protect nesting raptors, as much as possible should be done to solve the problems affecting migrant raptors.

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