

Notes from Abroad

Editor's Note: Carol L. McIntyre, Wildlife Biologist with the NPS Alaska Region, in May 1992 attended the Fourth World Conference for Birds of Prey and Owls. The meeting, held in Berlin, Germany, was organized by the World Working Group for Birds of Prey and Owls, an international working group dedicated to the conservation of birds of prey throughout the world. Here is her report.

Surprisingly, I was the only representative from Alaska and one of only 5 women who presented papers to the conference of more than 400 participants. The major emphasis of the conference focused on declining raptor populations worldwide, and conservation and research efforts on behalf of raptors in eastern Europe. The sessions covered the following topics:

Population studies; aspects of long-term changes in numbers and distribution of raptors and owls; biology and conservation of the large falcons in the subgenus *Hierofalco*; trapping, marking, and radio-tagging techniques; environmental contaminants and raptors; declining raptor populations: their biology and conservation; reintroduction of eagles, vultures, and other raptors; population ecology of owls; the systematics and taxonomy of raptors; tropical rain forests and raptors; and the biology of extirpated, rare, or lesser-known owls.

The two papers I presented were "Reproductive performance of golden eagles in Denali National Park and Preserve, Alaska" and "Distribution, status, and aspects of the breeding biology of gyrfalcons in Alaska," co-authored with Ted Swem, USFWS; Bob Ritchie, Alaska Biological Research; Peter Bente, USFWS; and Dave Roseneau, Biosystems Consulting. The first paper was one of several presented on long-term ecological studies of golden eagles, however it was the only paper presented on golden eagles in North America and one of the few papers on a non-declining population of golden eagles. The second paper included results of gyrfalcon surveys and population monitoring at Denali. It was presented in a series of papers focusing on status and distribution of gyrfalcons throughout North America, and included presentations by K. Poole on the Northwest Territories, D. Mossop on the Yukon Territory, and M. Fuller on western Greenland.

Both of my papers were well received and stimulated good discussions. Of particular interest were the field techniques and data collection methods used for the Denali project. Biologists were excited and pleased

to learn that the NPS is taking a lead role in raptor research in Alaska, and encouraged me to continue my studies on reproductive success of golden eagles and migratory movements of golden eagles in Alaska.

I participated in two field excursions. One was a visit to a newly created UNESCO biosphere reserve, Oberspreewald, in eastern Germany. This BR contains one of the largest wetlands in eastern Europe and provides breeding habitat for many bird species, including the rare Black Stork. A large number of raptors also nest in the Spreewald. One of the most interesting components of the reserve is the initiative taken to preserve the area's cultural resources, which include numerous small farming communities where farming is still small scale and conducted mainly by hand and animal power. I spent 2 days visiting conservation areas in the new federal province of Mecklenburg in north-eastern Germany. Of particular interest was a visit to a small fish farm in Murnitz, where we observed one of the largest concentrations of white-tailed sea eagles. We also visited a breeding area of the endangered lesser spotted eagle.

During the Mecklenburg excursion we attended a reception by the Minister of the Environment in Mecklenburg, who expressed her appreciation for our visit and described current conservation efforts in the province.

These field trips enabled me to observe wildlife and natural areas in the former East Germany, and to visit areas where westerners are only beginning to travel. It was instructive to see the extent of recent westernization in a former Soviet Bloc country and surprising to see large areas of undeveloped land, where wildlife seems to be abundant. However, a challenge awaits conservation groups in eastern Germany, where the influx of modern agricultural and industrial practices will change the landscape and where the desire for a high standard of living will prevail.

The conference and field excursions made it possible for me to meet with biologists from Scotland, Spain, Germany, Portugal, Yugoslavia, Netherlands, France, Bulgaria, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Siberia, Byelorussia, the Kola Peninsula, Kamchatka, Australia, South Africa, Canada, Israel, Japan, Cuba, and Taiwan. These contacts will be useful for the advancement of raptor research projects in Alaska, particularly through peer review of study designs and research proposals and by continued exchange of technical information.