

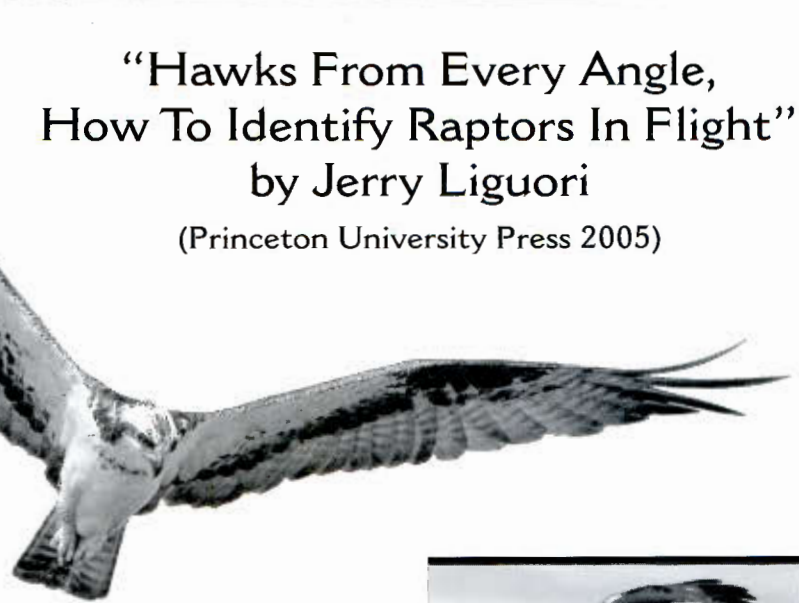
“Hawks From Every Angle,
How To Identify Raptors In Flight”
by Jerry Liguori
(Princeton University Press 2005)

A BOOK REVIEW
By Vic Berardi

Every so often a birding book comes along that becomes the benchmark for all to follow it. So is the case with Jerry Liguori's new raptor book, "Hawks From Every Angle, How To Identify Raptors In Flight."

The author, Jerry Liguori, with 20 years experience studying raptors, relates in a clear and comprehensive manner how to focus when viewing raptors on minute, but very important flight characteristics. Liguori's experience in the field is second to none. He was the hawk counter at such prominent hawk watch sites such as Cape May, NJ; Sandy Hook, NJ; Braddock Bay, NY; Derby Hill, NY; Whitefish Point, MI; Sandia Mountains, NM; Dinosaur Ridge, CO; and the Goshute Mountains, NV. This diversity in site experience is vital and very relevant to learning raptor flight identification because land features at these sights and their respective seasonal coverage differ significantly enough to bring a host of identification challenges, all of which Liguori covers in the book.

This book is intended for both the everyday birder as well as the hawk watcher. Its purpose is to educate the reader of the subtle flight and identification characteristics of all the regularly occurring migrating raptors. It is not intended to be an overall raptor identification book. There is little or no discussion on perched raptors or on non-migratory raptors.

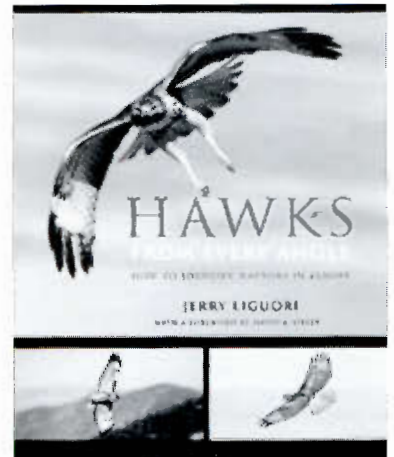


The style or manner in which the author relates this material is not necessarily new. The use of photographs exclusively has been used on other bird groups, such as gulls, shorebirds and to some extent, waterfowl. What is different with Liguori's style is that he not only uses photographs exclusively, most of which were taken by him, but they are also taken at four flight angles; Soaring, Head-On, Gliding Overhead and Wing-On/Going Away. That approach has never been done before in any raptor book.

Let's look at each of these flight angles and see their importance.

Soaring

All hawk watchers and birders are very familiar with this flight angle. Most don't even try to identify a hawk until they have the "good look" shown in a raptor flying directly overhead. All of the bird's distinguishing markings are generally visible even in questionable light conditions. Liguori points out what to look for on relative proportions of the bird's parts such as length and width of wings, length of tail and extension of the bird's head. Plumage variation is discussed here as well as aging.



Head-On

This is the hawk watcher's most valuable section of the book especially at a ridge or elevated site. Every hawk watcher and some gutsy birders try to identify raptors the moment they appear on the horizon, some at incredible distances. Subtleties here are Liguori's signature to his experience. Discussing this flight angle in words is a very difficult thing to do but Liguori succeeds very well. The accipiter section is masterful and every birder or hawk watcher has much to learn here. Have a look at the bird in the Head-On view on page 4 and try to identify it. Reading the text in detail will provide you with the answer.