



Gliding Overhead

This is a topic that is the birder's/hawk watcher's nemesis flight angle. It is one of the most difficult flight angles at which to identify a raptor, more so in very poor light. Most just wait until the bird returns to a soar and then rely on plumage for identification. But sometimes the only look you may have at a raptor is in this flight position. Many buteos coming out of a steep distant thermal may not be seen until they are gliding to the next thermal. Slight characteristics such as primary projection are tools for identification. Again, Liguori addresses this in detail.

Wing-On/Going Away

This is the, "What was that?" part of identifying raptors. Raptors that aren't quickly noticed or haven't been identified at Head-On will need to be identified at this flight angle. This may be the most difficult flight identification to master consistently. The Going Away discussion, I believe, has never been addressed in any raptor identification book or any other birding book to my knowledge. Liguori's photos along with the text address this problem quite nicely.

As the author points out, the photos are meant to stand alone along with their captions. And they do indeed. The manner in which Liguori makes use of digital photography allows him to offer outstanding side-by-side comparisons of similar species.

Most of the book is arranged by groups of raptors and each species in that group is dealt with individually. One group however, the accipiters, is dealt with as a whole. This may seem inconsistent to some readers and even

confusing but it has its purpose. The accipiters are by far the most difficult group to identify because of their similarities. The buteos, falcons and larger raptors are distinct enough individually to be dealt with individually. Because of the similarities in the accipiters the reader would be even more confused if he or she had to go back and forth between species discussion.

Another unique signature of Liguori's style is his term "Pitfalls." Readers familiar with Liguori's other writings know this term well. It is here that he warns the reader of precon-



ceived identification tendencies and possible, but very common mistakes.

The introduction includes instruction on how to use the book, a glossary, an anatomy chart, maps of where to see raptors in both spring and fall migration, a couple of pages with statistics, seasonal frequency charts and a few paragraphs on optics and camera equipment used.

The foreword of the book, written by David Sibley, and the testimonials on the back cover, written by some of hawkwatching's most renowned members offer the reader the best endorsements possible. More so than this, or any book review can possibly accomplish. Sibley's words are not only very thoughtful but also clearly explain the difficulties in learning how to identify raptors in flight, a process that Jerry Liguori has helped all of us with by writing this book. All in all, this is an excellent book and one every birder and hawk watcher should own.

—Vic Berardi

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Hawk Photos:

Opposite page, Osprey in flight.

Photo by Eric Walters.

Top left, Peregrine Falcon.

Photo by Jerry Kumery.

Top right, Adult Bald Eagle.

Photo by Mary Kay Rubey.

Left, Osprey.

Photo by Mary Kay Rubey.