

on. This flight behavior sometimes continued for over an hour and often the hawk would drift away. We would take a compass bearing, and using the DeLorme map, would get in the car and follow it. Eventually these sightings built up a pattern that narrowed down the location of a nest. For example, from an initial sighting of a soaring Swainson's Hawk it took us five more visits over 14 days until a nest site was located 4.5 km (2.8 miles) away.

Between 2002 and 2004 we found six nest sites (Table I). Three of the same sites were occupied for three years, two of the same sites for two years, and one site we found only in 2004 (which could have been active earlier, but was just recently found).

Table 1 shows that no site was able to rear young in each year, although four sites reared two or more young over the three-year period. Each year the total of young raised to flying remained about the same – between three and four young birds. Losses were usually due to unknown causes, but in at least two cases in 2003, nests were abandoned after severe

storms, and in two other cases in 2003 the losses involved predators, presumably Great Horned Owls (*Bubo virginianus*). In one case all that remained of two nestlings was a clump of feathers on the ground below the nest. In the other, the body of a well-grown nestling was found below the nest with the head and chest muscles missing. Great Horned Owls are major competitors for nest sites with Swainson's Hawks (Dunkle 1977). After early season failures, Swainson's Hawks will re-nest, and two instances in 2003 showed one re-nest about 300

m (330 yards) farther along the hedgerow from the original site, while the other re-nest was some 2.41 km (1.5 miles) away.

### Arrival and Departure

The majority of Swainson's Hawks winter on the pampas of Argentina, with only small numbers wintering in other parts of South and Central America (England, et al., 1997). A few winter in central California (Herzog, 1996) and southern Florida (Stevenson and Anderson, 1994). Satellite tracking by the Raptor Center at the University of Minnesota shows that Swainson's Hawks leave the Argentina wintering grounds about mid-March to travel the 9,600 km (6,000 miles) journey back to North America ([www.raptor.cvm.umn.edu](http://www.raptor.cvm.umn.edu)). Arrival dates vary by region, and in Illinois we observed our first birds 18 April 2003 and 24 April 2004. These Swainson's Hawks began pair formation and nest building almost immediately.

The birds leave in August and September with the latest observation 21 September in 2002, 7 September in



Swainson's Hawk near Huntley Mall, Kane County. 31 May 2005. Photo by Arlene Koziol.

**Table I:** Swainson's Hawk nest sites and productivity for Kane and McHenry counties, Illinois, 2002-04.

SITE NAME	COUNTY	2002	2003	2004	TOTAL YOUNG FLEDGED/SITE
Huntley Mall	Kane	1 adult hunting	<b>1 fledged from re-nest</b>	Pair nested, no young seen	1
Starks	Kane	<b>2 young fledged</b>	2 young predated in nest	No birds	2
Hampshire	Kane	<b>1 young fledged</b>	<b>2 young fledged</b>	Pair present, no nest located	3
Getty Road	McHenry	No birds seen	Pair failed, re-nested and failed again	Pair present, no nest located	0
Harmony	McHenry	No birds seen	No birds seen	<b>2 young fledged</b>	2
Coral	McHenry	<b>1 young fledged</b>	1 young predated in nest	<b>1 young fledged</b>	2
<b>TOTAL:</b>					
<b>YOUNG FLEDGED/YEAR</b>		<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>10</b>