

TALON-LOCKING IN THE RED-TAILED HAWK

Talon-locking by two Red-tailed Hawks (*Buteo jamaicensis*) in flight is widely accepted (e.g., Ferguson-Lees and Christie 2001, *Raptors of the world*, Houghton Mifflin, Boston, MA and New York, NY U.S.A.), although it appears to have been well described in the literature only once (Warren 1890, *Report on the birds of Pennsylvania*, 2nd Ed., Harrisburg, PA U.S.A.), who observed it during fall migration. He was cited by Bent (1937, *Life histories of North American birds of prey*, Part 1, U.S. Natl. Mus. Bull. 167, Washington, DC U.S.A.) and Palmer (1988, *Handbook of North American birds*, Vol. 5, *Diurnal raptors*, Yale Univ. Press, New Haven, CT U.S.A.), who also briefly described the behavior seen in the spring, which he interpreted as one bird being a territory holder and the other an interloper. Palmer was cited by Preston and Beane (1993, in A. Poole and F. Gill [Eds.], *The birds of North America*, No. 52, The Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia, PA and The American Ornithologists' Union, Washington, DC U.S.A.). Voelker (1969, *Loon* 41:90–91) witnessed courting birds locking bills in flight and falling to the ground, and he quotes another observer who reported courting birds locking bills or feet and falling to the ground. Both of those observations were made in March.

On 24 January 2000, two Red-tailed Hawks (*Buteo jamaicensis calurus*) were recovered under an electrical transformer near the entrance to the National Guard Armory in Santa Fe, New Mexico by the Public Service Company of New Mexico. They had been electrocuted and partially burned; all four of their talons were locked together. One was in normal definitive plumage, the other was a dark-phase bird with a sub-definitive banded tail. Both birds were females with ovaries measuring 8×20 and 8×15 mm, respectively. They were too burned to be preserved.

This incident of talon-locking between female Red-tailed Hawks occurred in January, suggesting aggressive interaction, in which one hawk was attempting to displace another hawk that was perched on the pole with a transformer. With talons locked the two birds made contact with two wires resulting in electrocution.

I wish to thank Anne Sanchez of the Public Service Company of New Mexico for presenting these birds to the Museum of Southwestern Biology, and the reviewers of this note for their helpful suggestions.—**Robert W. Dickerman**, Museum of Southwestern Biology, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, NM 87131 U.S.A.; e-mail address: bobdickm@unm.edu