

Students' Crowned Eagle Tracking Project from La Pampa, Argentina

Maximiliano Galmes

To celebrate our 20th anniversary, last year MTI awarded free transmitters to four student projects. This is the first report from students in Argentina.

The Crowned Eagle (*Harpyhaliaetus coronatus*) has been considered an endangered species by IUCN since 2004. The world population was estimated at less than 1000 individuals and their populations are declining. This is a large eagle that inhabits open woodlands in xerophytic forests of different biomes along its distribution that ranges from southern Brazil to northern Patagonia in Argentina.



Photo by Bart Paxton

Bryan Watts from the Center for Conservation Biology, Maximiliano Galmes and Fernando Urquiza working on the tagged chick.

Human persecution is the most significant threat to the endangered Crowned Eagle in central Argentina, due to a local belief that Crowned Eagles heavily and consistently prey on livestock.

Contrary to local beliefs, our results show that Crowned Eagles in semiarid habitats of central Argentina do not prey on livestock. Through video monitoring at nests we found that the main prey are venomous snakes and armadillos.

From Centro para el Estudio y Conservación de las Aves Rapaces en la Argentina (CECARA), Universidad Nacional de La Pampa and with the support of Peregrine Fund we are carrying out educational campaigns to disseminate information about ecology and conservation of the Crowned Eagle. We consider that these tasks are the most urgent high priority conservation measures that should be taken to preserve Crowned Eagle populations in this broad region.

By means of extension activities we incorporated a motivated group of students from "Escuela Provincial Agrotécnica", Victorica, La Pampa province, Argentina. Since then the student group has been participating in the Crowned Eagle project and with their teacher they currently collaborate on different research activities including searching for nests, capture and tagging of eagles.



Photo by Andrea Costan

Anabel & Fernando holding a Crowned Eagle chick during MTI 70g PTT attachment.

We aim to determine the habitat use of Crowned Eagles and evaluate the post-fledging period in central Argentina involving local students in conservation tasks of the species.

Working together with researchers from the Center for Conservation Biology, College of William and Mary and Virginia Commonwealth University, USA and PCRAR personnel from the Buenos Aires Zoo, we tagged three Crowned Eagle nestlings with 70g solar powered Argos/GPS PTTs donated by MTI earlier this year.



Photo by Maximiliano Galmes

Fernando holding a crowned eagle chick with a donated MTI 70g PTT.

The nestlings were tagged a few days before they left the nest. Although the young have not dispersed yet from their natal territory, some of them are moving considerably farther than others, performing displacements of 30 km from the nest. All transmitters are working very well and we are collecting new information regarding the habitat use of this raptor. We hope to continue collecting more important data for its conservation at its dispersal areas.

Local students Fernando and Anabel have a strong commitment to the project and throughout their participation they are open-minded regarding conservation tasks in the local environment. Furthermore this commitment from local youth has encouraged many local farmers to take part in Crowned Eagle conservation, caring and monitoring the nests within their ranches.



Photo by Joaquin Cereghetti

Left to right: Gonzalo Fernández Quintana (teacher), Anabel Gallardo holding the chick, Fernando Urquiza, Maximiliano Galmes and José Sarasola.

We plan to share data on the birds' movement with the student group over the coming months. We trust their enthusiasm will continue to grow and in this way we can ensure that information about the Crowned Eagle will spread among families, the school community and the local people.

Bits & Pieces

We will be closed July 4, 5 and 6 in observance of the Independence Day Holiday.

Remember - we will not begin work on your order until we have your completed Production Form and Purchase Order!

A new open-access journal titled *Animal Biotelemetry* will soon be launched by BioMed Central. The scope of the journal includes studies which utilize telemetric techniques to examine terrestrial, freshwater and marine species. Contact editor-in-chief Peter Klimley for more information - apklimley@ucdavis.edu

A reminder: To meet demands for new orders, we are only accepting bird PTT refurbishments from August to February.