CA/NV Golden Eagle Working Group Research Subgroup Meeting

Doubletree by Hilton Hotel, Sacramento, CA

January 30, 2013

Attendees: Ron Rempel, BJ Lukins, Elizabeth Leyvas, Eric Jepson, Joe DiDonato, Joel Thompson, Chris Briggs, Josh Hull, Rocky Montgomery, Judd Howell, Allen Fish, Doug Bell, Adam Duerr, Heather Beeler, Amedee Brickey, Jeff Smith, Grainger Hunt.

Note: there were other attendees that did not sign in

Re-Cap of GE Research Symposium – Monitoring and Research –Jeff Smith

- Data Gaps
    - Lack of recent coverage in CA, specifically central coast & w. slope Sierra's

      Grainger – there are local birders and local ranchers who know about eagle erries/nests, we should tap these resources.

      Jeff response: point brought up at GEWG meeting; that's why we brought Frank Isaacs to present.

    - lack of data on DOD lands, info on these land would be of great value for comparisons to lands that have more impacts
- Efforts on eagle databases: some efforts to prioritize CNDDB updates and creation of an eagle database
- Seasonal mixing of migrants and dispersers – important to understand project impacts
- Need better long-term data sets to effectively manage or identify long-term population trends.
- Expert panels – we should have more panels at the next symposia.
- To the extent possible, tie into other professional meetings for symposia.

Group discussion on potential topics for another golden eagle symposia:

- Mitigation of take, estimating take at wind farms, etc.
- Primary morality drivers for eagles – lead, turbines, pesticide (rodenticide) related deaths. New rodenticides (rodifacoum) are being used.
- Long-term trend monitoring

The next Raptor Research Foundation conference - Forest/sage step management 2014 raptor symposia. We should consider co-locating next symposia with this meeting.

Group discussion on Information Needs:

We should be looking closer at existing data sets (Bird banding lab)

Currently, CA/NV does not have a comprehensive database for GEs. Getting a comprehensive database to help manage the species and issues will be critical. There are concerns on access and release of sensitive information. Internships should be considered as a way to get things done, including developing and populating a database. Audubon is another option… for both survey efforts and data management.

The idea of a "protected" facebook page was suggested as a way for folks to share information.

<u>Group discussion on research priorities – lead by Granger</u>

In order to assess population effects from mortality sources…. We need to better understand these impacts. Reducing mortality of adults should be a focus of management. Mortality sources of concern include: lead poisoning associated with "varmet" shooting, electrocution, shooting of eagles.

Since GEs have fairly stable nesting territories, they lend themselves to long-term monitoring efforts.

Floaters are common on the landscape, and provide a ready source of individuals for pair replacement.

GEs are long-lived, have low reproduction, and do not mature until approx. 5 years, -- so eagle population are sensitive to low reproductive rate.

Frank Issac – volunteer eagles survey work in Oregon. We should spend more time trying to develop something similar for CA.

Maintaining nesting territories are essential to population management. Monitoring should be focused on this, and population structure. The occasional loss of annual reproductive is not that much of a concern for the species. We should be less concerned about these scattered impacts.

GE Prey-base need to be looked at relative to how we manage the species. Preybase swings can have a large effect on population trends. Territory occupancy/productivity in relation to preybase swings should be looked at closer to establish relationships. We need more coordination with researchers conducting research on GE prey-base species (Example - jack rabbit).

Altamont – non-breeders and floaters occupy "non-breeding habitat", where there may not be nesting substrate (example – the Central Valley).

Jeff – in some areas the floaters may just have to keep moving around…. throughout territories that are already occupied. In some areas the floaters may not settle into "non-breeding habitat" areas.

Another source of information on prey species is falconers that work with eagles… lessons to be learned in interviewing these folks.

Analyses need to be conducted for Drought/climate change predictions in relation to preybase densities and distribution changes.

Genetics: Marie Wheeler – world-wide analysis. Currently 12 markers have been IDed. Adam Duerr (WV University) – micro satellite work will not likely differentiate western populations. Marie is using SNIPS analysis that may be more conducive to looking at western population scale.

Genetic and lead analyses need to be conducted on more birds…. Currently there are few researchers collecting this type of information for analysis.

The group discussed frustration about the requirement to send all carcasses to the FWS eagle repository for Native American cultural uses. If we want to gather more material for genetic testing, samples will need to be taken before the eagles are sent off to the repository.

Other information that could be gained from feather collection/analyses: Bird turnover at nest sites/territories – collecting feathers at nest sites could help assess this.

In order to permit tissue/blood/feather collections, FWS and CDFW would need a study design. The research group could work on a study plan to utilize tissue/blood/feathers that could be put forth under multiple permit applications to feed a larger study.

Population age and sex ratios – what do we need to know about this to help manage the species

Looking at prey remains would also be of value, and be part of a larger study design.

Electrocution - the FWS is having ongoing discussions with utilities on address high risk poles/areas that are resulting in eagle mortalities. PG&E has indicated they want to work closely with the FWS on this issue. Discussion with other utility companies in Southern CA are ongoing.

Summary of morning discussion

1) Start working on a volunteer network for monitoring nest sites. – sub-group will follow-up on how to get a couple of local efforts underway as a pilot project.

2) Work on issues related to assessment of threats

3) Population modeling – test predictions of monitoring efforts

4) Develop protocols for tissue/ feather collection protocols – Adam, Jeff? , Heather - study design to look at lead/ genetics/ etc.

Next Symposia Topics -

- Prey populations
- Genetics
- Toxicology
- Focus on areas with threats
- Develop study plans

Next research sub group meeting will be planned for August 2013.