



A SURVEY OF POTENTIAL RAPTOR NESTING SITES
IN THE SOUTHERN ASKINUK MOUNTAINS, ALASKA

by

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Migratory Bird Management Project - Anchorage
Division of Migratory Bird Management
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Anchorage, AK 99503

June 1989

Key Words:

Raptors, Rough-legged hawk, Merlin,
Askinuk Mountains

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INTRODUCTION

During June 1989, selected areas of the southern Askinuk Mountains were surveyed for raptor nests. The Askinuk Mountains are located on the USGS Hooper Bay Quadrangle, and they rise abruptly from the Bering Sea to 714 m above sea level atop Towak Mountain. The Askinuks are composed of Cretaceous and Tertiary granitic intrusives, and numerous exposed and eroded remnants of dikes and vents are present on ridges and hillsides (Selkereg, 1974). Raptors were observed to be nesting on these remnants.

METHODS

During June 13-21, 1989, rock outcroppings in selected areas were searched for raptors and their nests (Figure 1). All nest locations were noted on the USGS Hooper Bay (C-2) Quadrangle (1:63,360 scale), and all nests were identified by location and nest number (i.e., KME1 is nest number 1 located at Kikuktok Mountain E). All aspects of rock outcroppings were visually inspected from ground level, from adjacent hillsides, and from overhead when possible. The status of nests was determined to be active or inactive. Nests were considered active when one or more adult raptors were present or when there was evidence of reproductive activity (i.e. eggs or young were observed). Nests were considered inactive when no adult raptors or reproductive activity were observed. For active nests, the species, number of adults, and presence of eggs or young were recorded.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Ten nests were located on rock outcroppings at seven locations (Figure 2, Table 1).

Kuttak River A

Kuttak River A was a rock outcropping located approximately 35 m above sea level on a ridge overlooking the Kuttak River. Nest KUA1 was located on the south side on a ledge 10 m above the tundra. On June 14, 1989 two adult rough-legged hawks were present in the vicinity of this outcropping; however, the contents of this nest were not observed due to high winds. On June 17, 1988 this nest was occupied by a pair of gyrfalcons and contained four nestlings (T. Mabee, 1988).

Kuttak River B

Kuttak River B was located approximately 100 m east of Kuttak River A. Nest KUB1 was located on a ledge on the east side about 8 m above ground. On June 14, 1989 no raptors were present at this nest, and the nest contents were not observed due to high winds. On June 17, 1988 this nest was occupied by a pair of rough-legged hawks and contained five nestlings (T. Mabee, 1988).

Kolomak River C

Kolomak River C was a rock outcropping approximately 35 m above sea level on a ridge overlooking the Kolomak River. Nest KOC1 was located on the pinnacle of the outcropping about 8 m above the ridge. No raptors were observed in the vicinity of this nest site, and the nest contained no eggs or young. On June 13, 1988 this nest was occupied by a pair of merlins and contained three nestlings (T. Mabee, 1988).

Kolomak River D

Kolomak River D was located on a rock outcropping at the base of a ridge near the Kolomak River. Nest KOD1 was located on the south side on a ledge approximately 10 m above the tundra. On June 18-21, 1989 two adult rough-legged hawks were present at this nest site, and on June 18, 1989 the nest contained at least two nestlings. In 1987 a pair of rough-legged hawks were observed here (K. Kincheloe, pers. comm.).

Kikuktok Mountain E

Four nests were located at Kikuktok Mountain E on a rock outcropping approximately 75 m above sea level on Kikuktok Mountain. Nest KME1 was located on the southwest side on a ledge approximately 14 m above ground. On June 18, 1989 one adult rough-legged hawk was present at this nest, but the nest contents were not observed due to their inaccessibility. Nest KME2 was located on the northeast corner of the same rock outcropping on a ledge 8 m above the tundra. Two adult merlin were present at this nest on June 18, 1989, but the nest contents were not observed due to their inaccessibility. Nests KME3 and KME4 were located on ledges 10 m above ground on the south side of this outcropping. Both nests were moss-covered and appeared to be inactive, although the nest contents were not observed due to their inaccessibility.

Kolomak River F

Kolomak River F was a rock outcropping at approximately 40 m above sea level on a ridge overlooking the Kolomak River. Nest KOF1 was located on a ledge 6 m above ground level on the south side of this outcropping. On June 20, 1989 no raptors were present in the vicinity of this nest, and the nest contained no eggs or young.

Kikuktok Mountain G

Kikuktok Mountain G was a rock outcropping located atop a ridge north of the Kolomak River at an elevation of approximately 100 m. Nest KMG1 was previously located at the northwest corner of the outcropping on a north-facing ledge about 6 m above the surrounding tundra; however, by June 20, 1989 the nest had fallen off the ledge and was destroyed.

During June 13-21, 1989, ten nests were located on rock outcroppings at seven locations. Four nests were active: rough-legged hawks were observed at three nests (KUA1, KOD1, and KME1), and merlin were observed at the fourth nest (KME2). Five nesting territories were determined to be inactive: one nest (KMG1) was destroyed; two nests (KME3 and KME4) were inactive and in disrepair; and the remaining two nests (KOC1 and KOF1) were inactive but in good repair. The remaining nest (KUB1) was of undetermined status: no adults were observed at the nest site, but the nest site was inaccessible and its contents were not observed.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Only a small portion of the Askinuk Mountains was surveyed for raptors and raptor nests. In the future a complete survey should be conducted throughout the Askinuk Mountains to document all raptor nesting sites. The status of all nests should be determined, although this may be difficult due to the inaccessibility of many nests. Data on nest locations and status (both historical and present) should be entered into an automated database and integrated into a geographic information system for analysis and display.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study was made possible by the knowledge and enthusiasm of

Jimmy Slats who spearheaded efforts to locate raptor nests. Special thanks go to George Walters and Bill Butler for providing logistical support and to Bill Butler and Ron Garrett who were kind enough to review this manuscript.

LITERATURE CITED

Mabee, T. 1988. Incidental raptor sitings. Memorandum. U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Bethel, AK.

Selkregg, L. L., ed. 1974. Alaska regional profiles, volume VI: Yukon Region. University of Alaska, Arctic Environmental Information and Data Center, Anchorage, AK.

Table 1. Location and status of raptor nests located in the Askinuk Mountains, Yukon Delta N. W. R., Alaska, June 13-21, 1989.

Nest #	Site	Location	Status	Species ¹
KUA1	Kuttak River A	R90W T19N S22 SW	Active	RLHA
KUB1	Kuttak River B	R90W T19N S22 SW	?	
KOC1	Kolomak River C	R91W T19N S25 NW	Inactive	
KOD1	Kolomak River D	R91W T19N S26 N	Active	RLHA
KME1	Kikuktok Mountain E	R92W T19N S27 SE	Active	RLHA
KME2	Kikuktok Mountain E	R91W T19N S27 SE	Active	MERL
KME3	Kikuktok Mountain E	R91W T19N S27 SE	Inactive	
KME4	Kikuktok Mountain E	R91W T19N S27 SE	Inactive	
KOF1	Kolomak River F	R91W T19N S25 NW	Inactive	
KMG1	Kikuktok Mountain G	R91W T19N S23	Inactive	

¹ Species codes are RLHA (rough-legged hawk) and MERL (merlin).

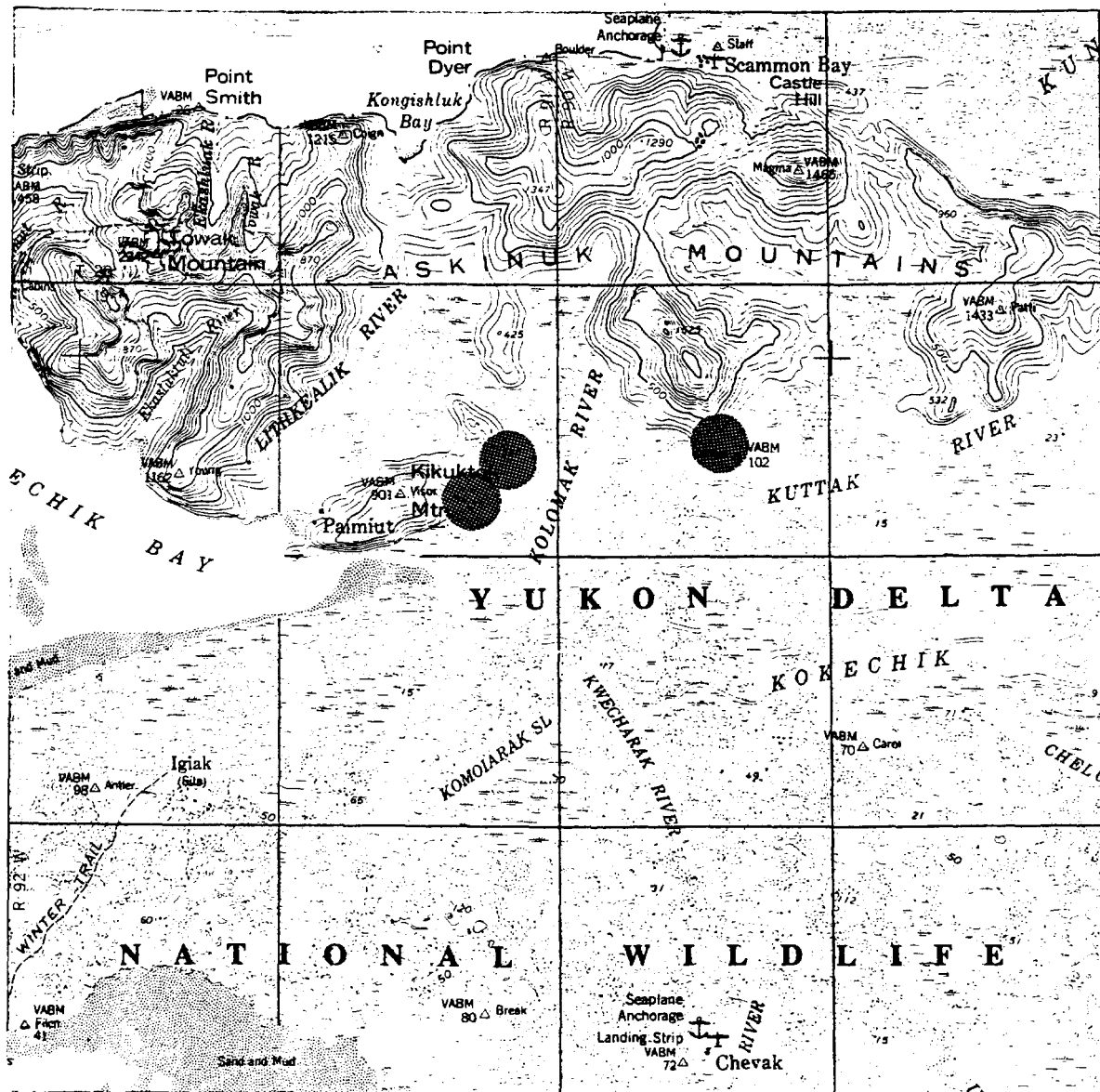


Figure 1. Area surveyed for raptor nests in the southern Askinuk Mountains, Yukon Delta N. W. R., Alaska, June 13-21, 1989.

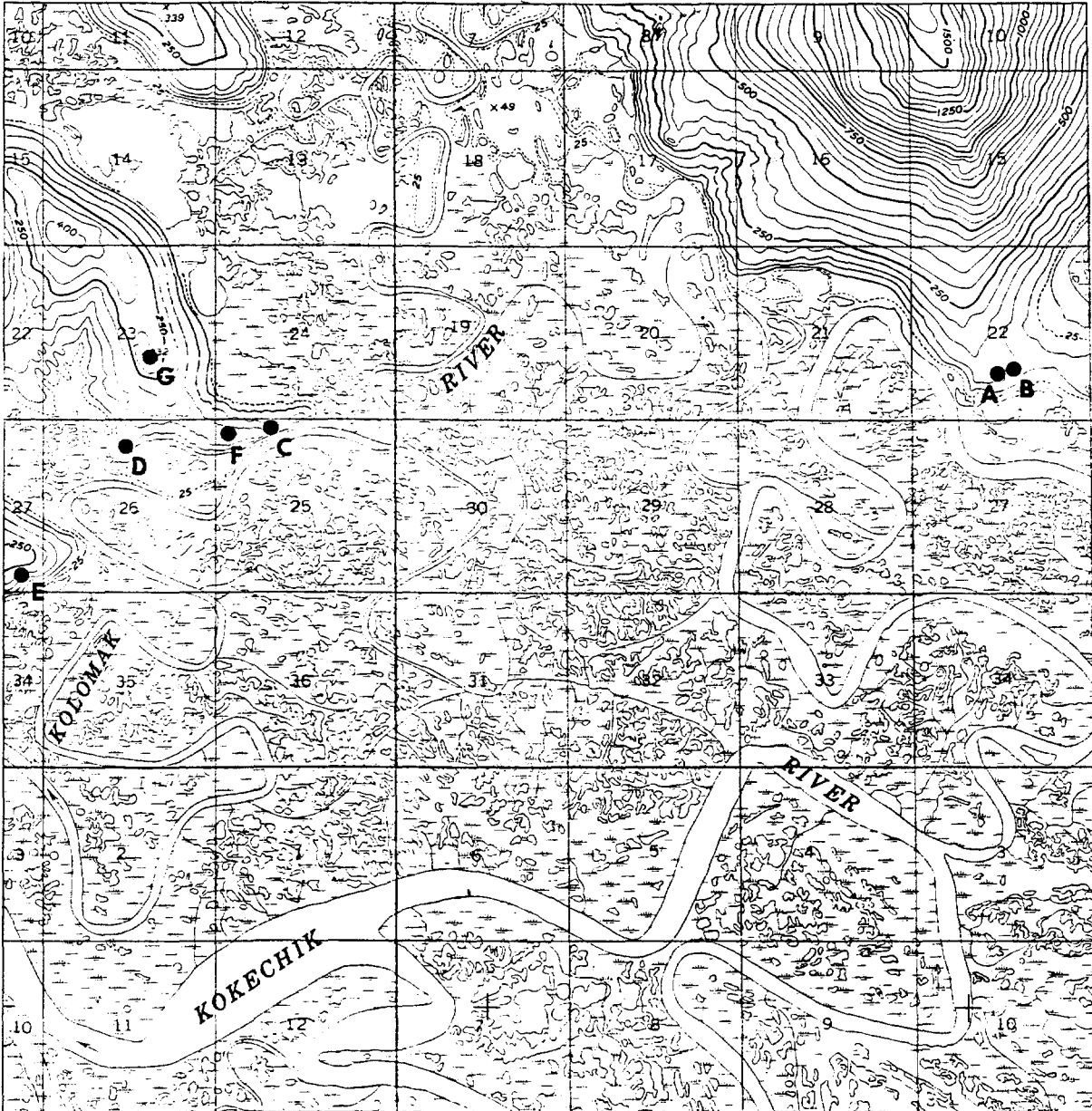


Figure 2. Location of raptor nests found in the southern Askinuk Mountains, Yukon Delta N. W. R., Alaska, June 13-21, 1989.

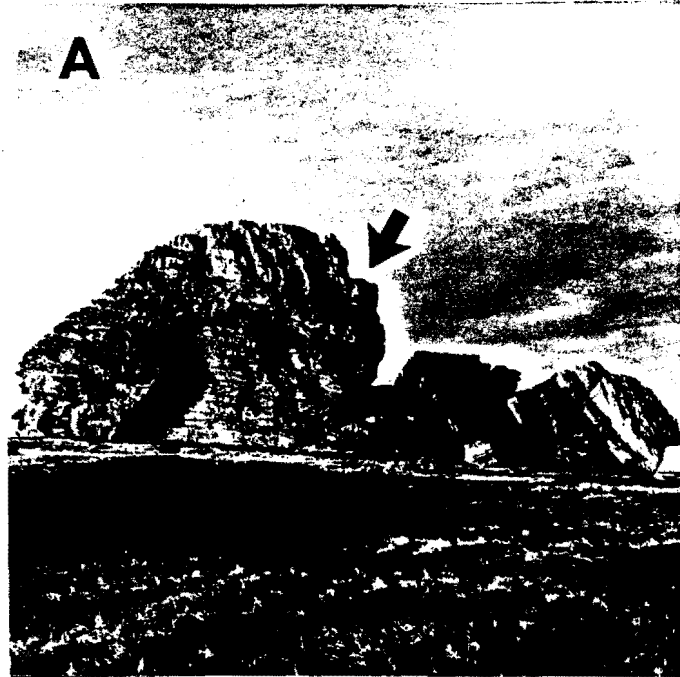


Figure 3. Kuttak River A and Kolomak River D. A) Kuttak River A and nest KUA1 (arrow). Kuttak River B is the rock outcropping in the background, and nest KUB1 is located on the reverse side (looking east). B) Nest KOD1 (arrow) from atop the rock outcropping at Kolomak River D (looking west).

A



B

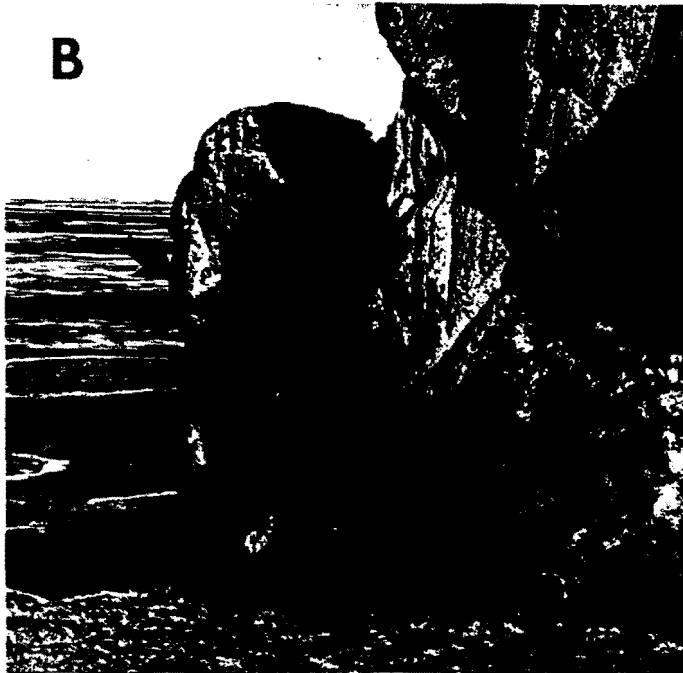


Figure 4. Nest KME2 at Kikuktok Mountain E. A) Close-up of nest KME2 (arrow). B) Nest KME2 (arrow) at Kikuktok Mountain E (looking southeast).