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OBSERVATIONS OF RED-TAILED HAWKS CAPTURING WILD DUCKS IN NORTH DAKOTA—Ducks (Anseriformes; Anatinae) are preyed on by red-tailed hawks (*Buteo jamaicensis*) in the northern Great Plains of North America (Gilmer et al., 1983, Prairie Nat. 15:133-143; Murphy, 1993, Ph.D. Thesis, Montana State University, Bozeman), yet I found no published, direct observations of captures of wild ducks by red-tailed hawks in the region. I made the following observations in south central Burke County, northwestern North Dakota (48°35'N;102°30'W).

On 21 June 1983 at about 0900 hr CDT, I observed a buteonine hawk about 50 m high, stooping to the ground in rolling, mixed-grass prairie. The hawk likely had been soaring; no elevated perches occurred within 1.0 km. I noted the approximate location of the grounded hawk. When I visited the site at 0905 hr, an adult red-tailed hawk flushed from a freshly killed female gadwall (*Anas strepera*) and flew toward a red-tailed hawk nest that held young, about 1.0 km away. The duck was laying breast down and contour feathers were plucked from its lower, posterior neck and scapular regions. I returned to the site at about 1100 hr and flushed an adult red-tailed hawk from the carcass. Much flesh from the same scapular region had been consumed. At 1500 hr the site was again checked (C. Male, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Cassville, WI, pers. commun.) and the following were noted: one fresh gadwall egg, a duck's intestinal tract, and one intact foot and part of one wing of a female gadwall. I visited the nearby red-tailed hawk nest 24 June and noted a gadwall prey item (wing) that appeared to be several days old.

On 10 August 1986 at 2012 hr, I observed an immature red-tailed hawk glide with set wings across a raised gravel road in an area of prairie and quaking aspen (*Populus tremuloides*) tree clumps (3-7/km^2); it may have initiated flight from a distant (>0.3 km) aspen perch. The hawk was about 80 m away from me and 1-2 m above ground. It continued to glide another 30 m to a 0.1-ha seasonal wetland. A female blue-winged teal (*A. discors*) and six young teal near fledging age (age class III according to Gollop and Marshall [1954, Miss. Flyway Counc. Tech. Sect.]) were feeding in open water on the far side of the wetland and seemed to not detect the oncoming hawk. Almost without breaking flight, the hawk seized one of the ducklings in its feet, then flapped its wings to drag the duckling over 0.5-m high, grazed whitetop (*Scholochloa festucacea*) on the water's edge to reach shore less than 2.0 m away. The hawk's tail and wingtips contacted the water while it labored to fly with its prey. The other teal momentarily scattered but within 30 sec regrouped and continued feeding, while the hawk plucked and consumed the duckling nearby.

Red-tailed hawks have versatile foraging behavior but rely mainly on perch-and-wait hunting (Orde and Harrell, 1977, Raptor Res. 11:82-85; Ballam, 1984, Auk 101:519-524; Palmer, 1988, Handbook of North American Birds, Yale University Press, New Haven, CT). When they hunt from a soar, success rates are low and energy demands moderate (Ballam, op. cit.). A flap-and-glide, concealed approach such as I observed is more common among North American *Accipiter* spp. than *Buteo* spp. (Palmer, op. cit.). My observations suggest red-tailed hawks

employ these uncommonly used or infrequently successful foraging tactics to capture wild ducks in northern prairies.

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