Replacing the Banding Blind

Before and after photos of our banding blind. PC Jesse Watson and Tim Baerwald

Thanks to funding from the Oregon Birding Association, we replaced our bird banding blind that was in disrepair! We have been banding birds at the Bonney Butte HawkWatch for 27 years, but had we not received this funding, we would have lost a year of data—something invaluable to a long-term monitoring effort.
We did face some challenges as the blind was much more time-, labor-, and cost-intensive than expected. Due to regulations associated with the site’s location in a national forest, the building was required to take place outside the HawkWatch, off forest service land. Our staff had to reroute plans and make two separate trips to our Bonney Butte HawkWatch from Salt Lake City, UT. Once the blind was assembled, the crew had to transport and carry the blind to its final location. The new blind officially began running the first week of October. The first bird banded was a Sharp-shinned Hawk!

Visitation, Count, and Banding Numbers

In addition to the assembly of our blind, we continued to carry out our standardized population monitoring on raptors migrating along the Pacific Coast Flyway. This year our 5 crew members spent 2,038 hours volunteering. During that time, they counted 2,086 raptors of 21 different species. The number of birds counted was about a quarter lower than the 10-year average. We cannot determine if this decline is an ongoing trend or a red herring until we gather more data in the years to come.

Since we faced various challenges with our blind assembly, banding did not begin until October. As a result, only 24 birds were banded compared to the usual 200-300 birds in a season.

Lastly, we hosted 396 visitors at our Bonney Butte HawkWatch. This year was the first year we launched a digital sign-in at our sites to capture data like email, address, and information on how they heard about the site. From this sign-in form, we had 125 visitors provide their information and opt into our email list. Next year we hope to grow this number as our team grows more comfortable with using the tablets and asking visitors to share their information. With this data, we hope to create more conservationists passionate about birds and our environment and grow monetary support for our HawkWatch site.