Species Account – Raptors

This assignment is designed to provide each student with experience conducting research using scientific literature and compiling information into a technical document. Students will select a species of raptor, conduct a thorough search of the literature on the species, and write a species account including all of the information listed below. The account should be written in a scientific style.

Your species account must be typed in 12 pt., Times New Roman Font, double spaced, and include page numbers.

IMPORTANT NOTES:

Make sure you use your own words when writing this account (i.e., most of the words in your account should be your own!). Read scientific papers and re-write the information in your own words.

Cite a source whenever you use information (not just the exact words) from a published source.

You must have a document in your hands to cite it, do not cite an article from another manuscript unless you have my permission.

Format:

The following sections must be included in each species account. In some cases, little information may exist on a particular species for a particular section. In this case, see me for further instruction.


Other common names (optional)

Author’s name (Natural History of Raptors – Year)

Distribution:

A detailed, written account of the distribution of the species. You can also include a map to help describe the species distribution.
Physical Characteristics:
This section should start with a detailed description of the physical appearance of the raptor. Include information on average measurements of size and mass for both males and females of the species, if available.

Natural history: (this section has several subsections)

Food Habits:
What the animal eats. Be sure to get as many references as you can from various areas in the species’ range.

Reproduction:
Breeding season, number of young, age at first reproduction, etc.

Behavior:
When the animal is active (nocturnal, diurnal, etc.), any interesting behaviors, foraging, migration, etc. There is a lot of information available on the behavior of most raptors.

Habitat:
What types of habitats are used by the species (again, be sure to gather as much information as you can from across the species’ range)

Disease:
Does the species harbor or transmit any notable diseases? Are epizootics an important issue? Think of diseases in the broad sense – not just bacterial or viral – including parasites, such as worms.

Economic importance for humans:
Is the species a game species, a species that humans like to watch, a pest, or of no importance at all?

Conservation status:
Is the species rare, threatened, or endangered?


Literature cited:
Include the correct citation for all references used in the species account. The format must follow the format for the Journal of Raptor Research. For information on the correct format see the Manuscript Guidelines for the Journal. I’ve placed a copy of these guidelines on my website.
All references in the literature cited section must be referenced in the body of the species account. Be sure you have conducted a thorough literature search and included all appropriate references. This is where many students fall short. If you fail to do a thorough literature search, you will not make an A on this assignment. Each section of the species account (e.g., distribution, physical characteristics, food habits, reproduction, etc.) should be supported with references. For example, with food habits, species that are widely distributed will often have different items in their diet in different locations. It is very difficult to give a set number of references for all species as some species have been well studies while others have yet to be studied in detail. A good rule of thumb would be to shoot for about 10 references. **MOST (almost all) of your references must come from peer-reviewed literature** (articles in scientific journals).

Important web sites for research:

http://www.govst.edu/library/t_gsu_library.aspx?id=1090 – This page provides access to a number of databases that are useful for targeted searches on your species. Be sure to search using a variety of terms including the common name of your species, its scientific name, and the names in combination with various key works like diet, habitat, etc. These references are going to be fairly current. **To find the older but very important papers, be sure to read the literature cited section of all articles you find.**

http://www.scholargoogle.com – general search engine, but still good. Many of the links that are provided through Google Scholar will charge you to obtain the paper. I would recommend that you do not pay for any papers. At a university, there are alternative ways to obtain this information. Such as……

http://www.govst.edu/library/ft_journals/ GSU pays for access to several online, full text journal services. These are good to check before starting with interlibrary loan.

http://www.govst.edu/library/t_gsu_library.aspx?id=1024 – Interlibrary loan site. You can request copies of journal articles or books that are not in our library at this site; this can sometimes take several weeks.

All of the mammalian species accounts for mammals are available online: http://www.science.smith.edu/departments/Biology/VHAYSSEN/msi/default.html Yes, it is for mammals, but the concept is the same and these are very good examples.