

# KRIDERS HAWK IN THE BLACK BELT OF ALABAMA

By ROBERT W. SKINNER

The collection of an immature Kriders hawk **Buteo jamaicensis kriderii** Hoopes on November 19, 1957, by the writer was the first specimen for the State of Alabama. The specimen was collected four miles south of Montgomery in Montgomery County, and identified by Dr. John W. Aldrich of the U.S.N.M. Since that time numerous **kriderii** have been observed in the State from November to as late as April 25, 1959.

In some areas, such as No. 4 Prison Farm in north Montgomery County, the ratio of **kriderii** to **B.j. borealis** was determined to be as high as 2-1 on specific counts. The ratio for the entire season (1958-59) was approximately 5-7. The highest one-day count on **kriderii** was eight (March 19, 1959). The immature birds outnumbered the adult plumaged **kriderii** by a ratio of 12-1. Adults possess an almost immaculate white tail and extremely light head; whereas immatures closely resemble the immature **borealis** with an excess amount of white in the plumage. Numerous degrees of variation occur.

The above mentioned study area comprises about 3300 acres of prairie type farm land, of which 2000 acres is under cultivation—wheat, corn, cotton, and various row crops being the main crops. Several species of rats and mice occur in abundance. The cotton-tail population is also very high.

Thirty-five miles southeast of Mntgomery on Sagefield Plantation at Union Springs, Alabama, **kriderii** was present in large numbers (March 7, 1959). This plantation contains several thousand acres of excellent quail habitat. The population of buteos was above average. The "burning off" of land in this section attracts hovering hawks from miles around, at which time a reasonably accurate count can be taken. The number of **kriderii** in this area was not as high as in the previously mentioned; the maximum number encountered being six on March 9, 1959.

**Kriderii** have been observed at various points throughout Alabama, usually a single bird. The southern-most record occurred at Coden, Alabama, on the Christmas Bird Count, 1958, (T. A. Imhof and R. W. Skinner). Coden is approximately one-half mile in-

land from the Gulf of Mexico. An adult bird was observed at Coffeetown on February 20, 1959 (Lovett E. Williams, Jr.).

The subspecies **is** identifiable in the field; however due to variations, some individuals present difficult field problems. The observer should be thoroughly familiar with museum specimens and acquire some familiarity with the race in the field before attempting to identify this race.

The Black Belt, so far as can be determined, has the most substantial population of **kriderii** in Alabama, and in local areas is a well represented raptor in the winter months.

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