Notes

Our observation was not unexpected as red-tailed hawks are highly opportunistic generalist predators that often prey on relatively large-bodied mammals equivalent in size or larger than striped skunks (Marti and Kochert 1995). Cottontail rabbits (Sylvilagus spp.), jackrabbits (Lepus spp.), marmots (Marmota spp.), raccoons (Procyon lotor), and house cats (Felis catus) have all been reported in the diet (reviewed by Sherrod 1978), suggesting that red-tailed hawks are physically capable of capturing and killing striped skunks. We speculate that the few records of skunks in the diet of red-tailed hawks (and perhaps other diurnal raptors) result from the respective activity patterns of predator and prey; red-tailed hawks are diurnal predators (Palmer 1988b, Marti and Kochert 1995), whereas striped skunks are largely crepuscular and nocturnal (Verts 1967), and thus unlikely to be encountered by foraging hawks.

We thank Lewis Medlock for accompanying us in the field and commenting on an earlier draft of this manuscript. The assistance of Linda Epps and the interlibrary loan staff at Sul Ross State University in obtaining references was most appreciated. We are especially indebted to Jake and Martha McCandles for providing access to the McCandles Ranch.—Steven G. Platt1 and Thomas R. Rainwater2 3.

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Literature Cited


Submitted 12 July 2011. Accepted 4 April 2012. Associate Editor was Chadwick P. Lehman