

Behavioral responses of American crows (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*) to broadcasted Barred owl (*Strix varia*)

In recent years, the monitoring of raptor populations has become mainstream in avian studies. One of the most popular techniques to do this is the broadcast playback method in which raptor calls are broadcasted and the territorial raptors respond, allowing researchers to estimate population size and whereabouts. However, a controversial aspect of the method is the high risk of mobbing bird species, such as crows, harassing the responding raptor. The purposes of this study were to compare crow behavioral responses to broadcasted barred owl calls, the variance of responses over time, in different weather conditions, and responses to the visual cue of an owl decoy. It was found that the crows became quickly habituated to the calls and did not respond at all in high wind or rain. Additionally, the presence of an owl decoy made no difference in the number of crow respondents to the calls. These results highlight some of the limitations and potential impacts of using the broadcast playback technique to survey raptor species.

Advisor: Jim McKenna