

## Southern Appalachian Creature Feature Podcasts

### Harris' hawks return to Texas

Greetings and welcome to the Southern Appalachian Creature Feature.

A pair of Harris' hawks, unlawfully captured in Texas and brought to North Carolina, were recently treated to a plane ride back to their south Texas home, the culmination of nearly two months of effort by law enforcement officers, raptor biologists, and Delta Air Lines.

In October, officers with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department received a tip about the birds through their wildlife crime stoppers program. By mid-November, the tip led U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Special Agents to a North Carolina suspect in possession of the hawks.

The birds, both juveniles, were taken to the Carolina Raptor Center for treatment, rehabilitation and evaluation for release. The hawks were in good condition and readily retreated from humans, demonstrating that their ordeal did not habituate them. Delta Air Lines provided transportation for both the birds and the raptor center's Amber Rosintoski, who released the hawks outside Laredo, Texas.

Sometimes referred to as the "wolves of the sky," Harris' hawks are one of the few raptors to live in groups. Cooperative hunting allows these raptors to kill larger prey than a lone hawk and they can take down mammals the size of a jackrabbit. Their wingspan is three-and-a-half to four feet and they can weigh as much as four pounds each.

The investigation into the capture of the hawks will be referred to the U.S. Attorney's office for prosecution.

For WNCW and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, this is Gary Peeples.