THREE CASES OF A SUPERNUMERARY TOE
IN THE BROAD-WINGED HAWK, *BUTEO PLATYPTERUS*
(VIEILL.).

I have thought it worth while to put on record three separate instances of an extra toe being present on the leg of a Broad-winged Hawk, *Buteo platypterus*. While these may

FIG. 48. Leg of Broad-winged Hawk from Illinois.

prove to have no direct evolutionary significance as reversions or as examples of polydactylism, still the occurrence of the phenomenon in three individuals of the same species from widely different localities appears to be more than a coincidence.

FIG. 49. Leg of Broad-winged Hawk
from Brooklyn.

FIG. 50. Leg of Broad-Winged Hawk
from Ontario.

PART I.

In "The Auk" for October, 1887, Vol. iv, No. 4, pages 331-333, is a short article entitled "Ornithological Curiosities,—A Hawk with Nine Toes and a Bobolink with Spurs on its Wings," by Henry K. Coale. An excellent wood cut is given of the foot and leg of the hawk, together with the following information:

"No. 5924 (Mus. H. K. C.), *Buteo latissimus* (Wils.), Broad-winged Hawk. Shot in small woods half-mile S. E. of Grand Crossing, Ill., Sept. 6, 1884. Length, 14.75; extent, 32.50. Legs and feet yellow. Bill black, cere greenish. Iris yellowish buff. Stomach contained crayfish.

"The extra toe grew out from the thigh, just above the ankle joint. It was not connected with the bone, but could be moved in any direction, seeming to grow from the muscles of the thigh. The upper bone slightly curved; one movable joint, a straight bone, and a perfect, movable claw. Color yellow, claw black, like the normal toes.

"Professor Ridgway writes (1884) that the only bird in the National Museum collection having abnormal toes is a Gull. It is evidently a thing of rare occurrence."

The extra toe is on the right leg and springs apparently from the same posterior plane as the hind toe. The length of the entire toe and claw is 46 mm., greater apparently than the middle toe and claw. The scalation is normal. (Fig. 48.)

PART II.

In the Childrens' Museum, Brooklyn, is a mounted female Broad-winged Hawk which possesses an extra toe on the left leg, growing from the posterior aspect of the tarsus, in the same plane as the hind toe, but elevated 6 mm. above that digit. It is thus about three-quarters way down the tarsus. The length of this abnormal toe and claw is 22 mm., making it but little shorter than the hind toe, while the claw itself is fully as large as that of the hind toe. It apparently possesses two phalanges and the scalation is normal, corresponding with that of the hind toe. If it were muscled, its position would admit of its functioning in seizing and holding prey.

The bird was collected in Prospect Park, Brooklyn, by Mr. Zartmann, and my attention was called to it by Dr. F. A. Lucas. (Fig. 49.)

PART III.

Two young Broad-winged Hawks were taken from a nest in Chemong Park, Peterboro County, Ontario, Canada, by Mr. David Bull about August 12th, 1907. They were brought to New York and sent to me at the Zoological Park on September 11th.

Both parents had been shot and were normal as regards the number of toes, and one of the young birds showed nothing out of the usual. In the second young hawk an extra toe appears on the left leg. It arises from the posterior surface of the tarsus about 14 mm. above the hind toe. Its insertion however is on the inner angle of the large scutes. It is extremely degenerate, the single phalanx forming a mere scaly nodule only 4 mm. in length. The claw is long and thin, measuring full 11 mm. in length and is curved outward across the whole width of the tarsus. (Fig. 50.)

Beebe, William. 1910. "Three cases of supernumerary toes in the broad-winged hawk, *Buteo platypterus* (Vieill.)." *Zoologica : scientific contributions of the New York Zoological Society* 1(6), 150–152.

<https://doi.org/10.5962/p.203796>.

View This Item Online: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/97326>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5962/p.203796>

Permalink: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/partpdf/203796>

Holding Institution

Harvard University, Museum of Comparative Zoology, Ernst Mayr Library

Sponsored by

Harvard University, Museum of Comparative Zoology, Ernst Mayr Library

Copyright & Reuse

Copyright Status: Public domain. The BHL considers that this work is no longer under copyright protection.

This document was created from content at the **Biodiversity Heritage Library**, the world's largest open access digital library for biodiversity literature and archives. Visit BHL at <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org>.