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Image created in Southern Alberta

*Images of Research Competition
University of Alberta*

Young of the Year

Semi-finalist (2021)

The grasslands of North America have been dramatically changed by the conversion of native prairie to cropland. All in all, we have lost roughly 80% of North American grasslands, and about 75% of species at risk in Alberta are found in grassland ecosystems.

Ferruginous Hawks, the largest hawk in North America and an apex grassland predator, are one such species. Considered threatened in Canada, Ferruginous Hawks breed in southern Alberta and spend winters in the southern USA and northern Mexico. My research compares their habitat selection between the summer and winter months to understand where and when in the year their survival may be most at risk. Because it would be difficult for me to follow these birds each winter, I use GPS technology to track their movements south of the border. I can also use these trackers to find where they may be nesting each year and can monitor them and their families throughout the summer.

This photograph of a 53-day old Ferruginous Hawk was taken while doing my weekly check-in of its nest in 2018. I believe it captures the regal attitude of *Buteo regalis* and the hope that each year's young bring to those of us trying to protect this species