

Public Programs Report

A popular new venture this season—the Minnesota Evening Speaker Series

by Margie Menzies, Public Program Director

This was my fifth fall as a staff member at Hawk Ridge—and it was a busy season! I took on coordinating HRBO's Public Programs to my list of other responsibilities. Hawk Ridge is committed to teaching school-age students and learners of all ages about birds and migration. In September and October we offered more than 70 different opportunities, providing approximately 1,250 visitors expanded chances to learn more from their Hawk Ridge visits. Here are some highlights:

We offered an old favorite—our Owl Program—on two Saturday evenings. A new venture this year, in partnership with Hartley Nature Center, is the Minnesota Evening Speakers Series, held on Saturdays, which included six lectures by avian authorities talking about their research or a subject dear to their hearts: *Hawk Ridge Research* from Jerry Niemi, *How Northern Critters Deal with Winter* from Sparky Stensaas, *Breeding Birds on an Abandoned Taconite Mine* from Steve Wilson, *Peregrine Falcon Recovery* from Jackie Fallon, *Golden Eagle Conservation* from Kristin Hall, and *More about Chickadees than You Probably Want to Know* from Laura Erickson.

This lecture series allowed us to expand beyond the outdoor classroom experience on the Ridge and reach a wider audience indoors and with electricity! Look for a continuation of the series over the winter/spring to help keep the birds and Hawk Ridge on your radar through the year.

This year, with help of Banding Director Frank Nicoletti and Owl Bander Ryan Steiner, we offered Private Owl Programs for the first time to small groups. Ryan did an outstanding job of providing lots of answers to lots of questions. Judging from the participants' enthusiasm, these were a huge success, and we certainly hope to continue these programs in the future.

Speaking of up-close experiences at Hawk Ridge, this year we offered two-day workshops featuring the *Best of Hawk Ridge* as a pre-Hawk Weekend Festival opportunity and later on in October *When the Large Birds Soar*. Mother Nature altered the plans a bit—not unusual at Hawk Ridge—but we were still able to provide a total of 24 attendees with close-up looks at songbird banding, raptor banding, owl banding as well as instruction in identification and flight behaviors. Participants got to experience the wonder of migration firsthand and to see Hawk Ridge's mission in action. Watch for more of these workshops and other unique opportunities to learn and experience things at Hawk Ridge up close.

There are a number of tried-and-true favorites as well. We offered multiple opportunities every weekend for visitors to attend short classes like *Eyes on the Skies* and *Hunters of the Sky* to enlarge their visit to Hawk Ridge. The Kids' Cart and Education Touch Table operated every weekend as well as Songbird Banding on Sunday mornings, and bird hikes on Wednesday and Saturday mornings with our Count Interpreter Clinton Nienhaus. Weekend education program warriors included returning veterans Allie Quick and Clinton Nienhaus, new this year Makaila Miller, Meredith Lorig, and long-time volunteer Beth Miller. During the week Paul Dolan-Linne

and Caitlin Johnson helped with school programming and count interpretation when Clinton was unavailable, along with our education trainee Jenny Rieke, and on busy weekends Amy Feinstein also helped keep the program schedule running smoothly by filling in the gaps. Thanks to Operations Director Jessica Chatterton, Volunteer Director Katie Swanson, and all our amazing volunteers who do so many critically important things behind the scenes to help keep all running smoothly. It was a busy and wonderful year.