

Northern Saw-whet Owl By Erik Bruhnke



Mother Saw-whet Owl, keeping watch photo by Erik Bruhnke

There are few things as endearing and cute as a Northern Saw-whet Owl. They are a unique bird of tiny proportions and great beauty. Like many owls, Northern Saw-whet Owls have yellow eyes. Their round, fluffy head consists of a pale face bordered with a brown facial disk. This facial disk is lined in white speckling near the upper portion of the face. Their wings are chestnut-brown, mottled with white and tan spots.

Northern Saw-whet Owls have a dark bill, which is different than their close relative, the Boreal Owl, which has a pale bill. Just like the Boreal Owl, the saw-whet does not have any visible ear tufts. The saw-whet's belly and breast is streaked in white and rusty-brown lines. They are well insulated even down to their feet, which are creamy yellow in color, and are fully feathered.

Northern Saw-whet Owls are established through southern Alaska, almost all of southern Canada, much of the northern U.S., and in select mountainous areas throughout the western portions of the U.S. into western Mexico.

They are found in dense woods, within a variety of mixed forest habitat; both coniferous and deciduous. The most important factor for their habitat selection is having dense woods to live in. Their colors help them blend into their wooded surroundings.

The call of this species consists of repeated, soft-sounding "hoo hoo hoo" notes. With persistent calling during the breeding time, a territory will be established and a mate will come around.

Northern Saw-whet Owls nest inside of woodpecker cavities located within old, soft trees. They do not add any additional nesting material to the

cavity in which they choose to nest. Saw-whets lay 4-10 eggs per brood.

The female saw-whet pictured was caring for 6 eggs at the time of the photo. Females incubate the eggs and tend to the young while the males do the hunting. Saw-whets eat primarily small rodents and will occasionally pursue large insects and small birds.

Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory is active in the research and study of

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Notes From The Director

By Janelle Long

This newsletter encompasses just a glimpse of all the excitement that happened at Hawk Ridge this past fall and what's to come in 2011. I'm humbled each day by the multitude of amazing staff, volunteers, board, and donors that make Hawk Ridge a success.

We've added three new board members, nearly 3,000 hours of volunteer service were contributed, and more than 90 percent of the fall contract staff returned for another year with Hawk Ridge!

Visiting Hawk Ridge in the fall feels more like a yearly reunion with family and friends; plus it includes thrilling birds. It's full of fun people, anticipation, and I learn something new every time I'm there. I truly thank all of you for making it happen. I can't wait to celebrate another year with this great organization.

A special thanks to the following grantors and sponsors:

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Fall 2010 Raptors Raffle

The 2nd Raptors Raffle was held this fall to help raise proceeds to benefit the research, education, and stewardship activities of Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory. Raffle tickets (\$5) were sold through Saturday, Oct. 23. The raffle drawing was held in the rain with 5 people in attendance on Sunday, Oct. 24 at Hawk Ridge Nature Reserve.

Thank you to the prize donors, staff/volunteers for ticket sales, and all those that purchased tickets totaling close to **\$850**. Prizes and winners included:

1st Prize: “The Dark Emperor” Giclee Print by Rick Allen with \$75 Gift Card towards Framing (Donated by Kenspeckle Letterpress & Sivertson Gallery).

Winner – Anne Hoops, Minneapolis, Minn.

2nd Prize: Diamondback Vortex 7x36 Binoculars (Eagle Optics) & Swarovski Cleaning Set (Swarovski Optik).

Winner – Bill Miner, Duluth, Minn.

3rd Prize: 5-day Kevlar Canoe Rental (Sawbill Canoe Outfitters).

Winner – Ray Gamache, Duluth, Minn.

Twin Cities Social

By Frank Berdan

Many of Hawk Ridge’s Twin Cities-area members and donors gathered with their friends to celebrate the successful 2010 fall season at Hawk Ridge. Hosted by Hawk Ridge member Lisa Dayton at the University of Minnesota’s Landscape Arboretum on December 9, our congenial group heard first cut research highlights from Professor Jerry Niemi, a Hawk Ridge board member.

Conversation flowed easily all evening, helped along by delicious finger food and an open bar. We shared our passion for the mission and programs of Hawk Ridge. Executive Director Janelle Long presented a concise yet comprehensive overview for our new friends. A Red-tailed Hawk was showcased by trainer Jen Vieth of the local Carpenter Nature Center.

One-third of HRBO members reside in the Minneapolis-St. Paul metro area, and this was the first in a series of annual small socials geared to update and listen to our Twin Cities supporters.

If you and/or your friends would like to be included in next year’s soiree, please contact Janelle Long at jl原因@hawkridge.org or 218-428-6209.

Many thanks to Lisa Dayton for making all the arrangements and supporting Hawk Ridge in such a generous way.

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- ☐ I want to volunteer, please contact me
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- ☐ Student (Vulture) \$15
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Help Fund Education Programs

- ☐ \$125 for a 4th Grade Outreach lesson: “Raptors in the Classroom”
☐ \$175 for a 5th Grade Lesson: “Experience Hawk Ridge”
☐ \$150 for the Yellow Bus Fund

Help Fund Research (per day)

- ☐ \$125 Raptor Banding
☐ \$80 Raptor Count
☐ \$40 Owl Research
☐ \$75 Songbird Banding

Help Us Meet Our Financial Obligations!

Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory depends on the generous contributions made by its members and friends. You’ll receive special member discounts and behind-the-scenes with tours as well as knowing these funds go to support education and research. Your membership contribution is tax deductible! Please make checks payable to Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory.

SEND FORM & PAYMENT TO:
Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory
P.O. Box 3006
Duluth, MN 55803-3006

Little Things in Life

continued

overlooked American Crow staged an impressive passage (16,695), greater than 50 percent better than the next best year. American Pipits proved to move in bulk (1,056 on 9/27), as did Lapland Longspurs (714 on 9/24), with those daily efforts providing a good chunk (40-50%) of their entire season’s flight.

Perhaps the most notable migrant of the entire fall would be Cedar Waxwings, which emptied out of the north woods in startling numbers. The horizon was teeming with flock after flock of waxwings on 8/29, 12,612 in all, for a total of 35,041 by season’s end! Rose-breasted Grosbeaks put together a few strong daily cam-

paigns, the best of which was 51 on 8/24. Rusty Blackbirds, a species of continental concern, marched south in the thousands again this fall (17,082). This count is particularly noteworthy due to Rusty Blackbirds’ severe, and poorly understood, decline and will be an important species to continue to monitor. Although not a great year for some of the more sought-after winter finches, Purple Finches (9,128), Pine Siskins (8,621), and American Goldfinches (5,101) all showed up in excellent numbers this fall.

The fact that Hawk Ridge serves as a regular interstate for both raptors and non-raptors (geese, pelicans, cranes, nighthawks, woodpeckers, and songbirds) means that seldom a day goes by without some

migration to look at, particularly for the trained eye. Considered altogether, over 327,000 migrating birds of 171 species were counted this fall—an extraordinary sum. A great raptor flight is nothing short of mesmerizing, there is something equally incapacitating about standing among a dizzying blur of songbirds engaged in their own incredible migratory feat.

So the next time you find yourself visiting Hawk Ridge, before heading up to enjoy the raptors, park yourself somewhere within a stone’s throw of Lake Superior for a spell in the early morning. With a keen eye angled skyward, you might be surprised by what you see.

Race for Raptors

By Janelle Long

Hawk Ridge held its first Race for Raptors 5k Trail Run on Saturday, November 13, 2010. Despite the sleet and snow, 34 participants made the trek along Amity Creek in the beautiful Hawk Ridge Nature Reserve. Warm drinks and food donated by Miner's Inc. (Super One), Great Harvest Bread Company, and McDonald's helped runners fuel up before and after the race. Students from Woodland Hills volunteered and motivate runners through the finish line.

Prizes were awarded to top placers in four age divisions in both male and female categories (see below). The overall winner was 15-year-old Evan Walpole, with a great time of 18 minutes 11 seconds.

A big thanks to all the following donors and sponsors: Athlete's Foot, Duluth Running Company, Continental Ski, Grandma's Marathon, Aurora Naturally (Warm Skin), Black Bear Casino, Andy Holak, Miner's Inc. (Super One), McDonald's (London Rd.), and Great Harvest Bread Company.

Thank you to all the wonderful volunteers for your time and enthusiasm and Race Coordinators Erica Sivertson-Henkel & Eve Stein.



Race for Raptors 2010 photo by Janelle Long

First place by division (view all results at www.northlandrunner.com)

W0-19: Abby Holak (23:26)
W20-29: Angie Ziobro (25:45)
W30-39: Jenny Schroeder (30:54)
W40+: Cheryl Anttila (32:02)
WWinner: Molly Pennings (22:47)

M0-19: Benjamin Mattinen (20:55)
M20-29: Keith Thompson (20:13)
M30-39: Matt Zack (19:28)
M40+: Andy Holak (19:36)
MWinner: Evan Walpole (18:11)

Diurnal Migration Passage

continued

Swans" (Nov. 11).

Also, the brushy woods below the Count Platform seems to be especially conducive as a stopover site for Winter Wrens; they are regularly found there, and Karl yielded a state high count of 33 on Sept. 28.

Come to Hawk Ridge anytime in the fall and experience the birds and the weather and the drama of seeing the birds in migratory passage.

The next time you sit on a rock at Hawk Ridge and look at the sky, hoping for a Gyrfalcon or even an eagle, contemplate some of the mysteries of this great migration phenomenon.

Lesser Yellowlegs photo
by michaelfurtman.com



Hawk Ridge 2010: Enjoying the Little Things in Life (and Migration)

By Cameron Rutt

To many, chilling fall cold fronts, notions of eagle kettles, roughies, or famous flights of goshawks race to mind upon the mention of Hawk Ridge. But what about Cedar Waxwing, Blue Jay, Rusty Blackbird, and Purple Finch? Although the lure of raptors is wholly deserved, in my mind, these songbirds equally represent fall migration at Hawk Ridge.

The lakeshore at Duluth has long been renowned as a major migration corridor, where tens of thousands of raptors annually circumvent the tip of Lake Superior.

In a nutshell, the 2010 version of that story read something like this: 53,213 raptors logged, the North American single-season record for Bald Eagles (4,438), 2 adult Red-shouldered Hawks, 2 Swainson's Hawks, the second ever 200+ Golden Eagle season (201), a season record flight for peregrines (116), and a Mississippi Kite. Increasingly, however, Hawk Ridge is gaining a reputation for its diurnal passerine flights, with 2010 only providing added evidence to that trend. From mid-August until the end of November, more than a quarter of a million (274,162) migrant non-raptors were tallied!

This year, Karl Bardon and I expanded the scope of the non-raptor flight, with two observers at different sites simultaneously counting migration along the shore in a coordinated effort. In addition to the main overlook, a new count site was incorporated atop an apartment building in the Lakeside neighborhood, at the mouth of the Lester River.

In effect, this provided a mile-wide net between Hawk Ridge and Lake Superior, with few non-raptors able to pass through without a click or a tick. The reason for this set-up was two-fold.

First, both the shoreline proper and the first ridge in from the shore are major leading lines for songbird migration. And on days of heavy passage, it is difficult to accurately quantify migration at both sites concurrently.

Secondly, there is a substan-



Lark Sparrow at Hawk Ridge by michaelfurtman.com

tial passage of small, dispersed, or low-flying songbirds along the immediate shoreline that is all but invisible from the Ridge. This year, however, it was our hope that this new count approach would provide a more accurate portrayal of non-raptor migration past Duluth.

Some of the more uncommon species this year included Northern Hawk Owl (10/15), 2 Short-eared Owls (10/15, 10/31), Band-tailed Pigeon (10/7), Western Kingbird (8/15), and Lark Sparrow (9/19 – 9/21). Rarities, however, are merely byproducts of the effort, which is focused on quantifying the magnitude and makeup of the flight. In addition to fine-tuning common knowledge about the timing of various species' migrations, trends will become evident from year-to-year, much like with hawk migration. This will be particularly useful in describing the variable phenomena of winter finch flights (i.e. 20,139 Common Redpolls in 2008 vs. 1,549 in 2010).

Hawk Ridge is one among a very short list of continental sites that make daily counts of migrant passerines, especially on a yearly basis.

When the last day of November came to a snowy close (literally), Karl and I had documented an incredible fall of migration. On four days

throughout the season, more than 10,000 migrant non-raptors were witnessed in a single day, including days of 16,100 (8/29) and 11,663 (10/6). In fact, a 7-day stretch at the end of September and early October averaged >8,000 non-raptors a day (!), a time when American Robins, Yellow-rumped Warblers, and Rusty Blackbirds were all moving in force.

Many species had their best showing since Karl began these counts in 2007: 84 Black-backed Woodpeckers were registered (228 in the past 4 years!), giving number to a sizable migration that may not be seen anywhere else in North America.

Eastern Kingbirds (364) showed a distinct affinity to the immediate shoreline, almost exclusively flying within a few blocks of Lake Superior (155 passed on 8/24 alone). Gray Jays showed up for the first time in years, with an even 50 slowly sailing south in late September/early October. That flight paled in comparison to their more migratory cousin, with Blue Jays moving in droves this year: 65,124 were tallied when it was all said and done, including some huge single day affairs (7,612 (9/14) and 6,485 (9/16)). And the easily-

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Common Nighthawk Counts 2010

By Paul Dolan-Linne and Gerald Niemi

The Common Nighthawk (*Chordeiles minor*) is a well-known August migrant along the North Shore of Lake Superior, and typically passes through Duluth, Minnesota, during the mid to late portion of the month. Common Nighthawks are in the family Caprimulgidae and are relatives of the Whip-poor-will, Chuck-will's-widow, and the Common Parakeet. Nighthawks can often be seen in the late afternoons and evenings during summer catching insects on the wing above trees and buildings.

Recent national concerns about declining numbers of Common Nighthawks and other aerial feeding birds has resulted in several monitoring programs, especially during the breeding season. Since it is well-known that nighthawks migrate in substantial numbers through Duluth, we began a systematic monitoring effort in 2008.

During 2008 and 2009, Common Nighthawks were counted beginning on August 15 and continuing until Labor Day. In 2010, the census period was extended, starting on August 11 and concluded on September 8. Observations were collected on most days between 4:30 p.m. and sunset from the rooftop garden of an apartment building located at 6030 E. Superior St. in Duluth.

Table 1 summarizes the total numbers of Common Nighthawks observed in the 2008, 2009, and 2010 migration seasons. Common Nighthawks were observed on 8 out of 17 census days in 2008 for a total of 2,514 birds.

In 2009, Common Nighthawks were observed on 10 out of 21 days for a total of 21,926 birds. In 2010, Common Nighthawks were observed on 16 of 20 days of data collection for a total of 3,266 birds. In both 2008 and 2009, the highest count was recorded on August 24. The peak count for 2010 occurred on August 23.

It is possible that a major movement was missed when no counts were conducted, but there were no observational reports of large movements in Duluth during these periods. What causes the large movements of thousands of Common Nighthawks remains a mystery. We observed a weak pattern with wind direction and sky cover, but no strong associations to predict large movements have emerged.

Observation platform photo by Janelle Long



Table 1 Common Nighthawk Migratory Census – nc = not counted			
Duluth, Minnesota 2008 and 2009			
Day	Common Nighthawks Observed in 2008	Common Nighthawks Observed in 2009	Common Nighthawks Observed in 2010
11-Aug	.	.	7
12-Aug	.	.	46
13-Aug	.	.	nc
14-Aug	.	.	17
15-Aug	0	0	0
16-Aug	668	0	29
17-Aug	29	181	53
18-Aug	0	602	585
19-Aug	0	0	110
20-Aug	0	57	56
21-Aug	0	0	690
22-Aug	75	0	0
23-Aug	2	0	747
24-Aug	1,470	10,379	326
25-Aug	0	9,740	281
26-Aug	0	0	311
27-Aug	59	0	nc
28-Aug	0	5	nc
29-Aug	201	0	nc
30-Aug	0	0	nc
31-Aug	10	67	nc
1-Sep	Census Concluded	532	1
2-Sep		302	4
3-Sep		61	nc
4-Sep		0	nc
5-Sep		Census Concluded	nc
6-Sep			0
7-Sep			3
8-Sep			0
TOTAL	2,514	21,926	3,266

Banding at Paine Farm Fall 2010

By Dave Alexander
& Frank Nicoletti

This was our fourth year of banding at Paine Farm. This site is one of two stations run independently from Hawk Ridge. The banding site is 0.4 miles behind the Hawk Ridge banding station and is located just southwest of Hawk Ridge. It is on a slightly different flight line, although many of the raptors passing by Hawk Ridge are seen from this station. This location is most productive on strong west/northwest winds.

A total of 385 raptors was captured and banded at Paine Farm during the fall of 2010. Banding started on August 22 and continued through December 1. A total of 53 days was covered. Five previously banded Sharp-shinned Hawks were captured. Four of these were from Hawk Ridge from the same season, one on the same day, two a day apart and one 16 days from original date banded. The fifth previously banded bird was a female Sharp-shinned Hawk banded as a hatch year, at Thunder Cape, Ontario, on September 22, 2007.

Among the 13 species of raptors banded, the vast majority of these were Sharp-shinned Hawks (309). The weather conditions were better than normal, but on many days there was a poor response to luring. Be-

cause of this the numbers of birds banded were lower than expected after September. Some of the highlights at this site were the station's first Peregrine Falcon and Short-eared Owl. We also banded six Blue Jays and a Yellow-shafted Flicker that flew into the raptor nets.

While working together with Hawk Ridge, a portion of our banded birds were released into the wild after being "adopted out" through the adoption program (a fundraising effort). This season we contributed 71 birds of 13 species to the adoption program.

It has been a delight to band at Paine Farm for the past four years. We look forward to the fall of 2011. Many of the staff and volunteers from Hawk Ridge spent time learning and assisting in the blind.

There are many to thank for



In photo from left to right: Jim Claypool, Frank Nicoletti (holding goshawk), and Annmarie Geniusz.

their help, especially Katie Brey, Josh and Peter Yokel, Karen Stubenvoll, Tara Haynes, Stephen Bockhold, Annmarie Geniusz, Cameron Rutt, Maury Aaseng, Stephen (Step) Wilson, Lee Morse, Julie O'Connor, Christina Tarasczuk and Kate Nicoletti.

Also, thanks go to the crew at the overlook for communicating weather conditions and bird sightings, etc.: Karl Bardon, Cameron Rutt, Andrew Longtin and Dave Carman. We would also like to thank the Hawk Ridge volunteers—they were great to work with. Finally, we owe a special thanks to Jim and Nancy Claypool, whose land makes it all possible.

	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
NOHA		4	1	1		6
SSHA		267	41	1		309
COHA		3	2			5
NOGO		2	13	6		21
BWHA		7				7
RTHA		3	13			16
RLHA				3		3
AK		7				7
MERL		5	2			7
PEFA		1				1
GHOW			1			1
SEOW			1			1
BDOW				1		1
Total	0	299	74	12	0	385
Days	1	13	18	20	1	53

Comments From The Board

By Ray Gamache, Chair

As the new Board of Directors chair for HRBO, I want to thank Tim Bates for his able leadership over the years. During his tenure, the organization and the Board have undergone considerable change and growth. On behalf of our membership and the Board, I want to extend a heartfelt thank you for your service. As the newly appointed chair, I hope to be able to lend a helping hand to Janelle and the Board as we continue the work in our core programs—education, research, stewardship.

Having moved to Duluth in 2008, both Jane and I were truly amazed when we first ventured up to the main overlook one crystal clear August afternoon. And every time we are up there, the wonder and beauty of this venue continue to amaze. Watching the fall migration from Hawk Ridge is one of the most beautiful, captivating and inspiring experiences I've had.

To be a part of what this organization does is truly a privilege. The level of expertise and the commitment of our staff, volunteers, board, and the entire membership inspires me to do whatever is necessary to spread the word about HRBO—Duluth's greatest attraction, in my estimation.

As a media historian (and not an ornithologist), I've come to appreciate learning so much about the migrations that we witness each year. In doing research last fall for a paper about 19th Century sporting journals, I came across many notices about birds, hawks and the beginnings of a conservation ethos.

In the Jan. 1, 1885 issue of Field and Stream, published by George Bird Grinnell, who went on to begin the National Audubon Society, there was this notice under the heading "Bird Migration in the Mississippi Valley": "As in former years, a large corps of observers is the prime requisite to success, and it is both hoped and expected that the many observers who last year contributed the most voluminous and valuable set of notes that have ever been gathered on this subject, will again give us their aid, and even surpass their last year's good record."

It's reassuring to know that the record-keeping done at HRBO continues the work begun on Mississippi Valley migrations more than a century ago.

By Jan Green, Secretary

On behalf of the Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory Board of Directors, I want to welcome three new board members. They all have had an ongoing relationship with the natural area at Hawk Ridge and to the research, stewardship and education programs we host there.

David Alexander, a physician at Essentia Health, is a raptor bander and was treasurer for the Hawk Ridge Committee of the Duluth Audubon Society from 1997-2000. John Baumgarten, a retired business owner in the timber industry, lives in the neighborhood and hikes frequently along the ridge. Karen Stubenvoll, a physician at Essentia Health, has been a HRBO volunteer and is apprenticing as a raptor bander.

Their knowledge and enthusiasm will be put to good use as we move forward in 2011 with an expanded board committee structure. These committees are Education (chair: Steve Betzler), Research (chair: Jerry Niemi), Stewardship (chair: Bob Ownens), Fundraising (chair: Frank Berdan) and Hawk Weekend (chair: Karen Stubenvoll). Hawk Ridge is a great place to explore the trails and watch the birds during any season. The HRBO board and staff hope to see you there.

Building Nest Boxes By Janelle Long

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Over the past several years, we've done a special nest-box building education project with visiting children during Minnesota Education Association weekend. Volunteers pre-assemble the nest box materials and help the children construct the boxes to take home that weekend.

Unfortunately, the weather did not play in our favor this late October weekend, but we were still able to build a few. Thanks to Campbell's Building Materials Center in Superior, Wis., for donating the lumber, Tom Reiersen for leading the pre-assembly party, Tony Mitchell for leading construction day, and all the other volunteers that helped out.

Western Great Lakes Owl Monitoring Project 2011

By Julie O'Connor

It's not too early to start thinking about the Spring Owl Monitoring project! As early as mid-February, owls start searching for their mates by calling out during the night. In April, owl monitoring volunteers all over Minnesota and Wisconsin will head into the night on their assigned routes to listen for those calling owls.

Routes are 9 miles long with 10 designated stops at one-mile intervals. At each stop, volunteers listen quietly for 5 minutes, noting any owls they hear calling and taking notes on environmental conditions.

These reports are submitted to Dave Grosshuesch, the project coordinator, who analyses the data and writes

up a report on each year's findings.

If you'd like to learn more about this project, visit our website at: www.hawkridge.org/research/springowl.html.

You'll find our protocol, seasonal reports and our certification quiz at the website, as well as instructions for how YOU can become a monitoring volunteer. It's a great excuse to get out and do some owl prowling, so consider becoming an owl route volunteer this year!

Contact Julie O'Connor (joconnor@hawkridge.org; 218-348-2291) for more information.

Diurnal Migration Passage at Hawk Ridge highlighting Non-raptors By Janet C. Green

The funnel effect created by Lake Superior and the North Shore Highlands on fall avian migration in northeastern Minnesota is well known, especially for raptors. The raptor count conducted since 1972 at Hawk Ridge Nature Reserve has produced some nationally impressive numbers for the 14 regular diurnal raptors and for the total yearly flight.

What has not been equally recognized is the massive daily migration of non-raptors that follows the same corridor both along the ridge and the shore. The topography in eastern Duluth is conducive for both concentrating and observing migration.

The Hawk Ridge main overlook is 550 feet above Lake Superior on a steep easterly bluff that falls away 100 feet on the westward side along the Amity Creek lowland. The Ridge is about one and one-fourth miles from the lake itself so larger birds can be seen, especially with a scope,

along the shore itself as well as passing overhead along the ridge line. Both the Ridge and the Lake Superior shore trend in a northeast-southwest line.

There are actual numbers, developed recently, documenting the extent of the non-raptor migration thanks to the dedication and skill of Karl Bardon, lead counter for Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory. I am greatly indebted to him for the data in this article. He has been counting the daily dawn migration from 2007 through 2010. The first three hours after dawn see the peak passerine flight, but many species continue in diurnal migration throughout most of the day. The dominant species with the biggest total yearly count from Karl's data for Hawk Ridge include:

- Canada Goose
6,638 (2008);
peak in mid to late September
- Common Nighthawk
13,541 (2009);
peak in late August
- Blue Jay
65,129 (2010);
peak in mid September
- American Crow
16,695 (2010);
peak in mid to late October

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Winter Wren photo by michaelfurtman.com



Diurnal Migration Passage

continued

Cliff Swallow	3,709 (2009); peak in mid August
American Robin	51,623 (2008); peak in October
Cedar Waxwing	35,041 (2010); peak in late August
Warbler sp	19,563 (2009); peak in late September
Red-winged Blackbird.	5,083 (2010); peak in late August
Rusty Blackbird	17,082 (2010); peak in late September
Common Grackle	6,819 (2010); peak in Sept. & Oct.
Purple Finch	5,138 (2009); peak in October
Common Redpoll	20,139 (2008); peak in November
Pine Siskin	8,051 (2008); peak in October

As you can see, some years the flight is better than others, depending on weather, climate change and population productivity during the breeding season. The numbers are as precise as counters can make them, and they certainly give a sense of the magnitude of the migration.

Under the right wind (usually westerly) and weather conditions (after the passage of a cold front) some of the daily flights can be spectacular. Some examples of daily large flights (>3,000 birds) from the year 2010 are 7,612 Blue Jays (9/14), 3,252 American Crows (10/23), 6,124 American Robins (10/6), 12,612 Cedar Waxwings (8/29), 3,976 Warbler species—mostly Yellow-rumped (9/26), and 5,100 Rusty Blackbirds (9/30).

Over these last four years Karl has observed yearly totals of non-raptors from 76,000-183,000 birds a year at Hawk Ridge. This includes about 140 migrant species a year, mostly passerines (about 90 species), but also other species like waterbirds, shorebirds, nighthawks and woodpeckers. Species in some of these other groups are



American Pipit photo by michaelfurtman.com

just represented by a few individuals whose identity is very dependent on the skill of the counter. Other species are specialties at Hawk Ridge or of regional interest. High yearly totals for this list include:

- Cackling Goose (1,521 in 2008)
- American White Pelican (401 in 2010)
- Sandhill Crane (588 in 2008)
- American Three-toed Woodpecker (5 in 2007)
- Black-backed Woodpecker (83 in 2007)
- Common Raven (1,053 in 2009)
- American Pipit (2,495 in 2010)
- Bohemian Waxwing (100 in 2007)
- Lapland Longspur (1,467 in 2010)
- Snow Bunting (1,090 in 2008)
- Red Crossbill (190 in 2009)
- White-winged Crossbill (3,691 in 2008)

Several overlooks at Hawk Ridge provide a good vantage point to witness the diurnal migration of all birds – raptors, passerines and other species. Specifically, these are the Main Overlook, Ole’s Knob and Summit Ledges. One never knows what bird will next come out of the eastern horizon and fly down the ridge. This sense of discovery adds excitement to migration watching.

Some rare species observations that have been made from the Ridge are Red-throated Loon (twice in 2008), Parasitic Jaeger (September 19, 2008), Band-tailed Pigeon (October 7, 2010), Mountain Bluebird (October 27, 2008), Townsend’s Solitaire (2007), and Smith’s Longspur (October 3, 2008). However, special observations do not merely concern rare species or high numbers. Consider these quotes in 2010 from the counters on the platform at the Main Overlook: “One Lesser Yellowlegs landed on the rocks at the hawk platform” (Sept. 1); “We saw and heard the raucous squawking of a Rusty Blackbird immediately after it had been picked off by a Merlin in-flight” (Oct. 14); “One Surf Scoter flying in formation with a flock of Tundra

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Lapland Longspur photo by michaelfurtman.com



We really do need the teamwork and the family of everyone, from visitors (you are the reason we are there in the first place!) to the banders and counters, educators, volunteers and continuing on to the Board of Directors that makes everything happen. Not a single person can take credit for what the Ridge has to offer, and so the family is boundless, incorporating anyone who loves birds.

Smiling Sydoney Blackmore in 2010 with Dark-eyed Junco photo by Hawk Ridge Staff.

Volunteer Appreciation

By Julie O’Connor

We must take a moment to thank our wonderful volunteers for their great work at the overlook again this past fall. More than 75 volunteers hosted our visitors at the overlook in the fall of 2010, answering questions, selling merchandise, teaching, pointing out and identifying raptors, setting up and teaching binocular use, hauling supplies to and from the classroom.

Every single day is made better by our cheerful, helpful volunteers.

More than 2,800 hours were recorded in our volunteer time log this fall; our top 5 volunteers put in a combined total of more than 440 hours! That’s an amazing effort, and WE THANK YOU!!

This fall, our volunteer program was offered a generous gift from a local businessman. Mike Maxim Sr. is the owner of Dubh Linn Irish Pub in downtown Duluth. Last summer

he heard about our wonderful volunteer corps and offered to host a party for them at the end of the season.

In early November, in addition to our traditional Volunteer Appreciation potluck dinner, we were treated to an hors d’ouvre social and FREE comedy show at Dubh Linn’s Pub. We had a fun, fun time, and we wish to thank Mike at the Pub for his generosity!

When I asked him why he wanted to host this party, he replied that volunteers make the world go ‘round, enriching the communities and organizations they serve, and he wanted to honor them in whatever capacity he could.

I highly recommend the food and atmosphere at Dubh Linn’s, and be sure to tell Mike ‘thanks’ the next time you’re there!

Happy Anniversary!

We had several volunteers celebrate their 5-year anniversary with us this season. Here is a list of our volunteers who’ve been with us at least five years, in order of their longevity. Many, many thanks to these wonderful people who give so generously of their time and energy to Hawk Ridge.

10 years:
Sydoney Blackmore

8 years:
Margaret Cleveland
Beth Miller
Jeanne Filiatrault Laine
Gail Marsman

7 years:
Kari Hedin
Susan Streitz
Karen Stubenvoll
Harold Nordin

5 years:
Jan and David Conley
Scott Dulas
Christine Ebert
Heather McDonald
Andrew Longtin
Russ Edmonds

Volunteer Viewpoint

By Sydoney Blackmore

Hawk Ridge is one of the best places in the world. I am totally convinced of this. First, just one glance from the overlook and anyone could fall in love with the place. Second, there are the birds. It's just exciting to be able to go there during migration and see huge numbers of birds. And last, but certainly not least, the people at Hawk Ridge have a way about them. Perhaps it is their common interest in birds, but everyone is kind, engaging, and positive.

If there is one thing that has influenced me most, it has been the great people at Hawk Ridge. These people have impacted me not only as a Hawk Ridge volunteer, but as a student, a community member, and a person. As a student, many of the organizational skills and ideas about commitment I learned helped me thorough my education. As a community member, I've learned that even small tasks can be part of a larger goal.

Whether it was allowing naturalists at Hawk Ridge to better do their job by taking on smaller tasks or forming a program to hopefully change views on a particular topic, I now know and believe that is it possible to change things for the better.

As a person, Hawk Ridge truly has shaped me. Having spent over half my life proudly calling myself a Hawk Ridge volunteer and a bird nerd has given me an exquisite combination of pride and humility. This probably doesn't sound too crazy to those of you reading this, but you can imagine that when you tell the average teenager that birds are your favorite hobby, you get some pretty funny looks. I was very lucky because I had all of my friends at the Ridge to back me up; it has made me feel not so crazy.

And maybe that's the biggest gift of all. We have the opportunity to band together in a common interest, which helps us take pride in who we are and what we love.

But no single one of us can keep the Ridge running on our own.



Sydoney Blackmore in 2000 photo by Michelle LeMasurier

Our volunteers are the heart and soul of Hawk Ridge. We praise them and thank them in each annual report, but we never hear FROM them. Each of our volunteers has different perspectives, goals and gifts to contribute.

The experiences they bring to, and get from, Hawk Ridge make them the crown jewels of our organization. We are inviting our volunteers to contribute to our newsletter and report so everyone can get to know them and understand why they participate with us each fall.

Our first contribution comes from Sydoney Blackmore, our first-ever volunteer. Sydoney has been a volunteer with Hawk Ridge since 2001, when she was 8 years old! She lives near Hawk Ridge, and spent much of her after-school free time being helpful to Debbie during Debbie's first season at the Ridge.

Sydoney is now a senior in high school and will be leaving the area to attend college next year. We'll miss her greatly! Sydoney is a 'do-er'. Not content to be a spectator, she gets involved in activities and makes things happen. When she was in 3rd grade, she planned and carried out a penny drive to raise money for Hartley Nature Center; now she is an honor student, an accomplished athlete and a Senior Girl Scout.

We at Hawk Ridge have enjoyed working and birding with Sydoney, and are so proud of the wonderful young woman and citizen she has become.

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Raptor Research Foundation Conference

Duluth, MN October 5-9, 2011

Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory will co-host the annual meeting of the Raptor Research Foundation (RRF) here in Duluth on October 5-9, 2011. RRF is a non-profit scientific society with 1,000+ members in over 50 countries. RRF's primary goal is the accumulation and dissemination of scientific information on raptors (hawks, eagles, falcons and owls). This information is used to increase our understanding of raptors and to promote the conservation of raptors worldwide.

RRF members will present their most recent findings on raptors and discuss such issues as the effect of climate change, habitat loss, harmful chemicals, and new energy development on the future of raptor species. These scientists strive to understand how these issues will affect raptors and the ecosystems in which they live.



RAPTOR RESEARCH FOUNDATION

Duluth, Minnesota 2011

The conference will also have a poster session, symposia on raptor-related issues, social events, field trips and a silent auction.

Hawk Ridge is teaming with the University of Minnesota's Natural Resources Research Institute and Department of Biology and the Duluth Audubon Society to host this conference.

More information is available online at www.hawkridge.org.

Hawk Ridge Birdathon

The 25th Annual Hawk Ridge Birdathon will take place on Saturday, May 21, 2011. Participants will compete in this 24-hour event throughout St. Louis County to benefit the programs of Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory.

Great prizes will be awarded in a variety of categories. A friendly potluck compilation brunch will be held on Sunday, May 22 to share in species observed and great stories. This is a fun citizen-science event for all ages – we hope you can join us!

For more information and to register, please visit www.hawkridge.org/events/birdathon.html or contact Janelle Long at 218-428-6209 or birdathon@hawkridge.org.



Founder Award

Dr. Pershing "Jack" Hofslund, Professor Emeritus at the University of Minnesota, Duluth, was presented with a plaque from the Hawk Migration Association of North America in recognition of his role as a founding member of Hawk Ridge. Dr. Hofslund came to Duluth in the late 1940s as a young ornithological professor and quickly recognized the value of the raptor migration at Hawk Ridge. He was instrumental in drawing national attention to Hawk Ridge and its importance to raptor migration and conservation.

Dr. Pershing "Jack" Hofslund receiving award from Dr. Jerry Niemi, who was a former student of Jack's.

Gray Jay - Migration and Invasions in Minnesota

By Janet C. Green

The Gray Jay (*Perisoreus canadensis*) is one of the emblematic species of the North Woods, particularly the boreal component of forested bogs and dense coniferous forests. In Minnesota, as well as elsewhere, they are considered a permanent resident. During the winter they rely on stored food and local carrion. They start to nest in February and March and the dark-plumaged young are fully fledged before most migrants have even arrived back to their territories. Known dependable breeding areas in Minnesota include: Sax-Zim bog; Aitkin, Koochiching, Beltrami county bogs; and many places in the Superior National Forest.

In spite of being considered a sedentary species, Gray Jays are seen actively migrating along the shore of Lake Superior, where they do not nest, and also sometimes in early winter in towns at the prairie edge in Fluffy Gray Jay photo by Erik Bruhnke



northwestern Minnesota or in cities like Duluth or the northern Twin Cities suburbs. These numbers fluctuate widely, from none to large documented invasions (1955 and 1965, The Loon 39:22-23; 1976 and 1986, The Loon 59:41-44).

On the North Shore migrants are commonly seen in October, fol-

lowing the shoreline at Brighton Beach, Stoney Point in St. Louis County and Lighthouse Point in Two Harbors, Lake County. This species' preference for the leading line along the shore was demonstrated in 2010, as part of the wider North Shore Migration Study, when 41 were counted during the fall migration count at the shoreline at Lester River, Duluth, but only 9 at Hawk Ridge which is about one mile from the lake.

Because I live about a mile from Lake Superior (since 1979 and before that on the lakeshore 1965-1978) and frequently walk along Stoney Point, I decided to investigate my records more thoroughly. Also, I have had Gray Jays overwintering on suet in our yard and have wondered where they come from and where they go when they leave.

Usually my records for Gray Jay migrants along the shore were on the order of 2-5 birds total for the fall, but in several

Gray Jay on a Tamarack photo by Erik Bruhnke



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Observation Platform Ceremony By Janelle Long

In 2009, Hawk Ridge received a grant from the Minnesota Power Foundation to construct an observation platform for visitors and counters. A dedication ceremony and ribbon-cutting was held on Friday, September 10 to celebrate the completion of this wonderful new addition and the start of another great fall migration season.

Representatives from the Duluth Chamber of Commerce, Minnesota Power Foundation, and Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory enjoyed this commemorative event. Hawk Ridge presented Minnesota Power with a plaque of appreciation that is displayed on the new observation platform.

Peggy Hanson of Minnesota Power and David Ross of the Duluth Chamber were also honored with the opportunity to release two banded Sharp-shinned Hawks. We all smiled and clapped as we watched the sharpies take flight on that picture-perfect day.



In photo fro left to right: David Ross, Jan Green, Janelle long, Peggy Hanson, Steven A. Betzler, and Tim Bates.



Peggy Hanson releasing Sharp-shinned Hawk photo by Hawk Ridge staff.

Nesting Raptor Survey Update

Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory is still gathering information on nesting raptors through a citizen science-based Raptor Nesting Survey within the city of Duluth, Minn.

If you live in the Duluth area, please keep your eyes and ears alert for nesting raptors in your neighborhood. If you find a nest or believe there is a raptor nest in the area, please submit your information by going to: <http://www.hawkridge.org/research/nesting.html>.

Hawk Weekend 2010

We were graced with great birds, weather, and visitors for our annual Hawk Weekend celebration (September 17-19, 2010). Over 175 people registered and participated in a variety of events. At Hawk Ridge Nature Reserve, over 14,000 raptors and 12,000+ non-raptors delighted the crowds. Naturalist and author, Kim Risen, gave an enlightening presentation on Friday evening highlighting his award-winning book, “Aitkin County, Naturally!”. On Saturday evening, Dr. Bill Bowerman, Professor of Wildlife Ecology and Toxicology at Clemson University, opened our eyes with his presentation on “Sea Eagles as Environmental Messengers – What They Tell Us About the Health of Our Planet”. Many participants enjoyed the wonderful Sustainable Salmon Dinner, thanks to First United Methodist, and the “Bids for the Birds” silent auction benefit on Saturday evening, thanks to over 60 donors. The silent auction helped raise close to \$2400 for the core research, education, stew-

ardship programs of Hawk Ridge. The weekend also offered excellent opportunities for seeing live banded birds up close at Hawk Ridge, free public education programs on hawkwatching, and off-site field trips. Field trips included the popular Lake Superior Birding Boat Trip, Lester River/North Shore, Indian Point, Park Point, 5W’s of Songbird Banding, and

Ancient Volcanic Geology of Duluth’s Shoreline. Many thanks to all the gracious field trip leaders, wonderful volunteers, hard-working staff, interesting speakers, and amazing donors that helped make Hawk Weekend a huge success. Mark your calendar for Hawk Weekend 2011 – September 16-18th. We hope to see you there!



Hawk Ridge main overlook photo by Janelle Long

Saw-whet continued

Northern Saw-whet Owls through long term bird banding efforts. A great amount of effort and time is put forth in banding both diurnal (daytime) and nocturnal (nighttime) birds of prey. This past fall at Hawk Ridge, a total of 910 Northern Saw-whet Owls were banded at the research station. This number is considerably larger than last season’s total of 505 saw-whets. The seasonal average number of saw-whets banded at Hawk Ridge is 554.

There is so much to learn from these small and beautiful owls. The more we know about them, the better prepared we are to ensure that they can continue living in our deep woods for many years to come.



Saw-whet Owl nesting cavity with owl by Erik Bruhnke

Gray Jay continued

years the numbers were significantly higher (66 in 2006; 20 in 1995; 54 in 1986; 51 in 1976).

Although it is not unusual to see one or two Gray Jays in our yard in October and November, the years that they consistently overwintered (usually two together) and were seen almost daily through March or April were sporadic. The dates for those years are 2006-07 (10/31-4/28); 1995-96 (10/4-4/3); 1986-87 (10/8-3/15); 1985-86 (10/31-3/8); 1976-77 (10/15-1/11).

I also decided to look at the Minnesota Christmas Count data. For Duluth, zero to five Gray Jays are the norm but the number was substantially higher in 2006 (29), 1995 (20), 1986 (54), 1985 (10), 1976 (10). Looking at Christmas Count data for the whole state (and removing some obvious data entry errors in 1983, 1981, 1977) the total numbers stand out for some of the years.

Gray Jays are reported on counts throughout the northern coniferous forest eco-region and its margin on the western prairie, but some years the totals are obviously above average: 2006 (336), 1995 (268), and 1986 (419).

Putting all of this fragmentary information together created a pattern of an approximate 10-year cycle. These cycles (using the fall starting



Gray Jay on a Tamarack photo by Erik Bruhnke

year) occurred in 2006, 1995, 1986 & 1985, 1976, 1965, 1955. The 10-year cycle for boreal forest bird influxes is well known for raptors, especially owls, and goshawk; but Gray Jays have not been considered as part of this cyclic phenomenon, although winter incursions are well known. This quote from W. Earl Godfrey, The Birds of Canada (revised edition 1986) illustrates the usual point of view:

“Winters mostly within breeding range . . . Also wanders somewhat south of the breeding range in winter, some years in considerable numbers.”

It is the 10-year cyclical nature of these fluctuations that my analysis is highlighting (admittedly using mostly anecdotal information). That raises several questions: Where are the jays coming from (Canada or the Minnesota North Woods?); why did they move south (lack of food in both summer and winter or breeding population increases?); are they young birds or adult pairs?; and why a period of about ten years?

The next time you see a Gray Jay think about the where and the why of your observation.

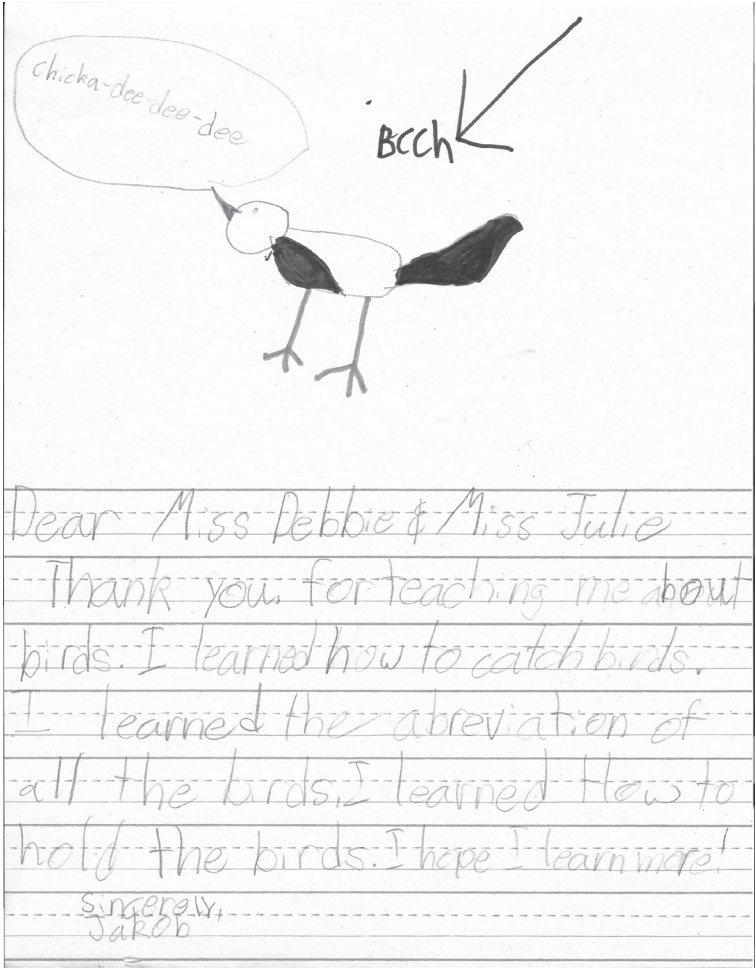


Julie O'Connor displaying Red-tailed Hawk by Hawk Ridge Staff

Education Stories

By Debbie Waters

We get a LOT of thank you notes from students that have learned about birds with us; they make us laugh, cry and cringe (“I got slivers in my butt from the benches”). We pulled a few of our favorites from our 3rd grade Discovering Birds field trip program. Discovering Birds focuses on backyard birds, the scientific method and banding songbirds. Enjoy!



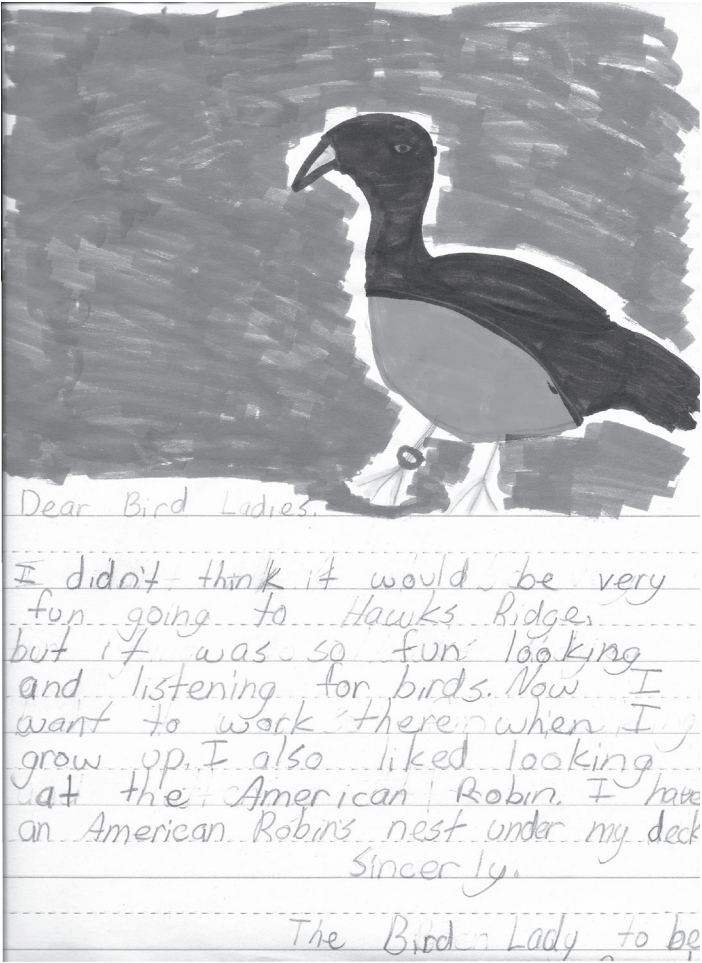
My favorite because we not only changed a young child's perception through a positive experience, but we also inspired her to become a “bird lady”. And because she did just what we designed the field trip to do...she connected with the birds in her own back yard. That's the first step.

Dear Miss Debbie & Miss Julie,

Thank you for teaching me about birds. I learned how to catch birds. I learned the abbreviation of all the birds. I learned how to hold the birds. I hope I learn more!

Sincerely,

Jakob



Students answer a research question using the scientific method. Often the research question is, “How much does a chickadee weigh?” The students then have to determine the methods portion of their research. They learn how to identify them by song, learn the 4-letter code for their species, learn how to catch them and handle them. Most students refer to the “pine cones” and “net” in their notes—we give them experience with “birds” and mist nets by having them remove tangled pine cones from an old, junky mist net.

Dear Bird Ladies,

I didn't think it would be very fun going to Hawks Ridge, but it was so fun looking and listening for birds. Now I want to work there when I grow up. I also liked looking at the American Robin. I have an American Robin's nest under my deck.

Sincerely,

The Bird Lady to Be

Stewardship Notes

By Bob Owens

We have several projects underway that will benefit the multiple users of the reserve year round. Treatment of buckthorn and honeysuckle (two invasive exotics found on the nature reserve) is ongoing, although can only be done seasonally. We have been authorized to procure the proper chemicals directly from the regional distributor. Treating will restart next summer in late June or July.

We are always looking for volunteers to assist with the chemical treatment process. The key is to know and identify the species, and that information can be learned quickly. Once volunteers have walked in the woods or along the trails with an instructor, they will become confident of treating the correct bushes.

Second, we are planning new signage for entering and exiting the reserve and improving the trail markings so they are readily identified during all seasons of the year. The current trail markers that are located on rocks or low on trees are not visible with snow on the ground and we plan to place maps at intersections to assist in navigating.

Third, plans are being developed to prevent erosion on two trails that are steep where they intersect with the Amity Creek trail. This will consist of sawn wood ties or round logs being placed across the trail to divert runoff water to the sides of the trail. There are efforts each spring to identify and ditch areas where spring runoff comes onto the trails.

Volunteers are invited to call for more details on projects that can be worked on individually. Volunteers will need a shovel and/or a pick-ax to dig ditches and place logs across the trails.

This message is also a great time to celebrate the completion of the boardwalk installation by Neil Schroeder and his team of volunteers. The design and installation was Neil's Eagle Scout project for the community. Thank you, Neil, for a job well down and we hope you will enjoy



Neil Schroeder on his completed boardwalk at Hawk Ridge.

hiking in the reserve while keeping your feet dry. HRBO will announce future volunteer work days as we approach the opening of the fall migration season in August. The hardworking group that turned out last summer deserves a big thank you, along with Julie O'Connor, who recruited and led the team brushing and trimming at the main overlook.

Number 100,000

On September 15, 2010, Chief Raptor Bander David Evans (a.k.a. “Fud”) banded his 100,000th banded bird at the Hawk Ridge Nature Reserve. The lucky raptor was a female Sharp-shinned Hawk.

We're not sure how many banders have achieved this monumental number, but we're guessing it's only a few. Fud completed his 39th season as the chief raptor bander at Hawk Ridge this past fall. Congratulations!

Spring Count Update

The West Skyline Hawk Count will not take place full-time this spring due to insufficient funding. Efforts will be put forth to run the count part-time on a volunteer basis, which has been done in the past.

If you are interested in volunteering for the spring count, please contact Frank Nicoletti at 218-591-0174 or fnicoletti@hawkridge.org. If you have any questions or would like to contribute for the future of the spring count, please contact Janelle Long at 218-428-6209 or jlong@hawkridge.org.