



Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory
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Taking Flight: News From The Ridge

Spring/Summer Issue | 2010

Peregrine Falcon by Julie O'Connor



Peregrine Falcon Photo by michaelfurtman.com

Peregrine Falcons. The fastest animal on the planet. They have been clocked at speeds over 250 miles per hour in their hunting dive, or stoop! They can survive g-forces that humans can't withstand. They are devoted parents and mates, defending their young against predators nearly four times their own size. Modern jets share features inspired by peregrines; the nose cone and adjustable wing are just two examples of innovation based on the perfection of peregrine flight, and they are the inspiration for ongoing aviation research. Their tears are thick and viscous to keep them from evaporating during their high speed flight. They are perfection in the air! They thrive on every continent except Antarctica and have successfully adapted to every biome on the planet.

Peregrines have been revered for thousands of years for their beauty and prowess. In ancient times, they were the birds of royalty; kings and pharaohs possessed them, and in some countries, commoners could be killed for owning birds "above their station." Because they were such sought-after birds, people have been monitoring peregrines since ancient times, and their nest sites have been

well-documented.

Peregrine Falcons are 16 to 20 inches in height, with a wingspan between 35 and 40 inches. They weigh between 1.5 and 2.5 pounds; males are about 1/3 the size of females. They hunt and eat birds (99% of their diet), chasing, overtaking, surprising and diving upon their prey in the air. Pairs will often hunt cooperatively; one bird flushing prey birds up into the air, the mate selecting and pursuing the chosen target. They mate for life and return to the same nest site each year, making it almost easy to monitor them over time. They are quite noisy and gregarious, especially during the courtship/breeding season. They defend territory vocally as well as with fierce physical attacks on intruders; the adults communicate vocally when the male is delivering food to the female and chicks, and the chicks can be deafening—their piercing cries for food can be heard from several hundred feet away!

In the mid-1900s, researchers became aware that, like Bald Eagles, Peregrine Falcon numbers were in serious decline in eastern North America, and by 1968, it was documented that there were NO nesting pairs of

peregrines east of the Rocky Mountains. This was the result of DDT poisoning by a process called bioaccumulation; whereby toxins are accumulated in the falcon's body in concentrations higher than those present in the environment because the falcons' food (birds) are accumulating toxins through their food. So, the falcons aren't eating DDT directly, but are exposed to it in the fatty tissue of the birds they eat. DDT didn't directly kill off eagles and falcons; it impedes the birds' body from utilizing calcium, causing them to lay eggs with weak, porous or non-existent shells.

There are three different subspecies of peregrines in North America; *F. p. pealei* (commonly called Peale's) that nest along the west coast of Canada and up into the Aleutian Islands of Alaska and don't typically mi-

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Notes From The Director

By Janelle Long

It's difficult to hear the stories of the people and to see the pictures of the wildlife being affected firsthand by the oil spill crisis in the Gulf Coast. The magnitude of the effect this will have on ecosystems won't be fully understood until years later. This emphasizes the importance of long-term monitoring of bird populations. The banding and count efforts of Hawk Ridge have been contributing to this type of long-term monitoring for decades. We thank you for supporting these programs that are core to our mission and that continue to make a difference in bird conservation.

We also thank donors and grant funders for making the special programs, projects, and events of Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory possible this spring and summer. We are happy to share with you the highlights in this newsletter. We look forward to this fall and hope to see you at Hawk Ridge to share in the migration with you!

A special thanks to the following grantors and sponsors:

- Lloyd K. Johnson Foundation
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- Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (Nongame Program)
- Natural Resources Research Institute
- Photos courtesy of michaelfurtman.com
- Radisson Hotel Downtown Duluth
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Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory
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Hawk Migration Association of North America 2010 Conference

In April, Hawk Ridge hosted the Hawk Migration Association of North America (HMANA) conference. 81 people from 14 states and three countries attended the three day meeting at the Radisson Hotel in Duluth. Nineteen Hawk Ridge volunteers, staff and board members spent the weekend behind the scenes, pulling off the event without a hitch. MANY THANKS to those of you dedicated your weekend to the Conference!!

Evening socials provided opportunities for raptor lovers to network and get to know each other, and our daily scientific sessions shared the latest raptor research across North America. Topics included migration computer modeling/satellite tracking; habitat conservation; productivity cycles; migratory routes; nesting habitat; lead poisoning; night-roosting surveys and nocturnal migration. Our keynote speakers were Dr. Scott Lanyon of the University of Minnesota, speaking about the Avian Tree of Life, and L. David Mech, discussing his 50-year career studying wolves in North America.

We offered daily field trips for our attendees. The highlight of the weekend cooperative was seeing Great Grey and Northern Hawk Owls in the Sax-Zim Bog! Good science, good birding and good people are the recipe for an enjoyable, educational weekend, and we hit the jackpot for the HMANA conference.

Coming Events!

**Hawk Weekend!
September 17-19**

Come and celebrate the migration at our annual Hawk Weekend!

Friday evening is "An Evening for Everyone," including a social and refreshments, live birds, "Guess-the-Number-of-Hawks Contest," and a presentation by Kim Risen, naturalist, author, photographer, and tour leader. Risen will present on birding and nature in Aitkin County, Minnesota, from his award-winning book, titled Aitkin County, Naturally! Kim was the founder and publisher of NatureScape News, a tabloid news magazine emphasizing the FUN of birding, butterflying and the wonders of nature.

Saturday will offer a variety of field trips and seminars away from the Ridge, and hawkwatching, interpretive programs, banded hawk and passerine demonstrations, optics displays, merchandise, and refreshments at the Hawk Ridge Main Overlook. Saturday evening offers a social and refreshments, our annual member

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Membership Contribution



Please Begin Renew

My Hawk Ridge Membership
 Student (Vulture) \$15
 Individual (Osprey) \$30
 Family (Hawk) \$50
 Sustaining (Owl) \$100
 Soaring (Harrier) \$250
 Supporting (Falcon) \$500
 Steward (Eagle) \$1000
 Additional Donation: _____

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

Name _____
 Address _____
 City _____
 State _____
 Zip _____
 Phone _____
 E-mail _____

I want to volunteer, please contact me
 Check here if you'd like to be added to our e-mail list for Hawk Ridge information and updates

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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.

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Hawk Ridge Birdathon

By Janelle Long

Eight teams participated in the 24th annual Hawk Ridge Birdathon in St. Louis County on Saturday May 22. Team "Gallivanting Gaviidae" defended their first place title for the fourth year in a row. Dave Benson, Lars Benson, John Ellis, Jesse Ellis, and Anya Illes counted 142 species, including Vesper Sparrows north of Meadowlands!

In all, a grand total of 170 species were counted. Despite being the lowest total in 24 years, it was still a great day overall with some exciting sightings. Highlights included: Tundra Swan, Red-throated Loon, American White Pelican, American Avocet, Willet, the second recorded Northern Hawk Owl, Vesper Sparrow, and Connecticut Warbler (with a total of 23 Warbler species recorded this year).

Thank you to Eagle Optics, Wild Birds Unlimited, Kollath-Stensaas Publishing, Lake Superior Garden Center, Kim Eckert, Mike Furtman, and Mike Hendrickson for your wonderful prize donations. We also sincerely thank all of the participants, pledge donors, and sponsors for your support in making this event possible! Proceeds help benefit the research & education programs of Hawk Ridge. Come out and join us in this fun fundraising event next year!

Newsletter

- Editing:
Ray Gamache

- Design:
Ashley Lindsey

Hawk Ridge Stewardship

By Bob Owens

The HRBO (Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory) has an agreement with the city of Duluth to manage the eastern most city green space known as Hawk Ridge Nature Reserve. This is approximately 360 acres of property, mostly defined by the boundaries of Amity Creek and East Skyline Parkway.

The HRBO Stewardship Committee is directly responsible for the care, sustainability and maintenance of this very special and highly diversified property within the city limits of Duluth. History would indicate that one time Mayor Snively was building the Parkway next to Amity Creek, which would have given him better access to his farm north of the Creek. However, better minds prevailed to keep the road on the ridge as it follows the skyline in the western parts of the city.

The Stewardship Committee works closely with the city forester and the Parks and Recreation Department. There is a management plan in place that has been approved by the city. Keep in mind the HRBO asks for city approval of each major project undertaken, such as the erection of the observation platform that was completed in August 2009. The current and ongoing projects are weed cutting and the treatment of buckthorn and wild honey suckle, both considered invasive species preventing natural flora and fauna from taking root. The committee is always interested in volunteers for keeping trails open and trimmed, stopping erosion, picking up litter from the public which seems to be a city wide issue and taking out dead trees where they become a hazard near a trail or the parkway.

Please call the HRBO office (218-428-6209) or Bob Owens (218-349-8334), chair of the Stewardship Committee, for a list of projects for volunteers to accomplish on their own or work with other volunteers. Remember this Natural Reserve is used 12 months a year by people with various interests such as snowshoers, snowmobilers, bikers, hikers, sightseers, horseback riders, dog walkers, runners/joggers and people just walking or driving to enjoy the beauty of the area. Theodor Roosevelt once said, "Do what you can with what you have and do it now." We welcome your inquiries and your assistance.

Spring Count

continued

(compared to 1,622 last year), and 160 Red-breasted Mergansers (compared to 958 last year) were counted.

A total of 4,604 Blue Jays was counted, including a record spring count of 2,525 on May 15, compared

to a total of 3,048 last year.

A total of 134 Common Ravens was counted, including a peak of 43 on March 18, (only 22 Common Ravens were counted last year). Only 1,273 American Robins were counted, compared to 9,803 last year. Only 26 Yellow-rumped Warblers were seen moving overhead, compared to 526

last year.

A total of 708 Purple Finches was counted, including a peak of 679 on April 5, (only 153 total last year). No redpolls were counted, even though 5,379 were counted last year; this species has biannual cycle, with this year obviously being the "off" year!

Peregrine Watch

continued

we've had songs sung to us about the natural beauty of Duluth; I have a falcon made from a piece of driftwood that someone shaped for me. People are connecting to these birds in ways that we can't define! While Peregrine Watch provides education and inspiration, we have also seen a sense of dread dawn on visitors as they realize that "our" birds, ALL of our birds in Minnesota, are going to be migrating toward the Gulf of Mexico. The awful horror of the oil spill DOES affect us here in Duluth, and we've been able to help people recognize that we do have a stake in en-

vironmental issues in distant places. I hope that through Peregrine Watch, we have encouraged people to help in the cleanup effort in any way they can. We send out regular updates about the lives of the falcons during our

Peregrine Watch season and occasionally throughout the year. If you'd like to read or subscribe to these updates, visit our Peregrine Watch page at www.hawkridge.org/education/pw.html. See you in the park!



Peregrine Watch visitors photo by michaelfurtman.com

Peregrine Falcon

continued

grate long distances; F. p. anatum, that nest east of the Rocky Mountains to the Atlantic seaboard, from central latitudes of Canada to the middle latitudes of the U.S.; anatum falcons typically migrate to the southern part of the U.S., through Mexico and Central America and into northern South America; F. p. tundrius that nest in the arctic regions of North America and migrate to the southern third of South America.

Because of these seasonal movements (or not), pealei and tundrius falcons were less impacted by DDT than anatum birds, who were exposed to farmland and human-populated areas (therefore DDT) during both the summer and winter cycles of their lives. Pealei and tundrius populations declined by an estimated 80 to 90%, while anatum birds were extirpated (regionally extinct).

Peregrines were given federally protected status in 1970, and became the focus of intensive restoration projects across North America. Through the extreme efforts and methods by researchers, falconers, conservationists and biologists, peregrines were reintroduced successfully during the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. The birds responded well to these efforts, and there are now thousands of peregrines throughout North America; several hundred thriving in the Midwest, and dozens of successful nest sites in Minnesota! Peregrines were removed from the federal Endangered Species List in 1999, but still remain under state protection nationwide.

We are fortunate to have three nesting pairs of falcons in Duluth. There are 16 to 20 nest sites on cliffs overlooking Lake Superior between Duluth and Thunder Bay, and another 15 to 20 sites on the bluffs overlooking the Mississippi River south of the Twin Cities. Urban birds, nesting on buildings, ledges, bridges, towers and smokestacks, account for another 15-20 nests throughout Minnesota. That's a LOT of falcons in our state! If you want to find the birds clos-



Peregrine Falcon Photo by michaelfurtman.com

est to you, check out these websites: www.raptorresource.org or www.midwestperegrine.org or google "name of your town + peregrine falcon" and you'll find them! There are webcams, nest cams, videos, blogs and monitoring reports from peregrine lovers all over the world—but the best way

to watch peregrines is NOT at your computer...get outside, turn on your eyes and ears, find the falcons closest to you and watch THEM. It'll be the best show you've ever seen!

Western Great Lakes Spring Owl Monitoring 2010

by Julie O'Connor

In April, owl monitoring volunteers took to the woods and roads around Minnesota to listen for breeding owls calling in the night. As top predators of the food chain, owls are considered good indicators of environmental health, making them important to monitor; however, there is a paucity of data about the abundance and population status for most owl species in the western Great Lakes Region. There are currently few species of owls that are adequately monitored using traditional survey methods such as the Breeding Bird Survey and the Christmas Bird Count. For these reasons, the Western Great Lakes Region Owl Monitoring survey was initiated in 2005.

The survey objectives are to:

1. Understand the distribution and abundance of owl species in the region;
2. Determine trends in the relative abundance of owls in the region;
3. Determine if trends are comparable in surrounding areas and analyze whether these trends could be scaled up or down on the landscape;
4. Determine if there are habitat associations of owl species in the region.

This was the sixth year of collaborative effort between HRBO, Natural Resources Research Institute, MN DNR and WI DNR to monitor owl populations. Existing

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Spring Count: Spring 2010 Migration Highlights

From March 1-May 15, the spring West Skyline Hawk Count was conducted. This marks the eighth year of official full-time data for this site. The total count of 14,992 raptors this spring was the lowest thus far (average is 23,297). Counts of Osprey, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Cooper's Hawk, Northern Goshawk, Broad-winged Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, Rough-legged Hawk, American Kestrel and Merlin were all the lowest to date, while counts of Turkey Vulture, Northern Harrier, Red-shouldered Hawk and Peregrine Falcon were near average, and counts of both Bald and Golden Eagles were well above average.

Counts of both Bald Eagles (4,028) and Golden Eagles (80) were the second highest to date, including an amazing flight of 679 Bald Eagles and 30 Golden Eagles on March 18. Three adult Red-shouldered Hawks were seen: on March 31, April 11, and April 14.

A total of 4,526 Broad-winged Hawks was counted including a peak of 1,425 on May 4, and a dark morph individual on April 23.

A total of 2,336 Red-tailed Hawks was counted with a peak of 301 on March 30, and a total of 22 dark morph individuals during the season (including single dark morph adult Harlan's Hawks on March 28 and April 6).

SPRING 2010 MIGRATION HIGHLIGHTS- NON-RAPTORS

For the second consecutive spring, a non-raptor count was also done, similar to what I have done in the fall migration at Hawk Ridge. A total of only 12,965 non-raptors was counted this spring, during both the official hawk count hours and during the early morning hours; this compares to a total of 34,479 non-raptors counted last year using the same methodology! A total of 572 Tundra Swans, 8 Trumpeter Swans, and 135 unidentified

By Karl Bradon

swans was counted migrating overhead during the raptor count; this compares to only 63 Tundra Swans seen migrating overhead last year. An additional 900 Tundra Swans were seen sitting on Spirit Lake on April 4. Totals of only 145 Common Loons and 9 Red-throated Loons were counted migrating overhead, compared to 1,179 Common Loons and 218 Red-throated Loons last year. This does not include an additional 63 Red-throated Loons counted sitting on Lake Superior on May 26.

A total of 972 American White Pelicans and 522 Double-crested Cormorants was counted migrating overhead, similar to counts of 1,066 and 934 respectively of these two species last year.

There was a very poor waterfowl migration. For example, only 73 Mallards (compared to 747 last year), 51 scaup

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American White Pelicans photo by michaelfurtman.com



Northern Hawk Owl photo by michaelfurtman.com

Comments From The Board

By Jan Green, Secretary

Under a by-law change last year the membership of the Board of Directors was increased to 11-13 members. We welcomed Frank Berdan, retired 3M Strategy Manager and birder with a cabin on the North Shore, in January. In March, we welcomed Steve Betzler, account manager for Minnesota Power, with an extensive background in environmental education.

Unfortunately, Doug Lewis, expressing much regret, resigned in May. His many contributions to the board are deeply appreciated, as was a comment in this letter of resignation. "I think that HRBO is a great organization, and the resource it represents and seeks to protect is a treasure."

As part of the budget planning process, the Board held a program prioritization session in March. Core programs were emphasized—fall raptor count and raptor banding; visitor education and site interpretation, including the annual September Hawk Weekend; Hawk Ridge site stewardship; volunteer coordination and recruitment; and classroom education.

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The Board members are active on five committees—education, stewardship, research, fundraising, and finance. If you have any suggestions or comments, please direct them to Tim Bates, chair, tbates@hawkridge.org.



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Common Nighthawk Census 2009

By Carly Lapin and Gerald Niemi



Common Nighthawk photo by michaelfurtman.com

Common Nighthawks were again counted in 2009 from the garden rooftop at the apartment building near the Lester River in Duluth. Common Nighthawks are well-known August migrants along the North Shore of Lake Superior and through Duluth. They are in the family Caprimulgidae and are commonly referred to as nightjars; the other nightjar member in the region is the Whip-poor-will.

Common Nighthawks are generally seen in the late afternoons and evenings during summer catching food on the wing above trees, water, and buildings. Their distinctive narrow wings with a white stripe, erratic flight, and “peent” call are easily recognized. In recent years there have been concerns with declining nightjar populations, especially in the eastern United States.

A total of 21,926 Common Nighthawks were counted between 4:30 p.m. and sundown during the period from August 15 until Labor Day (September 4, 2009) (Table 1). About half the birds were counted on August 24 when a spectacular migration of 10,379 was counted within a few hours. Surprisingly, in 2008 the high-

est count was also observed on August 24!

The total number of Common Nighthawks counted in 2009 was substantially more than the number observed in 2008 (a total of 2,514). Weather patterns are likely associated with these large discrepancies in migration numbers, but overall little

is known about the fall migration of this species. We are planning to continue this volunteer count of Common Nighthawks in 2010. We thank Josh Bednar, Paul Dolan-Linne, Cameron Rutt, and Ed Zlonis for their participation in the 2009 Common Nighthawk counts.

Day	2008	2009
August 15	0	0
August 16	668	0
August 17	29	181
August 18	0	602
August 19	0	0
August 20	0	57
August 21	0	0
August 22	75	0
August 23	2	0
August 24	1,470	10,379
August 25	0	9,740
August 26	0	0
August 27	59	0
August 28	0	5
August 29	201	0
August 30	0	0
August 31	10	67
September 1	Census Concluded	532
September 2		302
September 3		61
September 4		0
TOTAL	2,514	21,926

Owl Monitoring and randomly selected survey routes were used to conduct roadside surveys (once per route in early April) in Minnesota and Wisconsin. All survey routes consist of 10 survey points spaced one mile (~1.6 km) apart.

Volunteers listen passively for five minutes at each survey station, taking down weather and habitat information at each station where owls are heard and identified.

There were 119 routes assigned in Minnesota this year, with 40 that still need volunteers. Con-

tact Julie O'Connor (joconnor@hawkridge.org or 218-348-2291) if you'd like to run a survey route in western or southwestern Minnesota in 2011.

Data analysis is underway, and the results will be available on the Hawk Ridge website this fall.

Hawk Ridge Early Days: An Interview with Molly Evans

by Ray Gamache

Knowing that Molly was one of the founding members of HRBO and never having met her, I anticipated the interview with some trepidation.

As soon as I knocked on the front door and was greeted by both Molly and her dog Skipper, a beautiful Golden Retriever, I felt more relaxed. When Molly invited me into her dining room and I noticed that she had the World Cup soccer game on her television, I began to feel somewhat relieved.

“Have you been watching the games?” she asked.

I told her about watching the USA v. Algeria match the day before and how exciting the ending was when the USA, needing a victory, scored in Extra Time.

“I don't see why people get bored,” Molly said.. “I love ice hockey for one thing, so this is...well, it's different but not that different. And I am so intrigued, being as broken as I am, with anybody who can A) run that much, and B). use their feet

that cleverly and stick together even though it's got to be enormously frustrating all that time and no goal.”

When I set up the digital microphone in front of her, she looked at it with a wry smile on her face. “Good gracious, things are so fancy,” she said.

I could only confirm her estimation while making sure to get the microphone turned on properly. Thankfully, I decided to take notes as well. Things didn't get better when I asked her to say and spell her name.

“Molly...” she hesitated. “Evans...” she said, hesitating some more with a look on her face that seemed to say, “You can spell that, can't you?” She didn't bother with the spelling, but always the journalism teacher I spelled it out for her and she nodded affirmatively.

If she thought I was a complete dolt as this point, she didn't let on. And thankfully my next question about the origins of what became HRBO elicited a more engaging response,

even though I got off track when she mentioned how it was Koni Sundquist who got her involved.

“She'd be fun to talk to,” Molly said. “She's got good stories.”

Little did I realize that a pattern for the interview had been set, one in which my questions invariably brought out remembrances featuring a cast of characters whose names I struggled to keep up with.

“I can remember going up on the weekend, and Jack would be listening to the football game,” Molly said. “And there'd be maybe five or ten other people on a weekend. It was wonderful. And Jack was writing down on the backs of envelopes one thing or another what we saw.”

“Who's Jack?” I had to ask.

“Jack was darling,” she said, not providing me with his last name, which I forgot to ask. “He was so wonderful with the kids. And he never seemed to mind that I took over what he'd been doing. That was just ducky. So when

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Want to Get Involved?

Hawk Ridge benefits from the skills, experience and energy of our volunteers. We couldn't do what we do without our incredible volunteers.

Join us for the fall migration!

Each fall, our corps of volunteers makes the overlook a friendly, educational and inspirational place to be. We want every single visitor to feel welcome when they come to the Main Overlook, and our volunteers are right there, making sure that all visitors are greeted, given a brief orientation and lent binoculars so they can make the most of their visit. In addition to helping Naturalists with public interaction, they work behind the scenes to keep our program running smoothly by selling merchandise, helping organize our silent auction, working in our office and working on projects. We truly couldn't function the way we do without our volunteers!

Anyone can be a volunteer if you're willing to learn, work hard and have a positive attitude. You don't have to be a hawk ID expert—we'll train you!

Training session will be held in late August and early September. Contact Julie O'Connor at joconnor@hawkridge.org or 218-348-2291 for more information.

Join in the North Shore Migration 2010!

The North Shore Migration crew will again be conducting migratory bird surveys from Duluth to Grand Portage, Minn., August-November 2010. All are welcome to join the crew at their various observation sites or to keep up with the crew through an internet blog site.

This blog and a crew location calendar will be updated throughout the migration season for anyone interested in visiting or experiencing the migration as the crew records it. Please visit the official North Shore Migration website (www.hawkridge.org/research/nsm.html) or the research blog (northshoremigration.blogspot.com) for the most updated information beginning in August.

Peregrine Watch 2010

By Julie O'Connor

Thanks to the generous contributions from supporters, we were able to provide another season of Peregrine Watch to passers-by in downtown Duluth. For those unfamiliar with Peregrine Watch, we have a family of Peregrine Falcons that nest in a structure on the side of a prominent building in downtown Duluth, the Greysolon Plaza Building, formerly the Hotel Duluth. Naturalists set up spotting scopes and electronic monitors (there is a camera inside the nestbox) along the Lake Walk and teach about the lives of these falcons as they raise their young.

Funding issues forced us to cut the program by 75% this year, but even so, we were able to share the falcons with nearly 2,000 people. The response that people give when they look through the scope and see a falcon chick being fed by its mother is priceless! These birds are like a jewel in the crown of Duluth, and once people take note, they can't believe the beauty and magnificence the birds possess.

The Greysolon Plaza nestbox has produced 28 young since 2003.



Peregrine chicks in nestbox photo by michaelfurtman.com

This year we had four chicks again. All four chicks fledged, but one didn't survive his first day away from the nest; he flew into a building and died. It's easy to forget that these birds face the harsh struggles of being a wild animal! Though they don't have the same struggles as birds nesting on cliffs along the North Shore of Lake Superior, they are still animals living on the edge of survival. We hate to see them perish, but it's better for us to know when, where and how they meet their demise than to have no information at all.

Peregrine Watch is an inspirational program for us. We often have a mix of people at our scopes that would never come together otherwise—stock brokers and street musicians; bankers and pre-schoolers; tourists and hooligans. It's a thrill to see them interacting about the falcons and sharing a moment of joy as the young birds practice their flight skills directly over our heads.

Peregrine Watch is described as an educational program, but it's more than that. I get handwritten poetry handed to me about the birds;
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Education Stories

by Debbie Waters

Sarah was shocked, pleased and even a little misty-eyed. After spending two days per week working with me on our new field trip program, Discovering Birds, she had just experienced the impact we had on our students. While working her "other" job as the volunteer coordinator at the Lake Superior Zoo, Sarah was walking through the zoo grounds and heard an Eastern Phoebe. Upon rounding a corner, she was immediately spotted by a group of kids also listening to and watching the phoebe. These former Discovering Birds students recognized her and yelled excitedly,

"Sarah! We found a PHOEBE!"

And that's just what Discovering Birds is intended to do: introduce kids to the birds in THEIR world. Through a field trip experience, third grade students participated in a songbird banding research project. Using the scientific method, they explored a question and sought the answer. They learned the songs and calls of their neighborhood birds, noting that the songs were easier to remember when paired with lyrics. And they had FUN! So did we.

Through our grant-funded Raptors in the Classroom in the winter and Discovering Birds in the spring, we were able to reach 38 and 25

classrooms, respectively. That means almost 2,000 students had a personal experience with birds in 2010, whether through a chickadee in the hand or an impressive education Red-tailed Hawk visiting their classroom. The effects are long lasting: our students find us days, weeks, or even years later and recount to us not only what they learned, but what a special experience it was for them.

It's special for us, too, to be able to share our love and passion for birds with this new generation. Thanks to Julie O'Connor and Sarah Glesner, who helped pilot our first year of Discovering Birds.

Molly Evans

continued

Jack would get involved in listening to the football game, I would keep track...."

Before I could catch up with Jack [Hofslund], Molly was already on to someone else. "And I think Jan wanted to get a little more organized and casually dropped that that would be a good idea," she said.

Being on the board, I know who Jan Green is, thankfully. "I guess I haven't said a lot about Jan. It was her idea to save this area because her forte is the legal stuff.. And she named Hawk Ridge, which was better than Hawk Hill, because it is a ridge, not a hill. A cool ridge."

By the time Molly started talking about "...nice Kim, who was wonderful to work with..." my head was spinning.

"What was his name?" I had to ask.

Sensing my dismay, Molly explained who Kim is. "Kim Richard Eckert, I notice he's been using," she said.

Whenever the interview turned back to the people with whom she'd spent time on the Ridge with, it was as she were experiencing things all over again. "And then silly Koni. She knew David Evans long before I did because she was a passerine bander. So she was very interested in what David was doing. It was a huge part of my life. And not mine personally now, although since Dave is the raptor bander I seem to...suffer from that too," she said breaking into laughter.

When I asked if she felt like a raptor widower, she laughed again. "And a lot more. Yesterday he was up the shore doing peregrine stuff. In the winter he does snowy owl stuff,

Hawk Weekend

continued

meeting, a fabulous sustainable dinner, awards, a silent auction, and a keynote address by Dr. William Bowerman, Professor of Wildlife Ecology and Toxicology at Clemson University. His presentation is titled, "Sea Eagles as Environmental Messengers—What

and pretty soon he'll be doing osprey stuff.... Well, physically with a bird, he's kind of magic, a hawk whisperer if you will. I've watched a lot of people over the years handle raptors and I've never seen anybody quite like him. He's just really good and really interested and just loves it to the exclusion of almost everything else." "Say no more," I said.

As we were finishing up the interview, Molly noticed something outside. "The crows are after something," she said.

Suddenly she was back on the Ridge. "That's the other neat thing I saw up there. I was with Burnette Hojnacki, and this flock of ravens flew by. Flock...like maybe ten or twelve ravens flew by. They got down not as far as that first overlook, and one came back. And then I could hear this scratching sound. He'd seen a wasp nest, and I assume he was not going to share it. I don't know why he'd come back all by himself. And then we went down to look, and there

was the shredded wasp nest. I just felt sure he didn't want to share."

Molly would go on to explain that the raven was probably after grubs, and then Skipper yawned, pulling us back to the present. But only momentarily since Molly had a wonderful story of how she and David had gotten Skipper.

We watched a little of the soccer as I packed up the microphone, and I thanked her for giving me the interview. "Oh, you're welcome," she said and mentioned she's been interviewed several times. "And what ends up in the papers is always the absolute dumbest thing I said."

I told her I'd try not to let that happen.

To read the full interview, please go to www.hawkridge.org/about/news.html

Pictured from left to right are the Hawk Ridge Pioneers: Joel Bronoel, Ole Finseth, Molly Kohlbry (now Evans), Martha Green, Jan Green, John Green, and in back over the sign Wilbur Fox.



They Tell Us About The Health of Our Planet."

Dr. Bowerman has been studying bald eagle ecology and effects of environmental pollutants in the Great Lakes region since 1984.

Sunday will offer a variety of field trips and activities at the Hawk Ridge Main Overlook.

All activities at the Hawk Ridge Main Overlook are open to the public; everything else requires registration.

For more details about Hawk Weekend, go to www.hawkridge.org or contact us at 218.428.6209 or mail@hawkridge.org.