

Northern Goshawk By Dick Green

The Northern Goshawk, or simply, goshawk, is the iconic bird of the Duluth raptor migration. It is the bird illustrated in the logo of the Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory. Goshawks are not uncommon in their breeding areas in the forested regions of the northernmost parts of the United States and Canada, extending south in the United States in the mountains of the west and in New England, but they are seldom seen elsewhere except during migration, or in invasion years. Duluth is the best place to see goshawks during migration.

Goshawks are impressive birds. They are large, fierce birds that are fast, strong and bold. Goshawks are attractive birds, particularly adults, with their slate-grey backs and light grey barring underneath. Adult goshawks have quite distinct plumage from adults of their congeners, Cooper's Hawks and Sharp-shinned Hawks, both of which have brown barring underneath; however, few adult goshawks are seen in Duluth, except in invasion years, and young goshawks have plumage quite similar to young Cooper's and Sharp-shinned Hawks.

Birds in flight are distinguished by size and pattern of flight. Goshawks are much larger than Sharp-shinned Hawks, and the two species are not likely to be confused, but small male goshawks are about the size of large female Cooper's Hawks, and it takes an experienced hawk watcher to distinguish the two by appearance alone. Fortunately, however, Cooper's hawks are generally seen earlier in the season than goshawks, so statistical hawk watchers who cannot distinguish indi-



Northern Goshawk by Erik Bruhnke

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Notes From The Director

By Janelle Long

The spring and summer was filled with exciting happenings and new endeavors for Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory. We were able to continue Raptors in the Classroom, Western Great Lakes Owl Monitoring, and Peregrine Watch, thanks to partial grant funding and generous donors. The Spring Count was able to continue to some extent with the help of dedicated volunteers. We celebrated the 25th anniversary of the Hawk Ridge Birdathon event.

Two delightful small social events were hosted for Hawk Ridge to connect with members and donors, as well as neighbors and users of Hawk Ridge Nature Reserve. We've embraced board changes and staff changes, which bring exciting new direction and insight for the organization.

Our annual Hawk Weekend festival has been revamped to include a new venue, new workshops, new food, etc. We are also co-hosting the premier Raptor Research Foundation Conference this fall. As we kick off another great season, we invite you to join us for these special events and to visit us at Hawk Ridge Nature Reserve this fall. Thank you for your continued support and we look forward to connecting with you during the spectacular migration. I can't wait to see all the eyes on the skies!

A special thanks to the following grantors and sponsors:

Donald M. Weesner Foundation
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Minnesota Ornithologists' Union
Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
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Marshall Hardware
The College of St. Scholastica
(Bluestone Agency)
Michael Furtman, michaelfurtman.com
Erik Bruhnke / Naturally Avian

viduals would be fairly safe in believing that a large accipiter seen in September is a Cooper's Hawk and a large accipiter seen in October is a goshawk.

The Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory performs a number of functions, including educational and scientific. Different visitors may have different interests. In particular, we can distinguish among interests in the birds, in the count, and in the science. Casual visitors are most likely to be interested in the birds, and few visitors, whether casual or serious, can fail to be impressed by a newly banded goshawk that is shown at the overlook, described and released.

Serious birders who come to Duluth only once, or a few times, to see hawks might like to know when to come and whether they will see what they are looking for. Goshawks have come in large numbers during invasion

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2011

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Sax-Zim Bog Winter Bird Festival

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Speakers: Ryan Brady & Paul Bannick

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To register online: sax-zimbog.com

Email: Mike Hendrickson mlhendrickson@yahoo.com
if you have any questions about the festival.

Comments From The Board

By Karen Stubenvoll, Chair

During my first season in Duluth, in 2002, I “fell in love” with the region and with Hawk Ridge, watching kettles of Broad-winged Hawks swirl overhead during Hawk Weekend. Soon I became a volunteer, then moved on to raptor banding assistant, and now my life seems to revolve around the migration cycles of Hawk Ridge.

As the new chair of the Board of Directors for Hawk Ridge, I want to thank Ray Gamache for his strong leadership over the past year. We wish Ray and his wife Jane Benesch (also a Hawk Ridge volunteer) well in their new home in Pennsylvania. Thank you to the Board of Directors for your confidence in appointing me to succeed Ray in this position. I will do my best to assist Janelle and the board as we move forward with our programs and outreach.

On behalf of the Board and Staff, we also extend our sincere thanks to Steve Betzler for his valued service on the Hawk Ridge Board of Directors. Family issues have necessitated Steve’s recent resignation from the Board.

I especially want to thank our volunteer core for the many hours of service spent up at the overlook, and also behind the scenes throughout the year. We would not be such a strong organization without you! We also have dedicated staff members who help fulfill our core mission of research, education, and stewardship of the Hawk Ridge Nature Reserve.

I’d like to introduce our newest board member, Andrew Streitz of Duluth, who is a hydrologist with the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency. Andrew and his wife Diane Desotelle, an environmental consultant, consider Hawk Ridge one of their favorite destinations for walking, hiking and bicycling.

Hawk Ridge is what makes Duluth unique. It is where visitors from near and far come to view the raptors during their amazing journeys. I sincerely hope to see you on the ridge this fall.

In Memory of Burnett Hojnacki

By Molly Evans

Burnett Hojnacki, one of the founders of the Hawk Ridge Nature Reserve, died this summer. A long time member, she served the Duluth Audubon Society / Hawk Ridge Committee as Treasurer for many years, contributing both wisdom and dignity. When she was able, she helped with the thankless task of “fall clean-up” at the ridge. Those of us who are “of a certain age” remember her for her devotion to the ridge, preservation of the area, and the absolute joy of hawk watching from the Overlook.



Photo by Mark Gottwald

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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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Twin Cities Social
By Frank Berdan

The Twin Cities friends of Hawk Ridge gathered at Lisa Dayton's Forest Farm on July 31. Two dozen major donors and prospective members gathered on a hot and muggy summer afternoon.

We shared stories of lives impacted by our research and educational programs. Jen Vieth and her Peregrine Falcon provided up-close-and-personal Hawk Ridge moments for kids of all ages. Delicious light refreshments accompanied the conversations on the lawn.

We moved inside Lisa's new home for her welcome and a brief Hawk Ridge overview by Executive Director Janelle Long. Then forty years of research at Hawk Ridge were highlighted by Mark Martell, biologist and Hawk Ridge board member.

The group indicated broad agreement that Hawk Ridge has a



Board Member Mark Martell presents Hawk Ridge research highlights - photo by Frank Berdan

mission and success story that are worthy of our support. Everyone enjoyed themselves, new friends were made, and several families became new members of Hawk Ridge.

Thanks to our hosts Lisa and James!

Photo by Frank Berdan



Raptors in the Classroom 2011 By Julie O'Connor

This spring was another great season for Raptors in the Classroom. Once again we teamed up with the Lake Superior Zoo to bring this dynamic raptor program into fourth grade classrooms around the region. This program was primarily funded by Minnesota Power and the Donald M. Weesner Foundation--we AND the 37 fourth-grade teachers AND the 1,000+ kids we taught THANK these organizations for making this program possible in 2011!

Raptors in the Classroom provides two 45 minute programs to each classroom. Our first visit includes an overview of raptors, then some specific information about either owls, raptor adaptation or migration, depending on the program they've selected. Our second visit wraps up the content we started during our first visit, then our partner from the zoo brings out the education bird! This year, we worked with Heidi Faris from the zoo (Heidi is a former

volunteer and naturalist from Hawk Ridge), and their birds Lady (a Red-tailed Hawk) and Buito (an Eastern Screech-Owl). The moment the bird comes out of its carrier, the kids are mesmerized by it. It's a pleasure to be able to sit back and watch the children be drawn into the presence of the bird and know that one of those students may 'catch the bug' and become involved with birds--maybe even raptors--in the future.

Peregrine Watch 2011

By Julie O'Connor

Peregrine Watch is our summer education outreach program that uses a nesting pair of Peregrine Falcons in downtown Duluth as our primary teaching tool. We set up our spotting scopes and monitoring equipment in Lake Place Park on the Lakewalk and share the lives of these magnificent birds with passersby. Our audience ranges from preschool children to the elderly; businessmen to the aimless folks passing time in the park; tourists and locals alike.

2011 was a year of battles! The first battle was between our resident peregrine adult female, Amy, and another adult female who has been nesting in the area since 2007.

On May 30, I read the band on the female falcon at the Greysolon Building nest site, and it wasn't Amy. Amy (band 82/C) has been at the Greysolon Building nest site since 2004, and we were very sad to learn that she is no longer on this territory. Amy was a fearsome bird. She would scream and attack anyone on the roof of the building, and her wrath extended to neighboring rooftops once the chicks fledged. She was a gregarious, noisy, aggressive female, making her easy and fun to watch--from a distance!

The new female was banded as a nestling in McRae, Ontario in 2004. Her band number is a tipped-over 'B' over the number 8 (written as

*B/8). She was not assigned a name at her banding, so we nicknamed her JENNA, in honor of our young volunteer Jackson's mom. Jenna is much quieter than Amy and much more laid back. She would often not participate in feedings, territory defenses and nest protection; her mate had a much bigger job this year than in previous years! When she DID go into 'code red' protective mode at the nest, she was relentless in her attacks and just as willing to physically confront a human as Amy was, but she was much less vocal, which gave her the element of surprise. There was never any doubt about where Amy was, but Jenna could sneak up on you and hit you before you knew she was coming! It made for some exciting photos of the banding (visit www.michaelfurtman.com to see photos).

We battled to raise enough funds to provide Peregrine Watch--THANK YOU to the Minnesota Ornithologists' Union and the Donald M. Weesner Foundation for their funding help. We battled equipment failure, the economy (tourist numbers seemed very low) and the weather. Our first two weeks of programming were plagued by rain and dense fog

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Volunteer Jackson Boberg with his poster and Julie O'Connor at Peregrine Watch photo by Karl Boberg

Northern Goshawk
continued

years (over 5000 were seen in 1972 and in 1982), but even in non-invasion years, quite a few goshawks are seen. Over 100 goshawks have been counted in Duluth each fall for the last twenty years. The second and third weeks of October are perhaps the best time to observe goshawks in Duluth. Over the last ten years, goshawks have been observed on an average of eleven days of those two weeks. Only one year (2007) had goshawks observed on as few as eight days, and during that year, four of the fourteen days had bad weather (a total of one hawk was observed on the four days).

One of the most interesting things about goshawks from a scientific point of view is their periodic invasions. Adult goshawks typically find it unnecessary to migrate since the bulk of their food sources are available year round, in most years at least. Goshawk invasions have been observed every nine or ten years since the 1880s. Goshawk invasions usually follow the collapse of snowshoe hare populations. The idea is that goshawk populations increase as snowshoe hare populations increase as a part of the hare-lynx cycle. When hare populations collapse, along with

grouse populations, with which they are roughly synchronized, adult goshawks do not have enough food to breed successfully in the summer, or enough food to maintain themselves throughout the winter. Therefore they move south and are seen in Duluth and at other hawk-watching sites.

Possibly the largest invasion occurred in 1972, when 347 goshawks were counted at Hawk Mountain, Pennsylvania, 206 were counted at Cedar Grove, Wisconsin, and 5382 were counted at Hawk Ridge in Duluth. That was the first year of more-or-less systematic counting at Hawk Ridge. The peak in 1982 was also large, with 5819 goshawks counted at Hawk Ridge. There was also a peak in 1992, when 2040 goshawks were counted at the overlook (the numbers for 1972 and 1982 combined birds seen at the overlook and the banding station).

The peak numbers were not as high in the next invasion (1101 and 1107 goshawks were counted at the overlook during 2000 and 2001, respectively). It seems that the number of goshawks seen in peak years has declined sharply since the huge counts in the early 1970s and 1980s, but it may be that the peaks are lower but broader. There were more gos-

hawks counted in the 1990s than in either the 1970s or 1980s, and there were over 5000 goshawks counted from 1999 to 2005, which is more than half the number counted in the previous decade (which had the highest total). It will be interesting to see what happens this year and for the rest of this decade. How high will the numbers be, and how sharp will the peak be?

The pattern of goshawk invasions says something about the biology of the birds. In non-invasion years the relatively small number of migrant goshawks through Duluth is almost all young birds, and most of these are male. The movement of young birds in non-invasion years may be qualitatively different than the movement of adults in invasion years. It may be that in non-invasion years in North America the situation is the same as that in Europe, where males have narrower feeding niches than females and males disperse further than females. If male goshawks in North America are finer in their food demands than females, and if young males are poorer hunters than adult males, one might to expect the pattern that is actually observed.

During invasion years, relatively few young are observed, and the sex ratio of adults is fairly balanced, which is what would be expected if few young are produced and almost all adults move. Too little is known about the feeding habits of the goshawks that visit Duluth to explain the age and sex ratio patterns that are observed here, but observations of European goshawks are suggestive.

The Northern Goshawk is a holarctic species, nesting in boreal forests from Alaska, across Canada through northern and central Europe to Siberia. Goshawks, like other accipiters, show quite strong reverse sexual dimorphism (females are quite a bit larger than males). European goshawks show more sexual dimorphism than North American goshawks (males of the two races are about the same size, but European females are

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Northern Goshawk by Erik Bruhnke

Duluth Small Social
By Bob Owens

Karen Stubenvoll, John Baumgarten and Bob Owens hosted a successful social gathering on the evening of Wed. Aug. 10, with nearly 60 attendees, at the home of Mary Ellen and Bob Owens, which neighbors Hawk Ridge Nature Reserve. The goal was to bring various users of the Hawk Ridge Nature Reserve together, introduce Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory (HRBO) seasonal contractors, and to present the various functions (stewardship, education, banding, and counting) of HRBO, as well as raise funds for the current year. We also explained the unique relationship with the City of Duluth to manage the 365-acre park with little financial assistance from the city.

Members of the Duluth Trail Riders Assoc., Mountain Bikers Assoc., Snowmobilers Assoc., as well as neighbors, dog walkers, hikers and joggers were invited to hear our presentations and garner support for mutually beneficial projects. We



Host and Board Member Bob Owens speaks to the group about Hawk Ridge - photo by Frank Berdan

thanked the two Marshall School students, Joe Hodge and Killian McKee for their hard work to minimize erosion by improving current trails that lead on to the Amity Creek trail. It was a fun, energizing evening with many people thankful to learn more

about HRBO activities. A critique will follow as we finish the process and plan for the next social/fundraiser event.



Hawk Ridge Duluth social photo by Frank Berdan



Hawk Ridge Birdathon by Janelle Long

We celebrated the 25th annual Hawk Ridge Birdathon in St. Louis County on Saturday, May 21st. We had several teams of dedicated birders help carry on this tradition by participating for the good of birds and Hawk Ridge. Team “Treats n’ Tweets” (Dave Benson, Lars Benson, Lori Williams) took the trophy and counted 150 species to win the St. Louis County Big Day category!

In all, a grand total of 164 species was counted. This was the lowest total in all 25 years of the event, likely due to fewer teams and

a significant lack of shorebirds. This was also the first year no Eastern Meadowlarks were seen. The St. Louis County Birdathon 25-year average is 190 species with a 25-year grand total of 265 species. 218 species was the highest total count (1996) and 170 species was the second lowest count (2010).

Highlights included: Cackling Goose (2nd year seen during Birdathon), Great Black-backed Gull (5th year seen), Rough-legged Hawk (7th year seen), Ruddy Duck (9th year seen), Northern Mockingbird

(10th year seen), and 25 species of warblers! \$3500 was raised through this event for Hawk Ridge research, education, and stewardship efforts.

Thank you to Eagle Optics, Wild Birds Unlimited, Sawbill Canoe Outfitters, Chris & Cindy Edwanson, and Michael Furtman 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. Come out and join us in this fun fundraising event next year!

Peregrine Watch continued

around the nest site, making it impossible for us to work.

The birds carried on, however. Jenna and her mate, an unbanded male that we presume is the same male as in previous years, produced two female chicks, 70/W, named Laura (for Laura Erickson) and 71/W, named Waters (for Debbie Waters). The chicks hatched on May 20 and fledged on July 1 and 2. Laura (the bird) disappeared on July 5 and we are presuming that she didn’t survive her first week in the air. When only one chick remains, it becomes very difficult to locate them. Our primary way of finding them is by hearing them scream at their siblings and parents. In a family with multiple chicks, there is a lot of post-fledging action to observe, but with only one chick, the sky is very quite most of the time. Our final battle was to simply find Waters and her parents during the last few days of the program.

Overall, though, our season visitor totals were much better than we expected. We were able to provide 17 full days of interpretation (rain shortened or canceled 7 days of program) and we visited with 1,145 people. That comes out to be an average of 67 visitors per day or 16 visitors per hour.

Remarkably, these numbers are very close to our daily/hourly numbers from previous years! Peregrine Watch established itself on Facebook (www.facebook.com/pwduluth) and Twitter (@peregrinewatchduluth) this summer. These social media outlets connected us with another several hundred people from around the world and brought ‘our’ falcons to many more people than just those who could join us in person. It is our dream to provide on site Peregrine Watch education from Memorial Day through mid-July, but starting even earlier in May when we get our nest camera images streaming onto the internet. We’ll keep you all posted on those possibilities as they develop.

Thank you to our Peregrine Watch supporters—without your contributions, we wouldn’t have been able to be in the park this summer. Finally, I offer my thanks to Noelle Grunwald and Theresa Raab, the naturalists who worked with me this summer. Their enthusiasm and dedication really added great depth to the program and our visitors were drawn in by their friendly spirits and passion for falcons. They were a wonderful asset to Peregrine Watch 2011.

Keep your eyes on the sky and be sure to call or email in any reports you may have of peregrines in downtown Duluth throughout the next eight months!

Northern Goshawk continued

larger than American ones). One possible explanation of the difference is that in Europe female goshawks (but not males) can take mountain hares. North American goshawks take snowshoe hares, but snowshoe hares are half the size of the mountain hares of Europe.

Museum studies of European goshawks have shown that, over the last fifty years, females have become larger and males have become smaller. A suggested explanation is that due to clear-cutting of forests, hare populations have increased, giving females more large prey, while an increase in the number of foxes, which prey on the grouse that male goshawks feed to their mates and their chicks, has forced males to specialize in smaller prey, like red squirrels, which require more agility and smaller size to catch.

Goshawks are fascinating birds. They are exciting to see, fun to count, and the results of the counts are interesting to think about. I hope that visitors to the main overlook get to see some goshawks and think about how their world influences the numbers we see at Hawk Ridge.

Fall Education Preview by Debbie Waters

More than raptors are blowing in the wind this fall! You’ll see a lot of new faces, a new piece of equipment and an exciting new evening program. You’ll also get the chance to celebrate one last fall migration season with this Hawk Ridge veteran.

You’ll recognize three faces this fall at the overlook: naturalist Sarah Glesner, count interpreter Erik Bruhnke and myself. You’ll also see volunteer coordinator Julie O’Connor around occasionally, but she’ll mostly be busy coordinating the Raptor Research Foundation conference Hawk Ridge is hosting, to be held in October in Duluth. New to the overlook education staff this year are Margie Menzies, Jenni Polisen, Gail Johnnejack (2010 volunteer) and Tessa Enroth (2010 volunteer). We’ve got an excellent mix of education and research experience on our team this year and are looking forward to working together to provide our visitors with amazing experiences.

Fondly (and sometimes not-so-fondly) referred to by staff and

volunteers as “The Circus Wagon”, our old wooden merchandise trailer is being replaced by a shiny new 7’x12’ enclosed trailer from Widdes Trailer Sales. Our thanks goes to the Donald M. Weesner Foundation, who generously provided funding for the purchase of the trailer, the interior customization and a new point-of-sale system. We in the education department are eagerly anticipating streamlining our system for sales and being better able to provide service to YOU!

Speaking of better serving you, we are making a change to the format of the Saturday evening owl program—we’re eliminating the “program” part of it. These new Saturday owl evenings will consist of a format more like that of the daytime overlook—socializing, live bird demonstrations, adoptions and releases—but at night, at our lecture area and with a lovely campfire. Marshmallows, anyone...?

Also taking place at the lecture area this fall are our 5th grade

Experience Hawk Ridge field trip programs. Thanks goes out to the Lloyd K. Johnson Foundation, who generously provided the funding for the program fees and the Donald M. Weesner Foundation, who provided money for free bussing. Big yellow buses and enthusiastic 5th graders will be common sights this fall. At Hawk Ridge they will be treated to a research experience like none they can experience anywhere else!

There is no place quite like Hawk Ridge, and I know that very well. I have been a seasonal contractor for Hawk Ridge since the fall of 2001. In the past eleven years I have worn many hats: naturalist, volunteer, grant writer, webmaster, construction worker, editor, education director, weed whacker, photographer and bird bander. As I finish my secondary life science teaching licensure, it will soon be time for me to move on. Celebrate with me this fall my final season with the raptors!

HAWK WEEKEND FESTIVAL
September 16, 17 and 18, 2011

Come and celebrate the migration at our annual Hawk Weekend Festival!

Friday evening includes a social with refreshments, live birds, "Guess-the-Number-of-Hawks Contest", annual member meeting and a keynote address by Dr. Gerald J. Niemi. Dr. Niemi is Professor of Biology and a Senior Research Associate at the Center for Water and the Environment at the Natural Resources Research Institute at the University of Minnesota, Duluth. He will present on “Forty Years of Counting and Banding at Hawk Ridge”. This presentation will highlight the importance of the research that Hawk Ridge does each fall and the impact it has in bird conservation efforts.

Both Saturday and Sunday will offer a variety of field trips and seminars at and away from the Ridge. Hawkwatching, interpretive programs, banded hawk and passerine demonstrations, optics displays, merchandise, and refreshments will be offered at the Hawk Ridge Main Overlook.

Saturday evening will serve as a fundraising benefit for Hawk Ridge. The event will include a social, book signings, refreshments, fabulous hors d’oeuvres, awards, exciting auction with wonderful packages, live music, and a presentation by Stan Tekiela, naturalist, wildlife photographer and author. He will present a fun and entertaining talk “Uncommon Facts about Common

Birds”. Fascinating facts and tidbits about some of the birds that people love to hate will be shared. You will never look at these birds the same way ever again. This talk wraps up with a strong environmental message of conservation and understanding.

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. Registration for many of the field trips, workshops, and evening events is limited, so be sure to sign up today!

Fall Research Preview

By David Alexander



With the arrival of August, the fall research activities for Hawk Ridge are in their final stages of planning. Most visitors to the overlook will not notice any visible changes, but things are happening behind the scenes. We have new banders, a new banding blind, a change in research emphasis, and will also be co-hosting a major research meeting this fall.

David (Fud) Evans has retired after 39 years and after banding over 100,000 raptors at Hawk Ridge! We thank him for his time, passion, effort and contributions he made to Hawk Ridge and the world of raptor research. Fud recently co-authored a paper on the 40 years of raptor research at Hawk Ridge with Dr. Gerald (Jerry) Niemi and Dr. Matt Etterson. Dr. Niemi presented this research at the Raptor Research Foundation conference in 2010 and will present this interesting and exciting information at our upcoming Hawk Weekend festival. Be sure to join us!

After HRBO completed an interview process, we hired Frank Nicoletti to be the head bander for Hawk Ridge. Many of you will know Frank as our former long-time raptor counter. His extensive ex-

perience in banding raptors will be a great addition to the Hawk Ridge team. Along with Frank, we also hired assistants Nova Mackentley and Chris Neri. They both have experience with banding raptors, including supervising owl banding at Whitefish Point Bird Observatory in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. There will be a new banding blind and new observation blind, which we have spent the summer constructing.

As we move forward, we are slightly changing the emphasis for banding at HRBO. We will be working harder on educational opportunities, and will be working closely with Debbie Waters and the Hawk Ridge education staff. We hope to expand the Adopt-a-Raptor program. We also plan to provide periodic updates on the banding program through social media.

The fall count activities are not undergoing much change this fall. Karl Bardon will return as head counter for his 5th season. We hired a new assistant counter, Cory Ritter, who has counted raptors several seasons for Audubon Pennsylvania and conducted bird research for Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory. We will continue the non-raptor count this fall and, thanks to partial fund-

Banding Station Set-Up Crew. In photo from left to right: Frank Nicoletti, Tara Haynes, Annmarie Geniusz, Katie Brey, David Alexander, Dave Carman, and Andrew Longtin photo by michaelfurtman.com

ing from the Duluth Superior Area Community Foundation Biodiversity Fund grant, we will compile, analyze and publicize the data collected. Our research goal for the next year is to get a formal database of the years of count data completed, and work on a statistical analysis of the data for future publications.

HRBO is co-hosting the Raptor Research Foundation's annual conference in October here in Duluth. The conference will bring together the world's leading researchers on raptors, and is open to all registrants. More details are available on the HRBO website at www.hawkridge.org.

It's going to be a busy fall, as you can see. Over the next winter, we will be collating data from the fall and working on research project design for next spring and fall. If you or anyone you know has ideas for research projects for either the hawk count or banding station, please contact Janelle at jlong@hawkridge.org and we will get them to the research committee for review.

Jackson's Story continued

For some there is a single person or a moment in time, but for a lot of people it is not until you look back and connect the dots do you see the many things that brought you to the job you have when you are a grown-up.

Hawk Ridge is a place that has strengthened Jackson's dream. The people at Hawk Ridge and the experiences Jackson has had there have been truly amazing. Will this make his dream of becoming an animal rescuer reality? Who knows, but I know it will forever be one of the factors that

will make Jackson who he is when he grows up.

Doesn't that sound like something you want to be a part of? Thank you, Hawk Ridge!

Stewardship Notes By Bob Owens

The spring rainy season has continued through July, delaying some of the normal maintenance of trails. The wet season left its mark with significant erosion on three of the trails leading to the Amity Creek Trail. Fortunately a Marshall School student, Joe Hodge, called looking for a community service project so chose to rebuild about 100 yards of the Talus Trail near the intersection with the Amity Creek Trail—a section of the trail system which was the most vulnerable to erosion. Joe finished the project last week under the guidance of Judy Gibbs from the City of Duluth Parks and Recreation Department—our local expert trail consultant. The wet season has delayed mowing the Cutoff Trail and the Amity Creek Trail; however, the task should be completed by our opening date of August 15. We are fortunate to have their service and willingness to take on these extensive projects.

The banding station is supervised by Frank Nicoletti, who asked for mowing and additional clearing of alder brush before the Aug 15 start date. Volunteers worked on the mowing and clearing on Aug 3, 6 and 10.

We are fortunate to have had an internationally acclaimed trail designer from the National Association of Mountain Bikers mark a proposed new multi-use trail for a local club, Cyclists of Gitchee Gumee Shores (COGGS). The trail will be constructed over the next two years. This trail will be located on the lake side of Skyline Parkway for almost 2 miles. The trail will be part of COGGS' project to have a multi-use trail—available for use by birders, hikers, joggers and bikers—the full length of the

city.

We have met with the Duluth Parks and Recreation Department and other partners in the city who use or supervise trails to discuss developing consistent signage for all parks in the city. We at Hawk Ridge have used color codes for marking our internal trails and that strategy met with approval; however, a suggestion was made to have a map posted at each trail intersection for improved signage. We also plan to install three kiosks in the nature reserve, one entering from the monument overlook on Skyline Parkway, one located near the count platform area at the main overlook and the third at the parking lot at the intersection of Seven Bridges Road. These kiosks are to offer maps, notices of special instructions and special events.

Trash deposits are consistent

with years past; however there are fewer couches and chairs since one of the Universities offered recycling of used furniture. The city has been helpful with regular pickups of the trash barrels.

We are fortunate to have the service of students (Joe Hodge, Brandon Channell, and Killian McKee) and their willingness to take on these extensive projects.

Hawk Ridge Trail Work - photo by Judy Gibbs



Jackson's Story

by Karl Boberg

Remember when you were a kid and people asked, “What do you want to be when you grow up?”

Jackson told us (his parents) at the age of three that he wanted to be an animal rescuer. “Just like Steve Irwin”, he would say. Over the years he has collected toys, books, stuffed animals and pets that have fostered that love. Anything about animals has become Jackson’s passion!

When you see that your child has an interest, what do you do? You find ways to develop that interest and strengthen it.

The summer of 2010 found our family traveling from the Twin Cities to Duluth for a weekend vacation. Jackson had read in a Minnesota raptor book about a place called, “Hawk Ridge” so we decided to check it out. Well, it was the end of July and we quickly learned that not much goes on up on the ridge during the end of July; however, we met a retired couple that showed us some June berries up on that ridge and told us to come back in the fall when things are really cool. It was a beautiful view and it was worth checking out what this couple was talking about.

The end of September worked great for Jackson and I to travel back to Hawk Ridge. We drove up early on a Saturday. We arrived up at Hawk Ridge just as a naturalist was talking about a recently banded raptor before releasing it from the overlook. Jackson was about to jump out of his skin being that close to a raptor. He quickly proclaimed that the Northern Goshawk was his favorite bird! During our visit to Hawk Ridge we had an amazing time watching the count interpreter call out to us the birds in the sky above us. We watched naturalist demonstrations about the birds we

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were seeing. We saw feathers and wings. We were able to use binoculars better than our own. It was amaz-



Jen Vieth from Carpenter Nature Center with Peregrine Falcon and Hawk Ridge Volunteer Jackson Boberg - photo by Frank Berdan

ing and we had a blast!

For weeks we talked to anyone who would listen about Hawk Ridge; the breathtaking, beautiful raptors and knowledgeable naturalists. We couldn’t wait to come back again in the fall of 2011—staying for more than one day, this time.

When you see that your child has an interest, what do you do? You find ways to develop that interest and strengthen it.

Jackson’s 11th birthday was coming. What do you do for a boy who has a huge library of books and an impressive collection of stuffed-animals? I REMEMBERED HAWK RIDGE. Through the website I was put in contact with Julie O’Connor and told her that I had a son who was interested in raptors and that we would love to come up to Duluth to volunteer as part of his birthday celebration.

Julie and I emailed and talked on the phone and came up with an amazing idea. Jackson would come up and be a part of Peregrine Watch at the end of June. As Julie and I talked, several opportunities became

available. Jackson got the chance to suggest a name for the new female Peregrine Falcon at the Greysolon building. The name selected was “Jenna”, after Jackson’s mom. It was so fun for the whole family to read the updates from Peregrine Watch on the Yahoo! group posts from Julie.

On June 23rd Jackson, his grandparents, and I, all traveled to Duluth for three days of volunteering. Jackson made a tri-fold display with facts about the Peregrine Falcon. It even included photos from professional wildlife photographer Michael Furtman, who sent Jackson four great pictures and gave Jackson permission to use them for his display board. Jackson’s mom braided string to show the wingspan of a peregrine. Jackson collected sand from Lake Superior and weighed it to show the weight of an adult male peregrine.

During the three days of volunteering, I watched my son talk to hundreds of people on the boardwalk about falcons. He showed them his poster and talked liked a “junior naturalist”.

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West Skyline Hawk Count 2011 by Erik Bruhnke

SPRING 2011 MIGRATION HIGHLIGHTS – RAPTORS

The spring 2011 West Skyline Hawk Count was conducted from March 15 through May 8, with a total combined effort of 198 hours of scanning the skies and tallying raptors and songbirds. The count was conducted on a volunteer basis due to lack of funding for the project this year. The season’s raptor total came to 7,009 raptors. Aside from this year, the seasonal average (over the 8 previous years) is 23,297 raptors per season. Harsh weather this spring proved to be a significant factor in raptor numbers overall. A considerable and extensive duration of cold, rainy/snowy and at times dangerously gusty east wind days resulted in lower than typical peak days per species of that time, and of course contributed to lower numbers due to fewer days of counting. Visibility throughout the sky was at times very limited as a result of the winter-like elements; but the count persisted, and the number of raptors tallied is still quite impressive!

The most common raptor species observed this spring was the Bald Eagle (1,870). The early spring push of Bald Eagles was noteworthy, but once the weather consisted of considerable amounts of sustained and gusty east winds, the numbers of both eagle species and other migrating raptor species began to dwindle



Bald Eagle by Erik Bruhnke

within the immediate Duluth area. The second most common raptor species observed was the Red-tailed Hawk (1,778), followed by the Broad-winged Hawk (1,608). Looking back on historic records and averages of each raptor species seen, the spring 2011 raptor count had some interestingly high numbers observed, especially in relationship to the low

grand total numbers observed. For example, the West Skyline Hawk Count averages 65 Golden Eagles per spring. This spring’s count was 54 individuals, which is not far off from the average. Other noteworthy statistics include 24 Cooper’s Hawks observed this spring, whereas the average number of Cooper’s Hawks observed is 33. This spring’s Merlin

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2011 Spring Owl Monitoring By Julie O’Connor

The Western Great Lakes Owl Monitoring project completed another season of surveys in April. 135 of our 160 routes were assigned to certified volunteer monitors throughout the state of Minnesota and 88 of 90 routes in Wisconsin. Volunteers are certified through an online program and are assigned a pre-established 9-mile route in their area. They spend one evening in early April driving their

route, stopping at one-mile intervals and listening passively for calling owls for five minutes at each stop. They record observations onto data sheets at each stop, including GPS coordinates, weather/snow conditions, wind speed, wind direction, cloud cover and owls heard.

Without our dedicated volunteers, we would never be able to capture so much information during the spring owl breeding season.

If you’re interested in participating in this survey, please contact our volunteer coordinators for more information: Minnesota: Julie O’Connor (218-348-2291 or joconnor@hawkridge.org) Wisconsin: Ryan Brady (715-685-2933 or ryan.brady@wisconsin.gov)

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West Skyline continued

numbers are the most impressive (when compared to the average). A total of 18 Merlins was observed this spring, while the average number of Merlins observed per spring is 18 individuals; a very interesting find, considering that this season’s raptor total was approximately 30.1% of the average season total for the count.

In addition to the previously mentioned species, other raptor species observed this season included Turkey Vulture, Osprey, Northern Harrier, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Northern Goshawk, Rough-legged Hawk, American Kestrel and Peregrine Falcon. Aerial courtship displays were noted several times of both Peregrine Falcons and Cooper’s Hawks this spring. With the bulk of buteos came several exciting observations, including a total of 16 western dark morph and 1 Harlan’s dark morph Red-tailed Hawks. Dark morph Red-tailed Hawks (western and Harlan’s combined) made up approximately .96% of the total Red-tailed Hawks observed this spring. Two Krider’s x Eastern integrate Red-tailed Hawks were observed (one photographed), and two partial-albino/leucistic Red-tailed Hawks were also noted (one photographed). Of the Rough-legged Hawks observed, 4 were dark morphs (8.5%). This spring there were two separate accounts of ob-



Sharpie over West Skyline Parkway by Erik Bruhnke

serving Sharp-shinned Hawks migrating past with prey in their talons and there were two days where all three species of falcons were observed.

SPRING 2011 MIGRATION HIGHLIGHTS – NON-RAPTORS

This spring is the 3rd consecutive season where songbirds have been identified, tallied and noted on a daily basis. During the past two years, counter Karl Bardon’s highly skilled counts showed incredible northward movements of songbirds. This spring I was able to identify a portion of the migrating songbirds, but there were small flocks of birds that went unidentified and/or uncount-



ed. A total of 3,228 migrating non-raptors was tallied during the spring 2011 count for a total of 34 species.

A fallout of Fox Sparrows and Dark-eyed Juncos was noted both at the hawk counting site and throughout the Duluth area in mid-April. American White Pelicans seemed to have a somewhat early arrival, with the first sighting of this species occurring on April 6. Total American White Pelican numbers came to 451 birds. Other high numbers included 1,277 Bohemian Waxwings, 837 Canada Geese, 128 American Robins, 110 Dark-eyed Juncos, 87 Common Loons, 73 Tundra Swans and 36 Sandhill Cranes. Four Snow Geese were observed ; two were of the white form and two were of the blue form. I’d like to mention a very special thank you to Frank Nicoletti, Dave Carman and Stephen Bockhold for all of the energy and effort they put toward the raptor count this spring. I learned so much! Their help, expertise and effort really made the season’s count possible. Another very special thank you goes out to my good friends Laura Erickson, Harold Nordin, Katie Brey, Sarah Glesner, Annmarie Geniusz and Aldo Raul Contreras Reyes who visited the count throughout the spring and helped make the season memorable. You kept our spirits warm on those beautiful yet brisk early spring days.

Hermit Thrush by Erik Bruhnke

Volunteer Voices

by Gretchen McDaniel

I was recently asked to write about my experience as a volunteer at Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory (HRBO). Why do I volunteer? I could just admit right away that I do it for therapy, but I’m supposed to write a few paragraphs, so I will “start at the beginning”.

I had just moved to Duluth in 2003 when I saw a flyer looking for Hawk Ridge volunteers. Working with naturalists and birds of prey sounded interesting so I took the number, called it, and went to an orientation where Debbie Waters and Julie O’Connor introduced themselves as the Education Director and the new Volunteer Coordinator. We received volunteer information packets and they went over the contents with us. I was very impressed with the intent, organization, and information presented to us. I remember being excited to learn that Duluth/Hawk Ridge is a concentration point for migrating raptors. That fact really hit home with me...I had just moved to this beautiful place where I could witness something so special right in my own back

yard! The enthusiasm with which Debbie and Julie shared their plans with us was infectious. I couldn’t wait to get started!

Now fast forward to 2011. How does it make me feel to be a HRBO volunteer today? Well, I’m still excited about each new season. Volunteering at HRBO has given me a connection to the community and the area which I wouldn’t have had otherwise. I am proud to be a part of an organization which does such important work in raptor research and education. Watching these beautiful birds flying over the ridge and being displayed in the hand is addictive. Witnessing the look of awe and excitement on a visitor’s face while posing with “their bird” during a raptor adoption never gets old.

However, what really makes volunteering at HRBO a positive experience for me are the people: the Board of Directors, staff, volunteers and visitors. The hardworking board members donate so much of their time behind the scenes all year to keep the organization running smoothly and planning for the future. The amazing staff enthusiastically shares their knowledge, patiently answers our questions, and makes

us feel a part of a team. My fellow volunteers, people of all ages, backgrounds and life experiences, bring their own positive energy, skills, and welcoming attitude to each day. Interacting with the visitors affords us the chance to meet people (sometimes families or groups of friends) with varying interests in birds from all over the country, and sometimes even further away. We hear their stories and often share their Hawk Ridge experience, seeing it through their eyes. When they bring their canine friends along with them, I rarely miss a chance to introduce myself so that I can get my “dog fix”. All of these things and more come together in a place with the best view in town as a backdrop. The beauty of Lake Superior in all of her moods is an added bonus to anyone visiting the ridge.

My experience as a HRBO volunteer has been a gift, a gift to myself. While at the ridge, I find it hard not to smile or laugh or stare in wonder. Most days I find it difficult to leave because I don’t want to miss anything. Yes, I am still “in therapy” and I don’t see any end in sight. Do not blame HRBO...on second thought, maybe you should!

2011 New Volunteer Training Dates Set

Get in on the action and volunteer with us! We are always looking for more volunteers for the overlook and YOU are welcome to join us. You don’t need to know how to identify raptors, we’ll teach you what you need to know. All we ask is that you: **1.** be friendly!!! **2.** attend ONE of our training sessions **3.** commit 24 hours of volunteer time between September 1 and October 31.

How easy is THAT?!

We need people for a multitude of jobs including greeting visitors, selling merchandise, assisting naturalists with programs, pointing out birds, running errands, construction, trail maintenance, grounds work, office help and serving on planning committees.

Training Dates & Times

Session 1 (attend both evenings):
Monday, August 22, 6-9pm at NRRI
Tuesday, August 23, 6-7:30pm at Hawk Ridge

Session 2
Saturday, September 10, 9am-2pm at NRRI

RSVP is not required, but will be appreciated. Please contact Volunteer Coordinator Julie O’Connor (218-348-2291 or joconnor@hawkridge.org) for more information.