

# TAKING FLIGHT

NEWSLETTER OF HAWK RIDGE BIRD OBSERVATORY



Connecticut Warbler

Photo by michaelfurtman.com

## ON THE DARK SIDE OF FALL MIGRATION

by MARGIE MENZIES, NATURALIST AND SONGBIRD BANDER

It's hard to believe another beautiful Minnesota fall season has already progressed into November and the great roller coaster ride of birds during the fall migration is winding down. Many wonderful fall days were spent at Hawk Ridge watching migrating raptors overhead on their journey south. We watched what we could most easily see during daylight hours, but we also explored the whole other side to the fall migration scene taking place under the cover of night. This is the time of the songbirds.

In early August, the songbirds were already moving around in great numbers with young birds frantically learning how to be a bird, hunting and eating like crazy, stoking up their fat supplies necessary for survival on the migration to points south. How do we know they are moving?

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## COMMENTS FROM THE BOARD

by KAREN STUBENVOLL, CHAIR

Our favorite season of the year at Hawk Ridge is coming to a quick end. After enduring a brutal winter, a cold springtime, and a late arrival of summer, the fall season always brings hope and enjoyment with the raptors and other birds migrating by Hawk Ridge Nature Reserve.

In the off-season, the Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory Board of Directors has continued to stay busy with committee meetings for all aspects of our nonprofit organization, including our ongoing strategic planning.



HRBO Board Chair, Karen Stubenvoll, with Bald Eagle and Executive Director, Janelle Long

Photo by Chris Neri

On the board, we bid farewell to Jan Green, whose term expired this year. Jan is a well-respected conservationist who was an original organizing member of the Hawk Ridge Nature Reserve back in 1972. Jan has been a leader in ecology issues locally, in the state of Minnesota, and also nationally. We wouldn't be here today without the vision of Jan and others like her. We sincerely thank Jan for her ten years of service on the board of Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory!

We also said good-bye to Jerry Niemi, PhD, and Tim Bates, who both served on the board for ten years. Jerry is a professor of Biology at the University of Minnesota Duluth (UMD) and senior research associate at the Natural Resources Research Institute, and chaired our Research Committee. Tim is the associate director of the Recreational Sports Outdoor Program at UMD, and chaired our Education Committee.

We welcome three new board members:

- **Ken Gilbertson**, PhD, is an associate professor at the UMD and is the director of the Center for Environmental Education. He has been a mentor to many students in the field of environmental education, including our own executive director! Ken and his wife Katie live in Duluth.
- **Laura Erickson** is well known in Duluth and also nationally as a conservationist, expert birder, public speaker, author, and radio host of "For The Birds". Laura and her husband Russ live in Duluth.
- **Matt Etterson**, PhD, is a research ecologist at the Environmental Protection Agency. His most common research topic is to develop models of chemical effects on avian reproduction, involving studies of pesticides, mercury, and perfluorinated compounds. Matt lives in Gnesen Township with his wife Julie and their two kids Abby & Zak. Matt also volunteers for the MN Breeding Bird Atlas program.

As always, I want to thank our members, donors, staff, and especially our volunteers who make Hawk Ridge such a special place. The fall season wouldn't be the same without you! I hope to see you at the Hawk Ridge Nature Reserve or at one of our events this next year. Thanks for your support!

## THE DARK SIDE OF FALL MIGRATION CONT'D



Margie Menzies, Naturalist and Passerine Bander, with Black-capped Chickadee

Photo by Karen Stubenvoll

Well, as a bird bander, I watch for the increase in numbers of birds caught in a day of banding, along with an increase in the occurrence of young birds. One of the other fascinating ways to observe fall songbird migration is to watch local weather radar during the night. Look for those clear nights with no cloud cover and open your local radar screen and look for dense green and blue bands surrounding the location of the radar after dark. These are not clouds or storms- they are songbirds! Look at a larger area radar image and you can see circle after circle all surrounding areas with local Doppler radar systems. What an incredible sight to see, all visible thanks to the incredible volume of birds passing by overhead in the night.

OK, time to introduce the featured birds of this article. In the vast numbers of songbirds that pass overhead largely unseen, I have to confess to a special love for warblers. According to the Minnesota Breeding Bird Atlas, there are 31 different species of these colorful, constantly moving birds breeding in Minnesota, along with a couple more that breed even further north and pass through on their way south- so we are up to about 33 species or so. As a bander, I love observing the brilliant colors of spring plumage, the males all dressed up in their finest for attracting a mate. I monitor their progress through the breeding season, and eagerly await the arrival of the young birds from this year's broods in my mist nets. Then the fall molt begins, which will leave many of them with a more everyday

apparel look for their winter garb, better known in birding parlance as confusing fall warblers. It's a fascinating cycle to observe from year to year.

At Hawk Ridge, we do make an attempt to count song birds as well as raptors. Karl Bardon, our Count Director, begins his daily counting regimen (known as our official Non-Raptor Count), early in the morning at a Lakeside location. What kinds of numbers of warblers does he see? Let's do a quick comparison with 2013's numbers. Note: this is not a contest between the raptors and the passerines, nor is it a scientific comparison of long term trends--just a quick look at one years data to show the vast numbers of these birds that fly overhead. In 2013, the raptors counted at Hawk Ridge totaled 43,384 from August through December. The score for warblers was 32,421 August through November. Really the bulk of the warblers have already moved through by mid-September in most years, with a few species taking a later flight time rolling into October. Given that we can only count a couple hours of early dawn movement versus all day for raptors--those are some pretty impressive numbers for

such small packages.

And while we are on the subject of migration, we need to point out that every single one of the warbler species that breed in Minnesota, or pass through on their way south is considered a Neotropical migrant, meaning that they spend the larger portion of the year in Mexico, Central America or South America, and only come north to breed. It is well known that migrating great distances is highly risky business and it is estimated that perhaps as many as half of the birds that survive the summer to migrate south will not return the following spring. Why would you leave the reasonably stable weather conditions of the tropics for points north with these kinds of odds of success? A number of factors come into play. Consider that more than half of the nearly 400 species of Neotropical migrants spend their winters from Mexico to Panama, an area of not quite 4 million square miles, in addition to the resident populations of birds, not to mention migrants from the south! The breeding area for most of these birds in the US and Canada provides more than 25 million square miles of space!



Canada Warbler

Photo by Erik Bruhnke



## THE DARK SIDE OF FALL MIGRATION CONT'D

Warblers are also specialists in consuming lots and lots of insects, their primary energy source and a protein rich food. In the tropics, plants are limited to a standard roughly 12 hours of daylight year-round, while to the north there is a considerably longer day length for plants to produce more food for insects to consume and voila, the result is more insects. For example Duluth, Minnesota has approximately 15 and a half hours of daylight compared to Bogota, Columbia pretty much right on the equator, which has roughly 12 hours and 20 minutes of daylight. A difference of 3.5 hours of growing time, and the day length only increases the further north you go. So having room to spread out, in an area rich in insects sounds like a good deal for the Neotropical migrants, and it is speculated that perhaps there are also fewer predators in this abundance of space.

A few more specifics of migration and warblers are worth of exploring at this point. Consider first of all, the fact that the average warbler weighs about as much as 4 to 5 pennies in your pocket. That's not a lot to work with for a pretty long trek. Ornithologists, Tim and Janet Williams, have taken a hard look at Blackpoll Warblers to explore the energy cost of migration and compare them to human efforts to help us understand the enormity of what these birds are able to accomplish in endurance

and efficiency. Blackpoll Warblers breed from coast to coast in Northern Canada and in Alaska. When migration rolls around they head to the south or southeast toward the Atlantic coast. When they reach the coast they fly over the Atlantic ocean for 80 to 90 hours straight to northern South America, the equivalent of a human running 4 minute miles straight through for 80 hours! Blackpoll Warblers need to accumulate fuel for this journey. Weighing about 11 grams they may acquire enough fat to increase their body weight to 21 g. Your average Snickers bar has 14 grams of fat, enough for one and a half times the amount a single Blackpoll needs to fly 80-90 hours non-stop. If these warblers were burning fossil fuel instead of body fat this would be roughly equivalent to 720,000 miles per gallon! Consider that during your next candy bar break!

While preparing to write this article, I started to wonder proportionately how many warblers do I band in a year compared to other families of birds. At Sugarloaf Cove, on the North Shore, I band birds roughly once a week from late May through October. In 2013, 56% of the over 600 birds I banded were warblers. At Hawk Ridge, from August through mid-October 2013, 42% of the birds banded were warblers. Dave Grosshuesch, who banded passerines at Hawk Ridge from 1996-2007 estimates



*Western Palm Warbler*

Photo by Karl Bardon

that over 50% were warblers and represented 27 species of warblers. Clearly we live in some phenomenal warbler habitat as well as a substantial migratory pathway. However, we also know this habitat is constantly being altered by human hands. What do we know about population trends in the warbler species? Dr. Jerry Niemi and scientists from The Natural Resources Research Institute, part of University of Minnesota, Duluth have been studying breeding bird trends in the Chippewa and Superior National Forests for nearly 20 years. In the species found between the two forests, 95% of the species found in the Chippewa were found to be stable or increasing in population, while for the Superior National Forest this was found to be 90% stable or increasing in populations. Good news. How did the warblers fare? In both the Chippewa and Superior National forests Northern Parula, Ovenbird, Black and White Warblers, Nashville Warblers, Black-throated Green Warblers, and Pine Warblers were all found to be increasing. The only bird found to be decreasing in the two forests was the Connecticut Warbler. The Superior National Forest also shows an increase in Cape May Warblers, and Northern Waterthrushes, while the Chippewa shows an increase in Canada Warbler populations. So for the most part there is good news in the breeding habitats of these Neotropical warblers are holding their own or even increasing at least in the National Forests of Minnesota.



*Golden-winged Warbler*

Photo by Karl Bardon

## THE DARK SIDE OF FALL MIGRATION CONT'D

However, survival of the birds is more complicated than just the breeding territories. Birds must be able to safely migrate between the tropics and our northern forests, finding adequate resources along the way in an increasingly fragmented migratory corridor. Then, they must be able to survive in the tropics which is also an area that is rapidly being changed, with many of the tropical forests replaced by oil palm and coffee plantations, monocultures providing far less diversity in the wintering habitat of these birds. Fortunately, shade grown coffee efforts have started to make somewhat of a difference in this monoculture agricultural trend. It's been found that coffee grown in its normal shade growing conditions under the canopy of larger trees can support more than a hundred and fifty species of birds, a



Pine Warbler

Photo by [michaelfurtman.com](http://michaelfurtman.com)

record only bypassed by undisturbed native tropical forest.

The world of warblers is very complex, and little is known about how these birds live their lives. Did you know that Tennessee Warblers and Cape May Warblers are Spruce Budworm specialists? Did you know that American Redstart males can have two

different mates and defend two different territories? Or that a Black-throated Green Warbler is such a persistent singer that they have been observed singing over 466 songs in one hour? And that Minnesota has been declared crucial habitat for the Golden-winged Warbler, a species who's population has declined 26% per year for the last 45 years resulting in an over species decline of over 75%. Minnesota has the highest density of this species with about half of the global population living in Minnesota. So much going on with these tiny little birds! I encourage you to watch these little green and yellow blurs of color, during the fall migration, as they frantically feed during the day fueling their amazing nocturnal migration. Let's wish them well on their travels and hope for safe return in the spring, as we have so much more to learn.

## NOTES FROM THE DIRECTOR

by JANELLE LONG, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Someone recently asked me what the highlight of the fall season was for me. So many moments quickly came to mind with birds, staff, volunteers, programs, and visitors. What I answered with was our Hawk Weekend festival. It was the perfect culmination of many birds migrating through, many visitors, special programs, field trips and evening events, and the involvement of all of our staff, many volunteers, and board members to make it a success. However, that answer didn't completely satisfy me as my highlight, as it was just one example of a highlight of the fall season for Hawk Ridge. My highlight, though, was making the time to be up at Hawk Ridge this fall. With so much that needs to happen during the fall from fundraising to accounting to marketing to human resources, it's difficult to pull myself away from the office and behind-the-scenes work that comes with it. This year I'm glad I did and without any regret from a work perspective. The time I was able to spend meeting visitors, having thoughtful conversations with annual members and donors, being part of the staff team, appreciating volunteers, and watching the birds from all angles (in the sky, at the banding station, in hand, during education demos, and at the feeders) created highlights that are heartfelt and difficult to put into words. The only 2 words that come to mind that can somewhat sum up my feeling are: thank you. Truly, thank you, to the birds of Hawk Ridge, the people of Hawk Ridge, and place known as Hawk Ridge. What an amazing, memorable season!



Hawk Ridge Staff Photo 2014, including a few key volunteers and only missing Owl Program Manager, Sarah Glesner!

Photo courtesy of Janelle Long



# HAWK RIDGE EDUCATION PROGRAMS: 2014, A YEAR IN REVIEW

by GAIL JOHNEJACK, EDUCATION DIRECTOR

Prior to the fall season, our outreach education programs continued this year with monthly, bird-related outdoor programs with St. Michael's. We made it outside in most months, even though it was a pretty extreme winter. We read about birds, went bird watching and learned how to draw birds. It was great to get the students outside looking at real birds and habitat, rather than just talking about it in the classroom. The highlight was seeing a Broad-winged Hawk soaring near their school during our May class!

We also provided in-school visits to 15, 4th and 5th grade classrooms through our 2014 Raptors in the Classroom program given in partnership with the Lake Superior Zoo. The students LOVED having a real owl come to their classroom and they were always full of great questions. We thank the Lake Superior Zoo for their continued support in providing a live raptor ambassador for the programs.

In August, I took my visiting, extended family to Hawk Ridge to enjoy the view of the hazy lake. I told them about the many birds that would be coming and why they fly past the ridge in such great numbers. I noticed how the brush had grown and how the signs were still down. But I could feel it. It was almost time for us to get ready. Not so much for the birds, they will come regardless of what we do. It was almost time for us to get ready for you, the many wonderful visitors that come to see, appreciate, and learn about the birds. It was almost time for the volunteers, college biology classes and the 5th graders coming for Experience Hawk Ridge. It was almost time for the fall colors. It was almost time for Hawk Ridge 2014, and I was looking forward to it!

We had a mix of returning and new naturalists at the overlook this year. Returning as managers were Katie Swanson (Volunteer Coordinator), Jessica Chatterton (Operations Director), and Sarah Glesner (Owl Programs). Margie Menzies and Matti Erpestad again taught classes. New this year, were Caitlin Johnson, a banding volunteer from last year; Clinton Nienhaus, an environmental education graduate student from UMD and Allie Quick, a recent graduate of UW-Superior. We also had Julia Luger, the education trainee, who worked with and learned from the education staff. Erik Bruhnke, our count interpreter for many years, had a new job in Texas. We missed Erik's smile and his expertise, but we found a great replacement in Clinton Nienhaus!

We again had the Kid's Cart, songbird banding on Sundays, public programs, binoculars to use, and volunteers and staff to help visitors learn more and enjoy the migration. We provided 79 private programs and 26 public programs. We also initiated a new program for Duluth Public School 5th graders that emphasized banding and counting. This program was a great success as six out of nine schools were able to bring their students to see science in action in their own backyard.

Julia Luger, our education trainee, created the Mystery Bird Trail Kit, a wonderful, new educational activity. Students are grouped and sent off on the trail with their teachers to find clues corresponding to specific raptors. They wrote the clues on their clipboards and when they returned to the overlook, they looked through the raptor section of a bird book and found the raptor that matched their clues. Students had a great time with this activity and teacher said it was a great addition to their field trip. Thank you, Julia!

The fall season education programs have now come to an end and we look forward to seeing you again in 2015! My thanks to all for another great year. I appreciate the great efforts of our staff and volunteers, and of the teachers bringing their students. I especially appreciate the visitors at the overlook and our supporters; those who donate, make purchases at the trailer or buy raffle tickets, and those who sponsor a day or become members. You all make it possible for us to do research and education at Hawk Ridge as the magnificent raptors fly past. We'll see you next year!



Hawk Ridge Volunteer, Susan Bauer, running Kid's Cart activities

Photo by Janelle Long



Katie Swanson, Margie Menzies, and Julia Luger

Photo by Karen Stubenvoll



Hawk Ridge Count Interpreter, Clinton Nienhaus, and HRBO Board Member, Myron Peterson

Photo by Karen Stubenvoll

# PEREGRINE WATCH SUMMARY 2014

by KATIE SWANSON, PEREGRINE WATCH COORDINATOR

This summer we were again able to dive into the life of the Greysolon Plaza Peregrine Falcons. Peregrine Watch was staffed by 2 naturalists from May 28th - July 20th. We also had Marcos Stoffel helping this season as an intern. We rotated shifts and ran Peregrine Watch 5 days a week, when the weather was good. In the beginning of the season, we had a lot of rainy and foggy days that did not allow us to set up our viewing site. However, when the weather turned nice, we were able to talk to and connect with a lot of visitors about Peregrine Falcons. This year we held new evening hours on Wednesdays and Saturdays. Adding evening hours helped make up for some of the hours we lost during unfriendly weather. 3,098 people came to visit Peregrine Watch this season!

The Peregrine family started with 4 eggs in the nest this season, but only one of the four hatched. We figured this had to do with the cold weather in April when the eggs were laid. We were sad to see that 3 eggs did not hatch, but we were glad to have at least one nestling to watch grow. Since this nestling was the only one to be tended to, he did great! He started walking around the nest and peeking over the edge at an earlier age than normal. He liked to follow his parents around in the nest when they came in. This little male was banded with the color band black/red, E/85 by the Raptor Resource Project coordinators. When it was time to fly, this little guy made a strong takeoff and seemed to get the hang of things pretty quickly. On the day he fledged, he made it to a safe perch and started flying to higher buildings the next day. After a couple days of watching him fly and land, it was clear we did not have to worry about him. He and his parents liked to perch on the clock tower on the old Central High School building. Towards the end of the season, we were able to see him fly and take food from his parents. That was a good sign he was learning to hunt. Not too long after he started flying, it became difficult to keep track of him. He was flying all around and was mostly out of sight for us. I went downtown a few times after the season ended to look for the falcons, but it seemed they moved on for the year.

Overall, there were some ups and downs with the birds, program logistics, and weather, but in the end our one peregrine chick fledged successfully and we connected with a lot of great people from all over. There were some Duluthians who stopped by for their first time and a lot of tourists who were happy they found us while in town on vacation. What a great opportunity to spark their interest in birds by teaching them about these amazing Peregrine Falcons. And I have to add, visitors shared feedback with us that they were very impressed by seeing the birds in action and enjoyed getting a special glimpse of this Peregrine Falcon family through the naturalist's teaching and use of spotting scopes and camera monitor.

I want to give a special thanks to everyone who made the program happen this year. A big thanks goes to Lisa Dayton for making this program financially possible. Also, thanks to Duluth Parking, Penny Perry, Hawk Ridge staff (Frank Nicoletti, Miranda Durbin, Caitlin Johnson, and intern - Marcos Stoffel), and the Hawk Ridge board/committee members for strategic planning work involving this program.



Katie Swanson with banded Peregrine Falcon chick on Greysolon building Photo by Miranda Durbin



Miranda Durbin teaching student at Peregrine Watch

Photo by Katie Swanson

## SUMMER INTERNSHIP

by MARCOS STOFFEL

My name is Marcos Stoffel. My family moved to Duluth from the cities when I was five and I have lived here for 23 years. I attended UMD for a degree in Environmental and Outdoor Education with a minor in Business Administration. This summer and fall, I completed my internship with Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory.

During June & July, I helped with the Hawk Ridge Peregrine Watch program in Lake Place Park, Duluth. Peregrine Watch was a valuable piece to my internship because it allowed me to use the teaching skills that I've learned at UMD in a real-life setting. It was also rewarding to see how excited and eager people are to learn about birds.

My internship project was to create a Peregrine Watch Intern Handbook that includes history of the organization, background information on the Peregrine Watch program, and educational training information for teaching others about Peregrine Falcons.

Since I also have a background in business, I was excited to learn about some of the inner workings of a non-profit organization. I also enjoyed learning about the banding process and other research and education taking place at Hawk Ridge Nature Reserve this fall season. Overall, I learned a lot about Peregrine Watch, Hawk Ridge, and birds of prey.



# FALL BANDING UPDATE

by FRANK NICOLETTI, BANDING DIRECTOR



Banding Director, Frank Nicoletti, and Chief of USGS Bird Banding Lab, Bruce Peterjohn, with Bald Eagle

Photo by Janelle Long



Owl Bander, Madi McConnell, with Long-eared Owl

Photo by Karen Stubenvoll



Northern Saw-whet Owl (left), Long-eared Owl (center), Barred Owl (right)

Photo by Madi McConnell



Becky, Grace, and Kaitlin helping at the Hawk Ridge Passerine Banding Station

Photo by Karen Stubenvoll

This is my fourth season as the Hawk Ridge Banding Director and I'm excited to continue work on studying birds through the tool of banding. The large numbers and diversity of bird species banded makes the Hawk Ridge Banding Research project among the top in the country. We continue to make changes for improvement. We were happy to have Nova Mackentley (sixth season) and Chris Neri (fourth season) back as Raptor Banders. We were also happy to welcome Madison (Madi) McConnell from Alaska, as the Owl Bander, and Kaitlin Alford from Vermont, as our first Banding Trainee. We hope to continue giving other biologists the opportunity to gain valuable experience in all aspects of banding to further their careers with our new traineeship program.

This year we have several raptor research projects that we are assisting other organizations with: study of mercury in migrant raptors (Biodiversity Research Institute), We also enjoyed a visit from Bruce Peterjohn, Chief of the USGS Bird Banding Lab, to discuss banding research, education, and future opportunities. Turkey Vulture study with wing tag and satellite transmitter (Hawk Mountain Sanctuary), Snowy Owl with satellite transmitter (Scott Weidensaul and Project SNOWstorm), study of Red-tailed Hawk tail pattern (Boise State), continued work with DNA on Rough-legged Hawk (Joshua Hull), along with our monitoring of age and sex ratio and cyclical patterns in some of the species we capture and band at Hawk Ridge. Thanks to great volunteers and staff, the banding project continues to be a success. Fall season totals through October 31 are 2782 as follows: Bald Eagle-9, Northern Harrier-38, Sharp-shinned Hawk-2387, Cooper's Hawk-37, Northern Goshawk-70, Broad-winged Hawk-16, Red-shouldered Hawk-1, Red-tailed Hawk-93, Rough-legged Hawk-6, American Kestrel-31, Merlin-85, Peregrine Falcon-8, Prairie Falcon-1. Owl banding will end in mid-November and totals through October 31 included 952 Northern Saw-whet Owls, 25 Long-eared Owls, and 4 Barred Owls.

Under the volunteer supervision of David Alexander and Margie Menzies, the Passerine Banding Program continued this season. From August 7th through October 20th, we ran for a total of 41 days. We banded 1879 birds at the main station and 126 birds at the overlook. 61 species were banded. Thanks to all the wonderful volunteers that helped out with the project. A major goal this season was to continue training individuals to develop a strong, skilled core of people for sustaining the Passerine Banding Program. In addition to collecting data on migrants, we helped assist with two passerine research projects this season: collecting fecal samples of birds to determine bumblebee predation (University of Illinois) and continued work with Flat Flies (Canosia College).

Raptor banding will continue at the Hawk Ridge Banding Research Station through November 30. Thanks to all that helped with banding this season, thus far, and those continuing to help through closing.



# OVER 40 POTENTIAL BREEDING SPECIES COUNTED AT HAWK RIDGE

by GERALD J. NIEMI



American Redstart

Photo by Karl Bardon



Common Yellowthroat

Photo by michaelfurtman.com

Over the past three years breeding bird counts have been completed at Hawk Ridge Nature Reserve. A cumulative list of 40 species have been identified as potentially nesting within the approximately 365 acre reserve; an impressive number for a site close to a major urban area. Hawk Ridge is more than just the ridge. The nature reserve has an impressive array of habitats including deciduous forests with maple, birch, and aspen; coniferous trees primarily of pine; shrubby habitats of alder and willow; and open rocky areas with low shrubs. It is known for its raptor migration, but the Hawk Ridge Nature Reserve is also home to many breeding bird species.

We have established 13 points that are distributed throughout the nature reserve that sample the primary breeding habitats on the site. These counts are completed over two early morning counts between 5:00 and 9:00 am. Each count is 10 minutes in duration. Species that are abundant at the site include Red-eyed Vireo, Ovenbird, White-throated Sparrow, and Veery. Twelve species of warblers have been counted at the site including the Chestnut-sided Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, Nashville Warbler, American Redstart, Mourning Warbler, Magnolia Warbler, Canada Warbler, and Black-and-White Warbler. Ruffed Grouse, Indigo Bunting, and Rose-breasted Grosbeak, and Hermit Thrush can also be found.

Overall, we are interested in the population trends for the species using the Hawk Ridge Nature Reserve and documenting their breeding status. So far, we have documented reports of over 50 species observed within or flying over Hawk Ridge Nature Reserve during the breeding season; approximately mid-May to mid-July depending on the species.

## IN MEMORY OF NANCY JACKSON

by NAOMI JACKSON

Nancy Jackson, a life-long birder and long-time friend of Hawk Ridge, died on Easter Sunday, April 20, 2014. She lived in Hoyt Lakes from 1986 until 2011, when a stroke left her unable to care for herself and she relocated to the Twin Cities.

Nancy was an avid bird watcher, having set a personal record of seeing 306 species in Minnesota in one year. She was also a dedicated environmentalist, school bus driver, gardener, lay preacher, and church organist. After her retirement she rarely missed a big birding trip, putting thousands of miles on her VW camper and her Prius, ranging from Salt Lake to Felton Prairie to Grand Marais. Her days always started with an early morning walk at Fisherman's Point in Hoyt Lakes, checking to see what new species had made their way north.

She spent her last two years in a small retirement home in Mendota Heights, where she taught the staff to love birds as much as she did. As a friend noted at her funeral, Nancy is probably not resting in peace, but rather is pursuing extinct birds to add them to her list.



Nancy Jackson at Hawk Ridge

Photo by Hawk Ridge Staff

# WEST SKYLINE HAWK COUNT 2014 SUMMARY

by FRANK NICOLETTI



Broad-winged Hawk

Photo by Karl Bardon

Since 1997 raptors have been counted along the West Skyline Parkway during spring migration. In 2000, the protocol changed to include two sites, either Enger Tower or Thompson Hill, depending on wind direction. This 2014 spring season had less coverage than hoped, mainly due to many days of northeast winds and lack of available volunteer counters. This northeast wind phenomenon was also seen on other Great Lakes hawkwatch sites.

The spring count was in operation from 13 March through 1 May. A total of 12 days were covered with 62.5 hours averaging just over 5 hours per day and count of 6445 raptors of 14 species.

March had only three days of coverage, due to winter's continued hold on the northland. A total of 830 raptors were counted in 17 hours. The 29th and 30th produced a good flight of Bald Eagles with 305 and 437 respectively. Little else was counted, however, two adult goshawks were enjoyed.

April had eight days of coverage with 39.5 hours and 3939 raptors counted. Certainly the highlight of the season was the flight on the 20th, with 2939 raptors counted. Among the numbers counted were record daily high of Turkey Vulture and Rough-legged Hawk, 677 and 160 respectfully. We conducted the Hawk Migration Association of North America (HMANA) Raptorthon again this season as a fundraiser for both HMANA and Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory. The date we chose was April 25th and we counted 252 migrating hawks.

May 4th was the only count day that month and a good flight was observed by Dave Carman when he counted 1676 raptors, 1468 Broad-winged Hawk including two adult dark morphs.

Hawk Ridge would like to see this important aspect of migration monitoring continued, as it's a key and unique site where concentrated raptor migration occurs in both spring and fall. There are also many fewer hawkwatch sites recording data on spring migration in North America, as compared to fall hawkwatch sites. If you are interested in helping fund the spring count, please feel free to contact us at (218) 428-6209 or mail@hawkridge.org. If you are interested in volunteering for the spring count, please contact Frank Nicoletti at frnicoletti@hawkridge.org. Thanks to the following people for helping with the spring count: Frank Nicoletti, Dave Carman, Karl Bardon, Harold Nordin and Peder Svingen.

## FALL COUNT UPDATE

by KARL BARDON, COUNT DIRECTOR

We have been having another great counting season at Hawk Ridge this fall. Although there have been many more rain days than usual, and the weather has been more mild than average, the fall colors were perhaps the best ever. Over 58,000 raptors have been counted, which is about average for the last ten years. The most common raptors have been over 26,000 Broad-winged Hawks, over 15,000 Sharp-shinned Hawks, over 6,000 Red-tailed Hawks, and over 4,000 Bald Eagles. Highlights include a Prairie Falcon in August, a migrating Snowy Owl on Halloween, and two light morph adult Harlan's Hawks in October.

In contrast, non-raptor migration has been full of surprises and setting all kinds of records, with well over 300,000 birds seen so far this season. Many groups of birds flew by in numbers many times what we have seen previously. For example, a total of 1087 kinglets and 76 Brown Creepers were detected, while in previous years only about 50 kinglets and 3 creepers would be seen. Similarly, even though the Catharus thrushes (Swainson's, Gray-cheeked, Hermit, and Veery) are usually not seen flying after sunrise, this season a total of 865 Catharus thrushes were seen in morning flight! (which compares to a previous average of 47 for these species). Most rewarding was to count 44,395 warblers, which is the best season so far and more than double the previous average, an encouraging sign after many years of relatively low warbler numbers. Sparrows also shocked us in unprecedented numbers, including season counts of 50 Fox Sparrows, 9519 White-throated Sparrows, 82 White-crowned Sparrows, and 2931 Dark-eyed Juncos, all of which are more than ten times previous averages.

But in a season of superlatives, the prize has to go to the finches, which as I write this in early November, are still flying strong. We have already recorded over 68,000 finches, including season counts of 14,967 Purple Finches and 45,613 Pine Siskins, with a redpoll invasion also just beginning to start. Stock up those thistle feeders!



Pine Siskin Flock

Photo by Karl Bardon



# STEWARDSHIP NOTES

by **BOB OWENS, STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE CHAIR**

Every day from early morning until late in the evening hundreds of people are enjoying the Hawk Ridge Nature Reserve. This approximately 365-acre reserve is managed by the Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory under a trust agreement with the City of Duluth. Staff & volunteers from Hawk Ridge along with help from the City Parks & Recreation Department maintain the park year-round. Maintaining the nature reserve is the primary responsibility of the Stewardship Committee. We make improvements each year because of increased usage, demand for better banding and counting research facilities, and for our Hawk Ridge visitors to enjoy the wonderful place we have to share.

Projects underway this summer included improvements to the banding research station, culverts installed where flooding damaged areas two years ago, and new interpretive signage for visitors (including an updated trail map!). The committee is also working on development of a site management plan for the Hawk Ridge Nature Reserve, in which the first phase of this project of conducting a vegetation survey of the site is underway.

Other continuing projects include removing or treating invasive buckthorn and honeysuckle and mowing the main trails. During the fall season, facilities provided at Hawk Ridge include portable toilets and the Hawk Ridge merchandise trailer with Hawk Ridge and nature-related items for sale. You will also likely see students and visitors attending programs at our education lecture area and the research count staff counting birds from the observation platform.

Thank you for your membership and let us hear of your travels visiting Hawk Ridge Nature Reserve and the fall migration spectacle. Email those thoughts to us at [mail@hawkridge.org](mailto:mail@hawkridge.org).



Typical Fall Day at Hawk Ridge Nature Reserve

Photo by Gail Johnnejack

## SPRING OWL MONITORING REPORT

by **JULIE O'CONNOR**

Each year our Spring Owl Monitoring program sends volunteers all across Minnesota to survey for breeding owls. Each volunteer must be certified through our online program; they are then assigned a pre-established 9-mile route. 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 such as GPS coordinates, weather/snow conditions, wind speed/direction, cloud cover and owls heard, for each stop onto data sheets.

In 2014, 109 of 160 routes were assigned to volunteers, and nearly 80 routes were completed. Weather, wind and road conditions impact whether volunteers can complete routes or not, and every year is somewhat different from the rest!

Without our dedicated volunteers, we would NEVER be able to capture so much information during the spring breeding season! If you're interested in participating in this survey in 2015, please contact our volunteer coordinators for more information.

### VOLUNTEER COORDINATORS

#### Minnesota

Julie O'Connor  
218-348-2291  
[occonnor@hawkridge.org](mailto:occonnor@hawkridge.org)

#### Wisconsin

Ryan Brady  
715-685-2933  
[Ryan.Brady@Wisconsin.gov](mailto:Ryan.Brady@Wisconsin.gov)

# VOLUNTEER VOICES

by HARRY WILSON

Here's a little poem  
from Hawk Ridge  
Volunteer, Harry  
Wilson, about his  
experience helping  
Hawk Ridge Bird  
Observatory during  
the fall season.

*So many many birds to see and to learn,  
my tired old brain can barely discern.*

*But try as I might with excitement each autumn,  
my return to Hawk Ridge is where I shall come.*

*Always awed by birds since a very young boy,  
imagining the magical flight like a featherlite toy.*

*Small or large, raptor to swan, plain to so brilliant,  
the sight of a bird makes me feel so pleasant.*

*This magnificent place called Hawk Ridge,  
helps me learn of the birds and provides a great bridge.*

*With amateur watchers to the very seasoned,  
it was a place to return I quickly reasoned.*

*So during the summer I shall continue to observe,  
my flying friends without looking absurd.*

*My eyes to the sky and into the brush,  
hoping to see a ballet by some pelicans or a tiny thrush.*

*The sights and sounds are so very endless,  
I wait on fall with it's migration is what I do I guess.*

*Then off to Hawk Ridge and the people there,  
to see the birds on their way to who knows where?*



Harry Wilson with a Merlin

Photo by Hawk Ridge Staff

## HAPPY HAWK WEEKEND FESTIVAL

by JANELLE LONG



Hawk Weekend Festival crowd watching bird education demo

Photo by Janelle Long

The annual Hawk Weekend Festival held September 19-21st was one to remember! Over 100 registered for spectacular birding field trips, workshops, and evening dinners with speakers. Evening events were held at the Spirit Mountain Grand Avenue Chalet. On Friday evening, Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory held its annual membership meeting. The following board members were elected for 2-year term: David Alexander, Bob Owens, Mark Martell, Ken Gilbertson, Myron Peterson, & Steve Wilson. Annual highlights were shared by Executive Director, Janelle Long, including Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory celebrating 10 years as a nonprofit organization. The new Hawk Ridge Legacy Award was presented to Jan Green for her decades of service with both Hawk Ridge Nature Reserve and Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory. Jan served on the board of Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory for the full 10 years, since inception. New board member, Laura Erickson, presented the award to her mentor, Jan, and gave a delightful evening presentation filled with great bird stories from her big year. Saturday evening started on a high note with an amazing day of birding – nearly 4,000 raptors counted of 14 species at Hawk Ridge (including 2 Swainson's Hawks, several low-flying kettles of Broad-winged Hawks, and

a subadult Golden Eagle) and over 5,000 migrating non-raptors counted. Dr. James Duncan presented an engaging presentation on his owl research in Manitoba. Thank you to the 65 organizations, businesses, and individuals that donated items and services for both our silent auction and raffle. We appreciate all those who attended and all those who helped in making this a festival to remember! Mark your calendars now to SAVE THE DATE for next year – September 18-20, 2015!



# 2014 HAWK RIDGE BIRDATHON SUMMARY

by JANELLE LONG

Sunshine graced the 28th annual Hawk Ridge Birdathon in St. Louis County held on Saturday May 17th. Eight teams participated in several different categories in this friendly competition. Team "E.T." (Frank Nicoletti) won the Big Sit category counting 64 species in approximately 6 hours from Enger Tower on West Skyline Parkway, which also included 10 raptor species! Team "Whip-Poor-Wheels" (Steve Wilson, Mary Shedd, Sierra & Pam Wettering, Norma Malinowski, & Steve Schon) won the Township category counting 83 species in Breitung Township. This was one species higher than their total in 2013 and also completed non-motorized with 7+ hiking miles and 9 biking miles for 17.5 hours! Steve Wilson also led the way to win the Most \$\$ Raised category to award the 13-year old youngest participant, Sierra Wettering, with a new pair of binoculars! Team "Folks on Spokes" comprised of Andrew Webster and Del Erickson competed in the Non-motorized category via hike and bike to take the win with a total of 85 species. And for the first time in 7 years, the traveling owl trophy has been passed off to a NEW winning team in the traditional St. Louis County "Big Day" category! Team "Howie and the Velvettones" (Jim Hughes & Tom Nelson) take the win with a grand total of 129 species!

In all, **a grand total of 172 species were counted** on May 17, 2014. This was below the 27-year average of 190 species and several species were missed for their first time in the St. Louis County Birdathon: Dunlin, Red-Eyed Vireo, Chestnut-sided Warbler, and Eastern Bluebird. Great Crested Flycatcher was missed for a second time and Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, Warbling Vireo, Marsh Wren, Yellow-headed Blackbird, and Evening Grosbeak for a third. The St. Louis County Birdathon 28-year grand total is 266 species. 218 species was the highest total count in 1996 and 164 was the lowest count in 2011. The 1996 winning team (Terry Brashear, Mike Hendrickson, Mark Ochs, & Kim Risen) still holds the Big Day record with 177 species.

**Highlights:** Cackling Goose & Northern Hawk Owl (3rd year seen), Red-shouldered Hawk & American Tree Sparrow (5th year seen), Black Scoter (6th year seen), White-winged Scoter (8th year seen), Rough-legged Hawk & Black-crowned Night Heron (9th year seen), and Surf Scoter, Ruddy Duck, & Vesper Sparrow (11th year seen).

A big THANKS goes out to the prize donors. Thank you to Eagle Optics and Lake Superior Garden Center for the wonderful prize donations. We also sincerely thank all of the participants, pledge donors, and sponsors for your support. Over \$2400 was raised from this event for the benefit of Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory bird research, education, and stewardship programs! We hope you can join us next spring – SAVE THE DATE – Saturday, May 16, 2015!



Hawk Ridge St. Louis County Birdathon Winners:  
Jim Hughes and Tom Nelson with 129 species!

Photo by Janelle Long



Youngest Birdathon participant, Sierra Wettering with new Eagle  
Optics binoculars won as one of prizes with her mom, Pam Wettering

Photo by Steve  
Wilson



Juvenile Red-tailed Hawk migrating over Hawk Ridge

Photo by Karl Bardon



## CONTRIBUTION FORM

### PLEASE

☐ BEGIN ☐ RENEW

### MY HAWK RIDGE MEMBERSHIP

\$15 Student (Vulture)

\$500 Supporting (Falcon)

\$30 Individual (Osprey)

\$1000 Steward (Eagle)

\$50 Family (Hawk)

\$100 Sustaining (Owl)

\$250 Soaring (Harrier)

**SPECIAL FALL DONATION (1:1 MATCH!) \$** \_\_\_\_\_

*Your donation will be matched up to \$5000!*

### HELP FUND EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Fall Public Education Programs at Hawk Ridge

Hawk Ridge Volunteer Program

"Peregrine Watch" outreach at Lake Place Park

"Raptors in the Classroom" school outreach

"Experience Hawk Ridge" school lesson at Hawk Ridge

### HELP FUND RESEARCH PROGRAMS

Fall Count

Raptor Banding

Songbird Banding

Spring Count

☐ 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

\*We do not rent, sell, or trade mailing lists

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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 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

## A GIFT ANYONE CAN AFFORD

*You can support the work of Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory, and create a legacy for the future, by remembering us in your estate plan.*

Did you know there are ways to support Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory (HRBO) that do not affect your lifestyle or financial security? A bequest in your will or estate plan will help ensure that HRBO will continue its raptor research, education programs, and other bird conservation efforts for years to come. You can also designate HRBO to be the

beneficiary of a life insurance policy or an IRA. It's simple to do. Talk to an estate planning specialist or to our Executive Director, Janelle Long, for more information. (218) 428-6209 or [jloug@hawkridge.org](mailto:jloug@hawkridge.org)





Thanks to Count Volunteer, Russ Edmonds, for matching volunteer hours through 3M Foundation!

Photo by Karen Stubenvoll



Hawk Ridge Legacy Award Recipient, Jan Green, at Hawk Ridge count platform

Photo by Karen Stubenvoll



Counting Crew Old and New! (left to right - Cory Ritter, Steve Bockhold, Karl Bardon, Steve Kolbe, Dave Carman)

Photo by Karen Stubenvoll



Thanks to Eliza Grames for designing 2014 Hawk Ridge Broad-winged Hawk t-shirt!

Photo by Robin Heinonen



Setting up the Hawk Ridge merchandise trailer. Thanks to all the great staff and volunteers that helped at Hawk Ridge this fall!

Photo by Karen Stubenvoll

# SNORE OUTDOORS

by RUDY HUMMEL

The first time I spent the night in a tent by myself I was four years old. At sixteen, I was an avid outdoorsman. It was only natural that I would challenge myself by sleeping outside every night for an entire year. So I did.

What started out as a personal goal soon became much more when I thought of turning my challenge into a fundraiser. I had been presented with a chance to help others, and I grabbed it with both hands. Now, I just had to decide which organizations my fundraising efforts would support. Habitat for Humanity was easy; I was sleeping outside by choice for those who had no choice. But I also wanted an organization that represented the other side of what I was doing--the nature side.

That's where Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory came in. Hawk Ridge supports environmental education and research, and shares their love of birds and nature with others. It was a perfect fit.

Last winter was one of the coldest, snowiest, and most brutal on record, but I stuck to my goal. I slept outside for 365 consecutive nights in tents, snow caves, and even hotel parking lots. I learned a tremendous amount. Even though I had been told how interconnected humans are with nature my whole life, I had not truly understood it until I slept out there, in the rain, in the sun, in the snow, in the sleet, in the cold, and in the heat. I heard the maniacal-sounding Barred Owls in the night, and wondered what their lives were like. I saw the scolding Red Squirrel in the fir boughs above me, and wondered what his life was like. I realized that the birds that come to our feeders are not our guests, as we like to think, but our neighbors, for they live on the same land that we do.

Now, my quest is ended. I raised over four thousand dollars in donations for Hawk Ridge. I'm overjoyed that I could help support Hawk Ridge's education and research goals, and share my love of nature. My thanks go to the Hawk Ridge Board for their generous matching donation, and to those who slept outside with me the night before the Hawk Ridge St. Louis County Birdathon. Thanks especially to those who donated to Hawk Ridge through Snoreoutdoors.com. I couldn't have done it without all of you. Together, we made a difference.



Rudy Hummel (middle) celebrates 365th night of sleeping outdoors with celebration with family and friends

Photo courtesy of Gail Johnjack



Rudy Hummel (right) participating in campout and Hawk Ridge Birdathon with non-motorized team members

Photo by Gail Johnjack

## \$5000 MATCH FOR HAWK RIDGE!

Help Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory max a matching donation of \$5000 from generous supporters! For every dollar you contribute, your dollar will be matched until we reach the \$5000 goal! Please consider a gift of \$100 or more to help us SUCCEED and reach this goal. We appreciate you being part of the Hawk Ridge legacy for the future good of Hawk Ridge Nature Reserve and the bird conservation research, education, and stewardship achieved by our staff and volunteers. Thank you!

## INTERESTING BIRDBIT

The American Birding Association selected Laura Erickson to receive its prestigious Roger Tory Peterson Award for 2014. This award recognizes Laura for her lifetime of achievements in promoting the cause of birding. Laura also completed a "Big Year" in 2013 and tallied 593 bird species in North America. We congratulate Laura on her award!

## FALL 2014 RAPTORS RAFFLE

The 6th annual Raptors Raffle was held this fall to help raise proceeds to benefit the research, education, and stewardship activities of Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory. \$5 raffle tickets were sold this fall at Hawk Ridge Nature Reserve until the raffle drawing on Sunday October 26. Thank you to the prize donors, staff/ volunteers for ticket sales, and all those that purchased tickets totaling over \$1300. Prizes and winners were as follows:

**Eagle Optics 10x32 Ranger Binoculars** (Eagle Optics)

Winner – Joe Van Thomme, St. Paul, MN

**Duluth Pack Utility Pack** (Duluth Pack Store)

Winner – Jen Polzin, Minneapolis, MN

**Hawk Ridge Storm Creek Softshell Jacket** (On the Limit)

Winner – David Noble, Minneapolis, MN



# MOVING ON

by ERIK BRUHNKE



Erik Bruhnke with Hawk Ridge yearly visitors Bob and Judy

Photo courtesy of Erik Bruhnke



Former Hawk Ridge Count Interpreter, Erik Bruhnke

Photo courtesy of Erik Bruhnke

The experience of working as a Count Interpreter at Hawk Ridge from 2008-2013 has sculpted and expanded my passion for birding in ways I could have not imagined. Those six fall seasons have connected me to so many wonderful friends and colleagues, and I am very thankful for that to say the least.

There is something about Hawk Ridge that is recharging, invigorating and memory-making, both on the most comfortable days and those comfort-testing days throughout the beginning and ending days of migration. Those hot, full-sun, mid-September days are when the northern forests unleash the breathtaking kettles of Broad-winged Hawks that pour over Hawk Ridge. The early morning flights of songbirds are incredible, as the steady streams of these avian gems pass through the air within good time after sunrise. The air up at Hawk Ridge is always refreshing, with the rich aroma of maples, aspens and spruces a sweet treat to our senses. To see a raptor in the hand is a unique experience to be reckoned with. I am thankful and very blessed to experience all of these natural phenomena and pleasures, season after season. I learned much about birds on so many levels, and I learned much about myself.

Once those hot September days had gone by, the flights of raptors in late October were icing on the cake of migration. To observe dozens upon dozens of Bald Eagles and Red-tailed Hawks kettling overhead at one time can give even the most experienced hawkwatcher a blanket of goosebumps, despite how well-dressed one is for the brisk hawkwatching experience. I remember seeing my first Harlan's Red-tailed Hawk pushing through on the lake side of the main overlook during a snowy day in late October. And those regular Northern Goshawk in the hand--how can they not make you teary-eyed? One Halloween a Northern Hawk Owl was the last bird-of-the-day observed, seen as the counters and I were packing up for the evening. Braving and enduring the elements while doing something you love to do (like hawkwatching at Hawk Ridge) is making the most out of the northern Minnesota experience, especially as a bird nerd. Minnesota's nature is incredible, and so many of the ecological wonders of northeastern Minnesota's wilderness make their presence known at Hawk Ridge. For those of us that are Hawk Ridge veterans (regardless of how well we can tell those specks on the horizon), you will know what I am talking about.

This past June I moved to Texas where I have been expanding my passion for birds while creating birding workshops at one of the World Birding Centers. I am pursuing my passion of leading birding trips with my Naturally Avian birding tours and also with Victor Emanuel Nature Tours as one of their tour leaders. I am humbled for such wonderful traveling and birding experiences, which without a doubt started with Hawk Ridge.

While Crested Caracaras, Swainson's Hawks, Black Vultures and the occasional Aplomado Falcon can be seen where I live here in the southern tip of Texas, I still catch myself reminiscing on all of the wonderful times at the Ridge. Wishing all of you the best at Hawk Ridge!





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(ZMC Hotels, Inc)*

*City of Duluth Parks & Recreation*

*Eagle Optics*

*Miller Hill Subaru*

*@michaelfurtman.com (Michael Furtman)*

## GIVE TO THE MAX 2014

Don't forget to Give to the Max for Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory on Thursday, November 13th! Go to: <https://givemn.org/organization/Hawkridge> and help us win a Golden Ticket! Nonprofits and schools are eligible for Golden Tickets on November 13, 2014. Golden Tickets of \$2,000 are randomly awarded each hour to a nonprofit and school. At the end of the day, two randomly selected Super-Sized Golden Tickets of \$20,000 each will go to a nonprofit and school. Thanks for your support!

