

TAKING FLIGHT



Great Gray Owl

Photo by Laura Erickson

GREAT GRAY OWL

by LAURA ERICKSON

Of all the raptors of Minnesota, one of the most spectacular and charismatic is the Great Gray Owl. We seldom get to observe these huge birds at Hawk Ridge: the habitat isn't conducive for meadow voles, which are their primary diet. But during "invasion years" such as 2004-05, when great grays descended along the North Shore in droves, they could be spotted occasionally at Hawk Ridge as well as backyards in most Duluth neighborhoods. And our own Frank Nicoletti bands Great Gray Owls throughout our area. Banding is shedding important light on what is one of the most-yearned-for species for birders throughout the country.

The Great Gray Owl belongs to the genus *Strix*, along with the Barred and Spotted Owls, and is the only owl of that genus that can be found in both North America and Eurasia. In North America, great grays are found primarily in the boreal forest, particularly in meadows and bogs, where they specialize on meadow voles. Those ranging in the Rocky Mountains focus more on pocket gophers.

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COMMENTS FROM THE BOARD

by KAREN STUBENVOLL, CHAIR

Reflecting back on the months that have passed since our migration season ended, we are joyous to have sunny springtime days in Duluth, and the glistening open water of Lake Superior. Already, we can look up and see adult Bald Eagles migrating north, silhouetted against the bright blue sky. Many of our board, staff, & supporters stayed busy throughout the winter months, birding locally and in locations farther away. Now, we will be getting ready for the height of the spring migration season in Duluth, culminating in the 29th annual St Louis County Birdathon, a fundraising event for Hawk Ridge which will be held Saturday May 16.



Karen Stubenvoll, Board Chair, with
Bald Eagle banded at Hawk Ridge

Photo by Nova Mackentley

The Board of Directors stays busy all year long, with strategic planning, committee meetings, and our bi-monthly board meetings. Every year, there are new challenges & changes that we face as an organization, and the board strives to meet these challenges with enthusiasm.

We are fortunate for our most valuable resources -- our members, our supporters, our volunteers, and our staff! We hope to see you at the Birdathon, at Peregrine Watch in downtown Duluth, and then at Hawk Ridge in the fall season.

NOTES FROM THE DIRECTOR

by JANELLE LONG, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Spring has arrived! I love the time of change of seasons for many reasons. One of the reasons is that it never fails to provide me with something to welcome back. I'm sure many of you are welcoming back the migrant birds in your yard, as I am. I also welcome back our spring programs and projects, as you'll read about in this newsletter. Thank you to the staff, committee members, and volunteers that dedicate their time in making these spring education & research efforts possible. Lastly, thank YOU for your generosity through memberships, donations, grants, attending events and programs, and purchasing merchandise. This support not only provides Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory the opportunity to continue our fall count, banding, and education, but also allows us to welcome YOU back with the birds each fall season at Hawk Ridge Nature Reserve. Thank you for being one of my reasons I so enjoy the change of seasons! Hope to see you soon and please feel free to contact me anytime with questions, comments, or concerns at jlong@hawkridge.org or 218-428-6209.



A beautiful day at Hawk Ridge Nature Reserve

Photo by Gail Johnjack

GREAT GRAY OWL (CONTINUED)

Considering the tiny size of their normal prey, many people are mystified why this owl is so huge. The wing chord measurement, averaging about 410 mm, is significantly larger than the Great Horned Owl's 355 mm or so. The Great Gray Owl averages about 27" from head to tail, with a wingspan of about 52 inches; the Great Horned Owl averages only about 22" in length, with a wingspan of only about 44". Great Horned Owls take a much wider variety of prey, including snowshoe hares, grouse, and ducks. And their body mass is much larger, averaging 1,400 grams to the Great Gray Owls' mere 1,080 grams. So why are Great Grays so much larger in linear dimensions?

There are several good reasons. Both species range into the far northern reaches of Alaska and Canada, but because the Great Gray's body has so much less heat-producing mass, it needs more insulation, which the thick, dense outer plumage provides. The huge head size accommodates enormous ears that can detect a vole hiding within its grassy tunnel and buried under up to 18 inches of snow. And when the great gray grabs that vole, its huge wingspan allows it to pull out of the deep snow to take off again.

The boggy areas north and west of Duluth provide ideal habitat for Great Gray Owls. Virtually every winter they can be found in the Sax-Zim Bog, and the bog area is within their breeding range, too. Back in the 90s, a pair nested in an old crow's nest not far from Highway 52 in the bog. Many of us were delighted but also surprised to see the enormous female sitting in such a relatively small structure; the surprise led to shock when weeks later we were seeing five owlets popping up—true testament to how scrawny their bodies are beneath all those feathers. The Birds of North America lists more typical nests in abandoned Osprey, Goshawk, and Raven nests. Like virtually all owls, Great Gray Owls do not add any nesting materials or alter the structure.

In this age of digital photography and digiscoping, there are serious risks to publicizing nest locations of such photogenic birds, but we know that a pair nesting in the bog last summer produced young, and two first-year birds that spent much of the winter near the bird feeding station on Admiral Road are believed to have fledged from that nest. One of these young birds was skittish around people, but the other seemed to ignore people when it roosted or hunted near the roadside, giving lots of natural photo ops.

OF ALL THE RAPTORS OF MINNESOTA, ONE OF THE MOST SPECTACULAR AND CHARISMATIC IS THE GREAT GRAY OWL.

Great Gray Owls are also most often heard by night, or at dawn and dusk. In the movie *The Big Year*, Jack Black imitates the steady rhythm correctly when he's trying to call one in, but his tonal quality is wrong—their hoots are deep and resonant. They call most often during the breeding season. I've heard persistent hooting in May after sunset in the bog. The sound seems softer to my ears than that of the Great Horned Owl.

Most people associate the best bog birding with winter, but with luck, you may find a Great Gray Owl, or a pair of them, in the bog even as spring turns to summer. Any time of year, they're worth seeing.



Great Gray Owl on Admiral Road

Photo by Laura Erickson

Because they predominantly use their sense of hearing to hunt, Great Gray Owls can find their prey with equal ease by day and night. Their nocturnal vision isn't keen enough to help them avoid branches or other obstructions in deep, dark woods, but they usually hunt in open areas where that isn't a problem. We often see them hunting by day in winter, but that's only when absolutely necessary—they are just as successful by day, but are often harassed by crows and ravens when sitting out in the open searching for prey. Year-round, their most active diurnal hunting is at dawn and dusk, not when the sun is high.

2014 EDUCATION AT THE OVERLOOK

by GAIL JOHNEJACK, EDUCATION DIRECTOR

We had another successful education season at the Ridge in 2014. Our returning naturalists, Margie Menzies and Matti Erpestad, did a great job teaching many private and public programs, as well as working with overlook visitors. Our new naturalists, Caitlin Johnson and Allie Quick, learned quickly and were a great addition to our team. Clinton Nienhaus successfully took over the role of Count Interpreter and helped visitors see and identify birds as they flew by. Sarah Glesner again hosted the owl programs. Julia Luger was our first Education Trainee. She did a tremendous job of learning and helping. We were able to provide Sunday opportunities to watch passerine banding right at the overlook. We keep growing, learning and sharing our love of nature and birds at Hawk Ridge.

We provided about 20 public programs that reached approximately 320 people. These programs included Eyes on the Skies (Beginning Hawk Watching), songbird banding programs at the lecture area, several Primers and two special programs given by Clinton Nienhaus. Naturalist staff provided 78 private programs including both Primers for all ages and 'Experience Hawk Ridge'. These programs reached approximately 1,690 adults and students and were delivered primarily by Gail, Margie, Matti and Julia. Caitlin and Allie also did some programs.

We provided two versions of Experience Hawk Ridge this year. One was the same as was previously used. It covered the basics of the migration, the banding and counting, and how to use binoculars. The other version was developed especially for the Duluth Public Schools 5th grade classes that were able to visit Hawk Ridge. This program included a piece on songbird banding and while it covered the migration, it primarily taught the process of science and data collection. This intentional focus allowed the program to fit with a science unit teaching kit that was in the classrooms this year. Our program was based on nine specific 5th grade Minnesota State Standards that teachers must cover in their classrooms. We received excellent feedback on the all of the EHR's and especially on the new program developed with Duluth Public Schools.

We were very fortunate to have an Education Trainee, Julia Luger, for this fall season. The trainee position was designed to provide a professional training experience to further develop the education skills of the person in the position. The trainee assisted the Education Director and other staff at the overlook. Julia was a great fit for this position. She helped with all facets of the Hawk Ridge Education Department from learning to teach programs, work with school groups, handling live birds for education demos, and administrative tasks related to scheduling and organization.

Julia's special project was a trail kit that Julia developed for 5th-7th grade that school groups can use in conjunction with their program. The Mystery Bird Kit splits the students into groups that search for clues along the trail. The students write the clues on their clipboard forms and then use bird books back at the overlook to figure out their 'mystery raptor'. The students really enjoyed the activity and feedback from teachers was very positive. They appreciated having a focus on their hike, using bird books and the introduction to different raptor species.

Julia's work on this and other duties as assigned really helped to enhance our educational offerings during the fall season. Julia also strengthened her own teaching skills and is more clearly focused on an environmental education path after her time at Hawk Ridge.

We look forward to having a new trainee and another great season fall 2015!



Education Trainee, Julia Luger, at Hawk Ridge

Photo by Karen Stubenvoll

EDUCATION BEYOND THE FALL SEASON

Hawk Ridge continues to offer outreach programs throughout the winter, spring, and summer. Raptors in the Classroom school programs are currently being scheduled. Hawk Ridge also offers a variety of outreach programs that can be customized for your group. Special environmental education programs, like these, can be arranged with your class or group today! Please contact us at (218) 428-8722 or at mail@hawkridge.org.



Visitors at Peregrine Watch

Photo by Michael Furtman

GAIL'S FAREWELL

by GAIL JOHNEJACK, EDUCATION DIRECTOR

Hawk Ridge thanks Gail Johnejack for her 3 years of service as the Education Director with Hawk Ridge. Her positive attitude, enthusiasm for teaching others, and dedication will be missed! Gail has helped the Hawk Ridge education department improve and grow. We wish her all the best on her new journey!



Gail with Sharp-shinned Hawk

Photo by Karen Stubenvoll

Dear Hawk Ridge Supporters and Members,

It is with very mixed feelings that I tell you that I will not be at the overlook next fall. Things are changing in my life, such that a year-round paycheck is appropriate. Mostly, this means that my kids are entering the college phase! Fall timing is also tough. It's hard to take a son or daughter off to a far away school at the same time in August that prep work is happening for the fall season. I know where my priority lies.

While I look forward to whatever comes next, I will certainly miss Hawk Ridge. I will miss the school groups (it's TRUE! I really will miss them!), and the challenges that have come with this position. I will miss being outside on the warm days of September and the crisp, cold days of October. I will miss my daily fall view of our beautiful Lake Superior. I will miss the staff and visitors. I will miss the birds, the magnificent eagles and hawks. I will especially miss the Merlins. Those birds are my favorites, maybe because of their feisty desire to often want a piece of my fingers. The people and birds that I have met will always be part of me. I have learned so much from everyone.

I do feel like I am leaving a part of myself with the education program. I took my family experiences and created the Kid's Cart for our family visitors. I developed the evaluation forms for teachers so we could assess our effectiveness. I worked with the Duluth Public Schools to get more 5th graders to the Ridge for programs this year. Debbie Petersen (Waters) created a strong foundation for the education program at the Ridge and left her mark. I am leaving my mark and sending it forward to the next person for continued growth. This is how it should be.

This isn't to say that I will never be back. We aren't moving or anything like that. I have no doubt that I will come to the ridge to view the incredible migration from the other side of the road. So, with that, I bid you adieu as Education Director, and hope to see you again as Gail Johnejack, Private Citizen. See you at the Ridge!

PEREGRINE WATCH 2015!

by KATIE SWANSON

Things are gearing up for the 2015 season for Peregrine Watch! This year has started with a fun twist and changing times. It seems that we have two new Peregrine Falcons at the Greysolon Plaza building nest box. We have not had band number confirmation on the birds, but by looks and the fact that both of the birds have bands this year, we believe it is a new pair. We were guessing this would happen soon, since the male who has been nesting there for the past 13 years, had to be getting pretty old. Both birds were spotted together for the first time at the building on March 10th. So far we do not know if they have mated and when they will lay their first egg. We assume that this will happen sometime in April. We will try to check our camera as much as possible, so we can catch when the first egg is laid.

Hawk Ridge staff will be doing live interpretation and provide viewing of the birds from Lake Place Park 5 days a week. Beginning May 27th, come visit us anytime between 10am-2pm (Thurs, Fri., & Sun.) and between 11am-7pm on Wed. & Sat. You can follow us on the Hawk Ridge Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/HawkRidgeDuluth> and find information on our website at www.hawkridge.org under the Events tab. If you are interested in scheduling a private education program, please contact Katie Swanson at kswanson@hawkridge.org or 218-428-6209. We hope to see you soon!



Peregrine Falcons on Greysolon Building nestbox

Photo by Michael Furtman

2014 FALL RAPTOR BANDING REPORT

by FRANK NICOLETTI, BANDING DIRECTOR

It's been four years since I started managing the Hawk Ridge banding operation. Since 2011, I have been able to maintain the same effort of banding with the running of three hawk banding stations: Hawk Ridge, Moose Valley, and Paine Farm. Each station was operated by a trained and licensed bander with support from trained volunteers. These volunteers were an essential component of the operation and allowed us to run multiple stations efficiently.

The 2014 season proved to be a productive year. It was still below the 2011 and 2012 seasons, when nearly a 1,000 more raptors were banded each season, but above last season's record low of 3,224. The number of raptors captured and banded between the three stations totaled 3,888; this includes 53 foreign recoveries and 12 returns. Among the 3,888 total raptors, there were 1,015 owls. The owls were banded at the main station at Hawk Ridge, except for two Long-eared Owls at Moose Valley. The main station was in operation from 13 August- 8 December. Moose Valley ran from 1 September to 11 November, while Paine Farm ran from 1 September to 31 October. A total of 241 days were logged, and the overall average number of hawks banded per day was 11.9, which was on par with previous seasons.

The overall migration this fall was mixed with high and lows. The weather was for the most part favorable with regular fronts moving through and almost no easterly winds. There are some species appearing to be in decline and/or on their down cycle. We added two new species of raptors at the main station--a Prairie Falcon in August and a Snowy Owl in November, which bring our species total to 25: 16 hawks and 9 owls.

The exception to the weather was August, which was foggy with many days of east winds. This is quite unusual for August. The weather made it unproductive for counting and banding raptors. We only banded 51 raptors. This slow start may have delayed some of the early migrants, especially hatch-year Sharp-shinned and Red-tailed Hawks. However, Sharp-shinned Hawks caught up by mid-September and, as a result, 2014 turned out to be an average season for these diminutive raptors. Overall, a total of 1,980 raptors were banded in September, representing 51% of the season total. October's total of 1,661 or 43% was a strong showing, while November was about average with 130 or just over 3%.

The number of owls banded was low, as expected, due to where we are in their cycle. By that I mean, every 4 years they have a high breeding success due to the abundance of their prey base. We are in the middle of that cycle, so the numbers would be expected to be lower. A total of 1,015 owls were captured, which is the lowest since the new protocol has been in place. This protocol was the same since 2011, with two caller units: one each for Northern Saw-whet (NSWO) and Long-eared owl (LEOW). They are run simultaneously during the night. As in previous years, the NSWO caller was placed in the west net lanes, while the LEOW caller was placed in the east net (pines grove) lanes. Owl flights were consistent during the migration period, however, a slower than normal start during September was likely due to low breeding season.

An amazing 9 Bald Eagles were banded this season, which included five adults, 3 hatch-year birds, and a third-year bird. It's unknown why they were more catchable than in previous seasons. We also had more individuals than usual come in to investigate the stations. The individuals captured seemed to be in good shape. Northern Harriers were banded in fair numbers this season with a combined total of 41, which is just below the average of 48. The Sharp-shinned Hawk total was 2,403, which is up 800 from 2013. This increase is due to the larger count observed; 12,617 in 2013 counted vs. 15,773 this season counted. We had 3 returns: one from 2012, two from 2013. Cooper's Hawks were banded in fair numbers; 38 which is slightly below the average of 43. There was a return of a female banded as a second-year bird in 2012. Northern Goshawks at 107 was better than expected considering that only 219 were counted from the Main Overlook. The age/sex breakdown was as follows: hatch-year males: 69 or 64%; hatch-year females: 21 or 21%; second-year males: 3; second-year females: 3; and 7 and 2 after-second-year males and females, respectively.



Banding Trainee, Kaitlin Alford, with Peregrine Falcon

Photo by Miranda Durbin



Banding volunteer, Rachel Harris, and first Snowy Owl ever banded at Hawk Ridge

Photo by David Alexander

2014 FALL RAPTOR BANDING REPORT (CONTINUED)



Northern Shrike

Photo by Chris Neri

A hatch year Red-shouldered Hawk was captured and banded at Hawk Ridge on 21, September. This represents the fourth record for the Ridge, all of which have been hatch-year birds. Broad-winged Hawks were well-represented with a combined 16 banded, including 7 on 16 September. Of these, 2 were adults and 14 were hatch-years birds. The number of Red-tailed Hawks banded has gone down each season since 2011 from 290 to 110 this season. The numbers observed at the overlook has been fairly stable, but the number banded--especially immatures in September--has been down the past two seasons. Of the 110 banded, we had one adult and one immature rufous morph. For the second year in a row, Rough-legged Hawks were banded in good numbers. A total of 22 were captured, which is only behind last season's 33. All were immatures birds: 20 light-morph and 2 dark-morphs. The falcon numbers were quite varied. American Kestrel with 31 banded is the lowest since 2011. It's unknown whether there is a decline in population of this species or if a number of poor breeding seasons is the issue. Further investigation is needed to determine the reasons for

this trend. Merlin numbers were good with 85 banded and is above the average of 78 since 2011. Peregrine Falcon numbers were good with 8 banded; however, considering the high count of 105, it was lower than hoped. An adult female was banded on 14 September. No captured Peregrine Falcons were previously banded this season.

Northern Saw-whet Owl numbers were low this season with 979, which is the lowest since running the caller full time. The average number banded per night 19.9. The maximum number banded was 126 on 14 October. The age ratio breakdown was as follows: 56% hatch-year, 18% second-year, 11% after-hatch year, and 3% unknown. This season, we captured 54 encounters (already banded): 46 foreign recoveries and 8 returns. Sex was determined on 84% of the owls with overwhelming number being females at 78% and only 6% males. This bias has been recorded here and at other sites. The exact reasons for this disparity is still unclear. Of the 8 returns, 2 were from 2011, and there were 3 each from 2012 and 2013. Long-eared Owls were recorded in low numbers as well with only 32 banded. Age breakdown for this species is as follows: 11 hatch-year, 15 after-second year, and 5 after-hatch year, and 1 unknown. 4 Barred Owls were banded; all were hatch-year birds.

We are still waiting for information on a number of recoveries. There were 6 Sharp-shinned Hawks, including 3 from this fall up the Northshore and one from Wisconsin Point from this past spring. A Rough-legged Hawk banded by David Evans from his station just north of Hawk Ridge was recaptured on the same day.

Among the 54 Northern Saw-whet Owl recoveries, which is by far the most numerous species recaptured, there were 3 recoveries from 3 sites in Ontario, including Prince Edward Point, Long Point and Thunder Cape; several from Minnesota sites; one each from Iowa and Indiana; and from 3 sites in Wisconsin. Other records are still pending from the Bird Banding Lab.

Nova Mackentley, Chris Neri and myself staffed the banding stations while Madison McConnell worked the night shift at Hawk Ridge banding owls. Special thanks to David Alexander, Karen Stubenvoll, Miranda Durbin for the tremendous amount of time they spent this fall volunteering. Also a special thanks to Kaitlin Alford, our first trainee. She started at the end of August and was very eager to learn and did a great job. She worked well with the other staff and learned all aspects of raptor banding, including setting up the station, banding all raptors including owls, documentation and education. She completed her training at the end of October and helped develop a banding training manual for future trainees as her special project. I would also like to thank the numerous volunteers and others that helped in many ways, including: Jessamy Schwartz, Karl Bardon, Steve Kolbe, Jane Hosking, Gary Leeper, David Carman, Katie Swanson, Amber Burnette, Bruce Munson, the education staff and volunteers, and Hawk Ridge Stewardship Committee. Also I would especially like to thank my wife Kate for all she does and for her support.



Last raptor banded of 2014 season, adult male
Northern Goshawk

Photo by Frank Nicoletti

FALL 2014 PASSERINE BANDING SUMMARY

by DAVID ALEXANDER & MARGIE MENZIES

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. We banded slightly fewer species this year, but had over 250 more birds banded. Importantly, we had many more young birds this year reflecting better productivity. Bird highlights included an Eastern Bluebird, 3 Pileated Woodpeckers in four days, and the odd bird of the year, a young Sora. Our most common birds banded were American Redstart and Nashville Warbler. There were some slow days, but we did have three days over 100 birds banded with the peak on September 2 with over 200 birds banded.

Bird banding at the overlook happened on 11 days this fall. A total of 126 birds were banded with 21 species represented. The overall theme was wind- mist nets were only able to be set for a few of these days, and then often only for the first hour or so of the day. Gray Catbird was a species caught only at the overlook. There were 7 species of warblers (Magnolia, Chestnut-sided, Connecticut, Tennessee, Nashville, Myrtle and Western Palm), 3 species of sparrows (Slate-colored Juncos, White-throated and Fox), Ruby-crowned and Golden-crowned Kinglets, Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, Red-eyed and Philadelphia Vireos, Swainson's Thrushes, Cedar Waxwings, Black-capped Chickadees and a Brown Creeper. The most numerous birds were 36 White-throated Sparrows and 28 Black-capped Chickadees.

We recaptured 21 birds, including several up to three times. One White-throated-Sparrow recaptured 2 weeks later this year. There were 20 different recaptured Black-capped Chickadees; 9 of them were banded and recaptured this year at the overlook. Ten were Chickadees that were either recaptured from previous year's overlook banding, or birds that were banded at the main station.

We had many returning volunteers and several new faces. Everyone made progress this fall at learning and improving their banding skills. Thanks to the great volunteer crew who made it possible including David Alexander, Kaitlin Alford, Amber Burnette, Dave and Jan Conley, Erin Denny, Miranda Durbin, Grace Glick, Tom Hollenhorst, Margie Menzies, Rebecca Peak, Beth Ruark, Valerie Slocum, Karen Stubenvoll, Robbie Tietge, Abbie Valine, Katie Brey, Brianna Borka, Deborah Faul, and Andy Witchger. Thanks also to the hawk banders for bringing us the passerines caught in the raptor nets. Finally, many thanks to Myron and Holly Peterson for their sponsorship of Passerine Banding Education at the Overlook!



Hatch-year Eastern Bluebird banded at Hawk Ridge

Photo by Frank Nicoletti



Nashville Warbler

Photo by Karl Bardon



Unusual hatch-year Sora Rail banded at Hawk Ridge

Photo by Miranda Durbin

WEST SKYLINE HAWK COUNT 2015 UPDATE

by FRANK NICOLETTI, BANDING DIRECTOR

The West Skyline Hawk Count started on the 8 March this season, prompted by an early spring like weather pattern. A total of 12 days and 60.5 hours were voluntarily covered during March with a total of 1307 raptors counted of 8 species. The spring hawkwatch was covered by Frank Nicoletti, Dave Carman, Karl Bardon and Harold Nordin during the month of March. As expected, the most numerous species counted were Bald Eagle(1153) with high count of 338 on the 15th. Other species counted included Northern Harrier-4, Sharp-shinned Hawk-2, Northern Goshawk-2, Red-tailed Hawk-79, Rough-legged Hawk-31, Golden Eagle-33, Merlin-3.

We plan to continue to cover the hawkwatch during April through mid May. Again this season we will conduct the Hawk Migration Association of North America Raptorthon, which will happen during late April or early May. This is an important means of raising funds for both HMANA and Hawk Ridge, as the proceeds will be split between the two organizations to help their primary goals in monitoring raptor population across North America. If you are interested in sponsoring, please contact Janelle Long at jlong@hawkridge.org or 218-428-6209.

2014 HAWK RIDGE RAPTOR COUNT SUMMARY

by KARL BARDON, COUNT DIRECTOR

Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory conducted its annual hawk count from 15 August-30 November 2014 at the Main Overlook, with a total of 59809 raptors counted, which is about average for the last ten years, but about 23% below the average since full-time coverage began in 1991. Many more days and hours were lost due to weather than usual, with five full days and parts of about eight other days lost due to rain and fog. Most of this poor weather occurred in late August, with three of the five rain days occurring then, so it was no surprise that the August total was about half of the usual average. Weather was generally more conducive to counting the rest of the season, and counts for September, October and November were more average.

Turkey Vultures, Bald Eagles, and Rough-legged Hawks all had their second best season ever at the Ridge. It was also an excellent season for Northern Harriers, Sharp-shinned Hawks, Cooper's Hawks, Golden Eagles, Merlins, and Peregrine Falcons. Counts of Ospreys and American Kestrels continue to concern us with below average results, while the mystery of poor Broad-winged and Red-tail flights continues to puzzle us.



Adult Bald Eagle gracing the Hawk Ridge sky

Photo by Karl Bardon



Adult male Rough-legged Hawk

Photo by Karl Bardon

The total of 6385 Red-tailed Hawk was about average for the last ten years, but still below the long-term average since 1991. The peak of 1205 on 25 October was one of the highest counts in the last ten years. Interestingly, very few Red-tails were seen prior to 4 October, and the September count for this species was the lowest ever. There were three light adult Harlan's Hawks during the season (but no dark morph Harlan's), cementing my belief that light Harlan's are actually more common than dark Harlan's at Hawk Ridge. There was also one adult Krider's Hawk, and we had great looks at four partial albino Red-tails, two of which were about 75% white, and two of which were about 90% white.

The season count of 5055 Bald Eagles wasn't much of a surprise since Hawk Ridge seems to be the Bald Eagle capitol of the country during fall migration. The surprise was that the peak count for Bald Eagles was in early October, with 277 seen on 5 October, and a two-day total of 424 on 4-5 October. Usually peak Bald Eagle flights are in the range of 400-500+ and occur in November, but this season's early onset of cold weather in mid-November (which froze all the lakes to our north) did not produce the expected eagle flight. This increase in Bald Eagle numbers early in the season, and spreading out of numbers throughout the season without a sharp peak late in the season, seems to be a trend in the recent data, but it is unclear why. Are more southern Bald Eagles moving north after the nesting season, or are our northern birds moving south earlier than previous?

2014 HAWK RIDGE RAPTOR COUNT SUMMARY (CONTINUED)

It was a treat to see so many Rough-legged Hawks this season. The total of 834 is the second best season ever at Hawk Ridge, the most since 1994. We had many days with great looks at Rough-legs, and the peak of 126 occurred on 11 November during the end of a snowstorm, most of which were seen the first two hours after sunrise when the snow was still flying. This propensity for Rough-legs ("Snow-hawks") to fly through falling snow has been noted many times previously. Half of the season's total (418 birds) came in the ten-day stretch 11-20 November, showing that November coverage is essential for this species. And with little snow on the ground at the count's end, it seems likely that many more Rough-legs may move in December.

One of the highlights of the season was seeing two Snowy Owls, one seen migrating from the Main Overlook on 31 October, and another trapped at the banding station on 21 November and released at the Main Overlook. The only other Snowy Owl ever recorded at Hawk Ridge was a migrant seen in 2012. Surprisingly, Snowy Owl had not been recorded as a migrant at Hawk Ridge prior to 2012, despite Duluth-Superior being a traditional wintering site for this species. If anyone knows of other migrant Snowy Owls seen at Hawk Ridge in the fall, let me know and we will add them to the database.

Another highlight of this season was seeing a Prairie Falcon migrating overhead from the Main Overlook, and calling it into the banding station where it was trapped. Only five Prairie Falcons have been seen previously at Hawk Ridge. Other less common raptors spotted this season include an immature Red-shouldered Hawk on 21 September and an adult on 5 October, and a total of six dark morph Swainson's Hawks, which is about average for the Ridge. There were also four Richardson's Merlins seen this fall, which is more than usual.

All of the Hawk Ridge staff and volunteers were helpful with the count this year, but I would especially like to thank capable co-counter Steve Kolbe and indefatigable volunteer counter Dave Carman for all of their help doing the count. Joe Beck, Russ Edmonds, Jane Hosking, Ted Keyel, Jan and Larry Kraemer, Madi McConnell, Myron and Holly Peterson, Cory Ritter and Candice Swanepoel all helped as well. See you all in 2015!



Merlin

Photo by Steve Kolbe



Snowy Owl taking flight! Second Snowy Owl counted at Hawk Ridge this fall

Photo by Karl Bardon

2014 HAWK RIDGE NON-RAPTOR COUNT SUMMARY

by KARL BARDON, COUNT DIRECTOR

For the eighth season in a row, Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory continued its effort to count all migrating non-raptors during the fall season. Beginning with the first trickle of waxwings, Red-wings, and warblers in late July, and ending with flocks of finches in late November, this was a truly an incredible season that was full of surprises and set all kind of records. The total of 358,815 migrant non-raptors was the best season ever. This total is 38,000 birds above the previous best season in 2011, and over 86,000 birds above the average since counts from the shore were combined with Hawk Ridge in 2010. During morning hours when most non-raptor migration occurs, we have one observer at Hawk Ridge, and one observer near the shore (one mile from Hawk Ridge), and these totals are combined to give a better representation of how many non-raptors migrate through the area. This year the results were amazing! Many groups of birds flew by in numbers many times higher than what we have seen previously.

For example, a total of 1089 kinglets and 76 Brown Creepers were counted, while in previous years only about 50 kinglets and 3 creepers would be seen. Kinglets and creepers are generally only seen foraging in the trees, and not often thought of as birds that can be seen in active migration flying overhead, but this season we detected these birds migrating very low over the ground, moving through the trees and stopping briefly to perch, or occasionally flying just above the trees. The two best days were on 6 October when 16 Brown Creepers, 153 Golden-crowned Kinglets, 69 Ruby-crowned Kinglets, and 100 unidentified kinglets were seen, and on 7 October when 29 Brown Creepers, 262 Golden-crowned Kinglets, 44 Ruby-crowned Kinglets, and 151 unidentified kinglets were counted. Because the kinglets are so small and similar looking, and move by so quickly, it was often not possible to identify them in flight. In any case, these numbers are far beyond anything we had counted previously, and the total of 262 Golden-crowned Kinglets on 7 October is a new high count for the state.

Similarly, even though the Catharus thrushes (Swainson's, Gray-cheeked, Hermit, and Veery) are usually only detected in small numbers on the ground, and usually not seen flying after sunrise, this season a total of 865 Catharus thrushes were seen in morning flight! (compared to a previous average of only 47 for all these species combined). It was rather shocking to identify 74 Swainson's Thrushes flying over the trees in full sunlight on 13 September, many of which were identified on-the-spot with digital photographs. An even larger flight of thrushes on 15 September included 46 Swainson's and 46 Gray-cheeked, but conditions were not as good for identifying these similar-looking birds in flight, and an additional 188 Catharus were left unidentified. It was amazing to see so many of these secretive thrushes in active migration flying overhead, since they are usually only detected at night when their distinctive calls can be heard. Every year there is at least one night when the number of thrushes calling in the pre-dawn darkness is simply overwhelming, and this year that flight occurred on 21 September when hundreds of Swainson's and 42 Gray-cheeks were heard. An even larger flight of 65 Gray-cheeks was heard on 29 September, which is a record high count for the state. As dawn broke on the 29th, Gray-cheeks were calling everywhere, and many were seen flying out during the early morning.

It was also an amazing season for Common Ravens, with a grand total of 2337 counted, which is by far the best season ever, and over 1,000 birds above the average. The peak day of 209 Common Ravens set a new high count for the state, an epic flight of flock after flock of ravens moving along the Ridge, often stopping to kettle over the owl decoy and harass it with their hoarse cries. Why so many ravens this season, and where are they all going?

Most rewarding was to count 46,215 warblers this season, 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. A total of 26 species of warblers were identified, and most were seen in numbers much greater than previous seasons. Overwhelming numbers of warblers moved through on 28-29 September when over 7,000 were seen each day, most of which were Yellow-rumps. We have often known that large numbers of Nashville and Tennessee Warblers move through earlier in the season in August and early September, but it is often difficult to separate these two similar looking warblers in flight; this year perfect conditions of low-flying birds in full sunlight allowed us to identify record fall flights of these two warblers, including 245 Tennessee and 639 Nashville Warblers on 2 September, the latter count a new state record. Other high counts included 41 Black-and-white Warblers on 15 August, 263 American Redstarts on 2 September, 50 Cape May Warblers on 15 August, 15 Blackburnian Warblers on 16 August, and 106 Palm Warblers on 4 October, all of which are some of the higher fall counts for the state. Although Golden-winged Warblers are unusually quite uncommon in Duluth, we counted eight this fall. We also identified two Pine Warblers in August, a species that is seldom seen in migration in fall.



Common Raven stooping at the owl decoy at Hawk Ridge

Photo by Karl Bardon

2014 HAWK RIDGE NON-RAPTOR COUNT SUMMARY (CONTINUED)

Sparrows also shocked us in unprecedented numbers, including season counts of 50 Fox Sparrows, 9564 White-throated Sparrows, 82 White-crowned Sparrows, and 2939 Dark-eyed Juncos, all of which are more than ten times previous averages. In previous years, we generally did not see many sparrows in active migration flying by, but as with thrushes and kinglets, this season we counted some very amazing flights of sparrows migrating low over the ground, through the trees, or even high above the trees. One of the highlights of the season was watching thousands of White-throated Sparrows migrating in this fashion, including 2166 on 21 September and 4034 on 22 September, both of which were new high counts for the state. Although not a record, the flight of 1074 Dark-eyed Juncos was interesting in that many of the birds were high overhead, certainly atypical for any species of sparrow.

But in a season of superlatives, the prize has to go to the finches, which flew by in such overwhelming numbers it was difficult to believe. The total of 111,372 finches is more than double that of any previous season, and includes new high season counts of 15,291 Purple Finches, 38,440 Common Redpolls, and 52,395 Pine Siskins. Throughout most of November, the barrage of flock after flock of small finches was almost ceaseless, with counts of over 1,000 virtually every day. Peak counts include 4762 Pine Siskins on 19 October and 8435 Common Redpolls on 9 November. Even more amazingly, radar work by the USFWS's Avian Radar Project suggests this diurnal migration counted at Hawk Ridge may just be the tip of the iceberg, with additional hundreds of thousands of finches potentially moving over at night. The numbers must be staggering, and certainly underscore how little we actually know about migration. We don't even know where all these finches went, since as I write this in mid-December, they have not been reported in large numbers to our south. So where in the world did all those hundreds of thousands of finches go?

What made this season so incredible for so many diverse groups of birds? Perhaps the answer lies in comparing these birds to the ones that did not show well in this season's totals. For example, there were only 5190 Common Nighthawks, only 13,779 Cedar Waxwings, and only 1695 Red-winged Blackbirds (all about half their averages). There were also considerably fewer Cackling Geese, ducks, shorebirds, Horned Larks, Tree Swallows, American Pipits, Lapland Longspurs, Snow Buntings, Bobolinks, Pine Grosbeaks, and White-winged Crossbills than usual. There will always be some species more and some species less common than usual, but this season the number of birds that flew by in unprecedented numbers was simply amazing. Whatever the reason, we will take it!

These non-raptor counts would not have been possible without the capable eyes and ears of my fellow counter Steve Kolbe. I would especially like to thank Steve for being up at the Ridge at sunrise every single day to count all those crazy birds! It's going to be a long, hard winter.



Male Common Redpoll

Photo by Karl Bardon



Migrating Pine Siskins

Photo by Karl Bardon



White-throated Sparrow

Photo by Karl Bardon

TEN YEARS OF WESTERN GREAT LAKES OWL MONITORING SURVEY

by DAVE GROSSHUESCH



Northern Saw-whet Owl

Photo by Michael Furtman

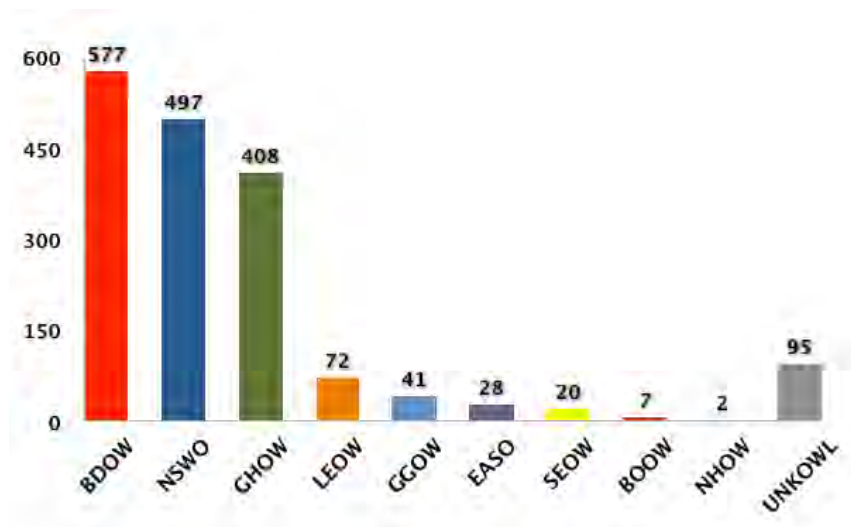
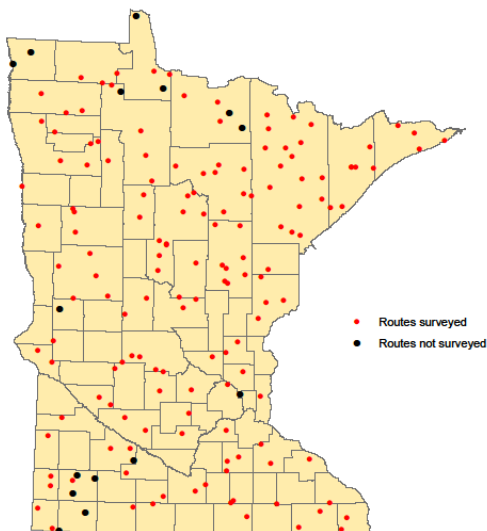
This was the tenth year of a joint effort between Minnesota and Wisconsin to monitor owls across political boundaries. In 2014, a total of 313 owls comprising eight species were recorded on 105 routes, with no owls recorded on 45 routes. The top three owl species combined for Minnesota and Wisconsin were Barred Owl, Great Horned Owl, and Northern Saw-whet Owl, respectively. In Minnesota, a total of 174 individual owls comprising seven species were recorded. The mean number of owls/route was 2.15 compared to 1.99 in 2013. In Wisconsin, a total of 139 individual owls comprising five species were recorded. The mean number of owls/route was 2.01 compared to 2.00 in 2013.

Results of the 2014 Western Great Lakes Region Owl Survey were similar to previous years in many regards, as detections of Barred and Great Horned Owls, as well as all owls combined, were near recent averages. Eastern Screech Owl detections remained low, while Long-eared Owls rebounded a bit after a poor showing in the cold, snowy spring of 2013. Perhaps most notable was a significant spike in numbers of Northern Saw-whet Owls found in Minnesota, particularly northern Saint Louis County, a spike only modestly mirrored in Wisconsin. Saint Louis County also hosted several Long-eared Owls, Great Gray Owls, a Northern Hawk Owl, and a Boreal Owl was also detected in nearby Lake County. The influx of these boreal species may have indicated a localized outbreak of rodent prey, or perhaps, it was a function of the late spring arrival in this region leading to a delay in breeding phenology.

Ten years of survey data moves us closer to being able to conduct trend analyses. One of the survey's primary goals has always been to provide information on population trends for the region's owl species. A brief synopsis of the last ten years of owl surveys in Minnesota reveals that most routes across the state have been surveyed in at least one year (Figure X). Though, it also reveals that it's typically harder to fill routes in areas of the state with lower population densities; a challenge that any citizen science project encounters. That said, over 1,700 owls of nine species have been detected since 2005 (Fig X) in Minnesota – a testament to the many hundreds of volunteers that have contributed to increasing our knowledge of owls in the state!

Because other surveys, such as the federal Breeding Bird Survey, do not assess nocturnal bird populations this survey is especially meant to serve as an early warning system for significant population declines and/or range shifts. Initial results from unadjusted counts suggest relatively stable or even slightly increasing populations of most species. However, highly variable calling behavior of owl species leads to some uncertainty in relatively short-term trend data, so confidence in these patterns will grow as the survey continues in the years ahead.

Distribution of routes surveyed and not surveyed in MN, 2005 - 2014.



TEN YEARS OF WESTERN GREAT LAKES OWL MONITORING SURVEY (CONTINUED)

Unfortunately, detections for uncommon species are too low to allow for reasonable trend assessments. These include Great Gray, Boreal, Northern Hawk, Long-eared, and Short-eared Owls. However, occurrence information for these species is highly desired among conservationists across both states. As such we initiated a pilot survey in 2015 in Minnesota to increase detections for a few species of special concern including Great Gray, Boreal and Short-eared Owls. This entailed increasing routes in areas of known distribution, conducting replicate surveys along routes and modifying current protocol to use conspecific playback. In particular, we will be interested in obtaining better information about habitat associations/needs for these species. We anticipate that a more refined protocol will be in place for 2016, which may include stratifying a subset of routes by preferred habitat type. These strategies could also be successfully used for other owl species of interest such as Eastern Screech Owls. However, additional resources will be needed to fully design and implement such efforts toward less common, hard-to-detect species.

Recommendations and future perspectives for the Western Great Lakes Region Owl Survey include: 1) centralize storage of all data collected to date into the Midwest Avian Data Center, 2) develop an on-line route selection and data entry system in Minnesota, 3) work with regional partners to finish analyses of detectability and other variables influencing owl calling activity, 4) conduct additional analyses of owl habitat associations and power to detect population trends, 5) continuing to evaluate current survey methods and objectives to determine if modifications are needed to better inform resource managers, enhance volunteer experiences, and monitor owl populations. For example, in Wisconsin they will be conducting a second survey period in late April/early May to increase the detectability of owls, and 6) evaluate data collected during the pilot survey on species of concern in Minnesota to develop a new approach to monitor rare owls.

Without our dedicated volunteers, we would NEVER be able to capture so much information during the spring breeding season! If you're interested in more information about the survey or participating in this survey in 2016, please contact our project coordinators for more information:

Minnesota: Dave Grosshuesch
218-663-8076 • dgross@hawkridge.org

Wisconsin: Ryan Brady
715-685-2933 • Ryan.Brady@Wisconsin.org

HAWK RIDGE NATURE RESERVE STEWARDSHIP REPORT

by BOB OWENS & ANDREW STREITZ

Hawk Ridge Nature Reserve experienced a challenging winter, with some early snow, then extreme cold, then mild temps, which melted a great deal of the snow. The early snow brought family sledders out for fun with kids, fat tire bikers were daily visitors, and each day saw more joggers, dog walkers and folks who hoped the snow was appropriate for cross-country skiing. The barriers on each end of East Skyline were installed by the city crew about Dec 1, just as the Hawk Ridge counting and banding season ended for Count Director, Karl Bardon, and Banding Director, Frank Nicoletti.

The cold January and February months held timid visitors back from coming out, however the regular joggers, dog walkers and the fat tire bikers continued visiting the park daily. The break in the weather in early March melted much of the snow clearing the road which brought more folks out to hike and walk dogs. By the way very few snowmobilers were on the snowmobile trail this year, probably due to lack of snow on adjoining trails.

This last year has seen the completion of one exciting project at Hawk Ridge Nature Reserve, and the beginning of another. Last year thanks to funding from Duluth Legacy Endowment Fund (Duluth Superior Area Community Foundation & City of Duluth) and funding from the MN Lake Superior Coastal Program (MN DNR and NOAA), Hawk Ridge hired ecologist Barb Delaney to complete a vegetation survey of Hawk Ridge Nature Reserve and to report on biological diversity, location and density of invasive plant species, and recommendations.

Coincidentally, Hawk Ridge was offered the services of the 1854 Treaty Authority, often described as the Tribal DNR, for the removal of invasive buckthorn and honeysuckle from the nature reserve. The timing proved to be very good, as the Ridge was now in possession of detailed maps showing the location and density of the many invasive plants that have encroached on our park. Working together, Hawk Ridge staff, Board members and volunteers selected priority areas for the invasive treatment. Starting in late February, Jeffrey Flory from the Authority has been out at least once a week treating the invasive buckthorns along E. Skyline Drive working from the west entrance of the park up toward the main overlook. Jeffrey has received extensive training on the use of the chemical treatments, and follows guidelines set down for Duluth Parks. Following the new approach to buckthorn removal, the treated trees are left standing to avoid spreading seeds and to shade any buckthorn shoots that remain. The Authority will continue to work this spring until the plants start budding, and then return in the late summer. Hawk Ridge is very appreciative of their services.

We look forward to seeing more users (both wildlife and people!) of the Hawk Ridge Nature Reserve as the spring brings on warmer temperatures!

Hawk Ridge Buckthorn Project, March 2015



VOLUNTEER VOICES

by MIRANDA DURBIN

I lived under Hawk Ridge my entire young life but rarely made it up there during the migration season. I was never a birder and tended to prefer mammals until I took an ornithology course in college. So when I moved back to Duluth as an adult, I decided to get involved. I began volunteering at the Hawk Ridge main overlook during the 2012 fall season. I've never been great with talking to strangers, but it helped me to learn and open up. I began to learn better identification of raptors in flight (which I'm still constantly working on). I was always a little envious of the banders, and though the overlook is an exciting place where you get to meet a lot of neat people and see a lot of birds in the sky, I found myself really wanting to be involved in the banding project.

After meeting Frank Nicoletti and David Alexander the following spring, I did my best to make my interest about banding known. That fall I began volunteering in the banding station and I have been loving every minute of it. Both Frank and David have been great teachers, both in identification in the sky and aging and sexing in the hand. Even on slow days, the blind can be a great place. Any spot you see in the sky gets you excited at the possible prospect of what could be coming in.

There have been so many high points, it would be tough to pick the best, but being there when we trapped an adult bald eagle in 2013 was definitely one of them. I have helped with owls a bit over the last two seasons, but it wasn't until Halloween of 2014 that I saw my first Barred Owl in the hand. That would be another highlight.

I have greatly enjoyed my time at Hawk Ridge and learning from some amazing birders and trappers. I don't plan on going anywhere anytime soon.



Adult male and female Northern Goshawks held by Banding Volunteer, Miranda Durbin

Photo by Frank Nicoletti

HAWK WEEKEND FESTIVAL 2015!

Make plans now for the annual Hawk Weekend Festival, September 18-20, 2015! Our evening events will be held at the Spirit Mountain Grand Avenue Chalet. We will kick off the festival at our Friday night dinner event with our annual member meeting, awards, and a great presentation from Richard F. Green on the amazing Northern Goshawk! Dr. Richard Green is a Professor at the University of Minnesota Duluth in Mathematics and Statistics Department. He also serves as a member on the Hawk Ridge Research Committee.

Our Saturday evening dinner event will feature an exciting raffle and an engaging presentation on "Mercury exposure in hawks and owls of North America" by David Evers of the Biodiversity Research Institute. Environmental mercury loads are currently elevated due to anthropogenic sources and continue to increase because of global inputs - raptors are excellent indicators of tracking these environmental mercury loads.

Conservation Biologist, Dr. David Evers, is the founder and executive director of Biodiversity Research Institute (BRI), an ecologically-minded nonprofit research group based in Portland, Maine. BRI's wildlife biologists conduct original research and monitoring projects around the world with an emphasis on using wildlife as indicators of ecological health. David has been actively studying the environmental exposure and effects of mercury in a wide range of bird species since 1987. While his research investigations have focused on mercury in the Common and Yellow-billed Loons and various species of songbirds, he has also conducted work with a variety of breeding and migratory raptors in North America. He has over 100 peer-reviewed publications with most emphasizing mercury in wildlife.

The full registration includes meals both nights, field trips on Saturday & Sunday, and admission to an "Advanced Hawkwatching" workshop at Hawk Ridge Nature Reserve. A variety of exciting birding and nature field trips will be offered and led by excellent guides.

Registration for the festival will open in June on our website at www.hawkridge.org. Please note hotel rooms tend to fill up quickly during the fall season, so we suggest you make your travel plans early to attend. We hope to see you at our annual festival event!

IN MEMORY OF VIRGINIA THOMSEN

by MYRON & HOLLY PETERSON



Virginia Thomsen releasing Sharp-shinned Hawk at Hawk Ridge

Photo courtesy of Myron and Holly

Virginia Thomsen, 80, of Elkhorn, Nebraska passed away on December 15, 2014. She became a Hawk Ridge member and supporter after visiting Hawk Ridge with her daughter, Holly Peterson, in 2010. Virginia released a Sharp-shinned Hawk during her visit. She was thrilled with the release and she described that experience many times to her friends back in Nebraska.

Virginia enjoyed watching and feeding birds at her homes over the years; she spent many hours at her kitchen table in Blair, Nebraska watching the Brown Thrashers that built a nest in the bush outside her window. When she lived in Florida she enjoyed the tropical birds; in Nebraska she loved the prairie species. While living in Chicago many years ago, she raised an orphaned House Sparrow. Holly took that sparrow to school for Show and Tell before releasing it back into the wilds of their suburban Chicago neighborhood. And wherever Virginia lived, she enjoyed raising canaries and listening to their songs.

Virginia served on the Board of Directors of Friends of Black Elk-Neihardt Park in Blair, Nebraska. She was a member of the Audubon Society of Omaha and a contributor to many conservation-oriented organizations in addition to Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory.

INTERESTING BIRDBIT: TURKEY VULTURE TOMMY

Research Biologist, David Barber, from Hawk Mountain Sanctuary and Hawk Ridge Banding Director, Frank Nicoletti, captured an adult Turkey Vulture in early August in West Duluth and placed a wing tag and satellite transmitter on it. This is the first Turkey Vulture in the Midwest to be fitted with a tag or transmitter as part of the Turkey Vulture Migration Project. The data collected has given us information on roost locations, hourly and daily movement. The bird was tested for lead and the reading came up low. Turkey Vulture "Tommy" began its migration on 4 October and reached its wintering ground on 27 October. Tommy made local movements in southern Mexico near the Guatemala border this winter. We look forward to following Tommy's migration path, winter and breeding home range.



Banding Director, Frank Nicoletti, with Turkey Vulture "Tommy"

Photo by Miranda Durbin





CONTRIBUTION FORM

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☐ BEGIN☐ RENEW

MY HAWK RIDGE MEMBERSHIP

\$15 Student (Vulture)

\$30 Individual (Osprey)

\$50 Family (Hawk)

\$100 Sustaining (Owl)

\$250 Soaring (Harrier)

\$500 Supporting (Falcon)

\$1000 Steward (Eagle)

☐ 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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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.

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P.O. Box 3006

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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

A SPECIAL THANKS TO THE FOLLOWING GRANTORS & SPONSORS

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29TH ANNUAL BIRDATHON EVENT!

Mark your calendar now for Saturday May 16th to join us for the 29th Annual Hawk Ridge St. Louis County Birdathon! This is an exciting 24-hour competition to raise money for the bird research and education programs of Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory. The extreme birders will take on this challenge throughout the night and day, but don't be put off by an extreme schedule! You can bird for an hour or less just by watching a feeder to compete in the "Big Sit" category. In the "Eco" or "Non-motorized" category, you can ride your bike, canoe, or walk through as many of the local birding hotspots as you wish. There are fantastic prizes, such as t-shirts, hats, prints, and more! The grand compilation brunch will be held at Hartley Nature Center on Sunday May 17th, in which prizes and the traveling owl trophy will be awarded. We are accepting pledges now, so even if you can't make the event, we truly appreciate your consideration of a pledge. If you have questions or need help forming or joining a team, please contact us at birdathon@hawkridge.org. Registration details are found on our website at www.hawkridge.org under the Events tab.



Black-and-white Warbler

Photo by Karl Bardon