

## **2017 Raptor Banding Report**

### **Frank Nicoletti, Banding Director**

The fall 2017 season marks the 46<sup>th</sup> year of raptor banding at Hawk Ridge. This is my seventh season managing the banding operation. Hawk Ridge is one of the longest running banding operations in the world, and its continuing efforts to collect data is of utmost importance, especially with the changing climate and shifting of species and weather patterns. We along with other professional organizations and individuals continue to work toward understanding the migration of birds across North and Central America.

From 2011 to 2014 we had the Hawk Ridge, Moose Valley, and Paine Farm banding stations running full time. Unfortunately, programmatic budget constraints have prompted us to scale down. The Hawk Ridge station maintains full time operation and Paine Farm and Moose Valley are run on a part-time basis, thanks to the help of volunteers. Raptor Bander, Miranda Durbin, and volunteer David Alexander were able to fill in mainly in September and October. We dropped in numbers of days covered the past two years from an average of 235 days from 2011 to 2014 to an average of 176, 2015-2017. Again this season we had two banding trainees, which made the banding operation run more smoothly and provided a great opportunity for the trainees to learn all aspects of banding. We also continue to rely on our great core of volunteers.

The 2017 season was the second lowest with a total of 3,400 raptors banded behind 3,224 in 2013. We banded 16 species of raptors, 11 hawks and 5 owls. This total includes 57 foreign recoveries, birds banded at a different banding site and recaptured at Hawk Ridge and 16 returns, birds previously banded at Hawk Ridge and recaptured at Hawk Ridge from previous season's. We are still waiting for information on recoveries (birds banded at Hawk Ridge and recaptured at a different banding site). Among the 3,400 total raptors, there were 2,073 diurnal (hawks) and 1,327 nocturnal raptors (owls). The owls were mostly banded at the main station at Hawk Ridge except for 3 partial night during which 18 owls were banded at Paine Farm. The main station for hawk banding was in operation daily from August 15 to December 11. Moose Valley ran from September 2 to November 18, while Paine Farm ran from September 3 to October 28. We logged a total of 171 days, which is well below our overall average of 210 station days since 2011. The average number of raptors banded per day was 20.

The overall migration this fall from a banding perspective was mixed with high and lows. Lack of cold fronts in September and early October gave us poor capture rate especially for Sharp-shinned Hawks which is the most abundant raptor we band. But this poor weather also effected species and capture rate of other; Northern Harrier, American Kestrel and Merlin. We had good cold fronts the remainder of the season through closing in December and produced good numbers of later season migrants such as Northern Goshawk and Rough-legged Hawk.

A total of 2,073 hawks were banded during the fall, with monthly total as follows: 46 in August, 1,335 in September, 623 in October, and 47 in November and 3 in December.

Of the 2,073 hawks banded, 16 were foreign recoveries and 3 were returns. 2 Peregrine Falcons recaptured were from the North Shore of Lake Superior; one banded as nestlings in 2016 and another from 2015. We are still waiting for info on most of these other records

Owls kept us busy this fall with banded 1,136, including 41 foreign recoveries and 13 returns. This total is below the average of 1,510 but within the expected range consider where are in cycle. Since 2011 we have followed a protocol using two caller units: one each for Northern Saw-whet (NSWO) and Long-eared owl (LEOW). Last year we started using a Boreal Owl (BOOW) caller, which we will continue to use in the future. Unlike last year, we did capture Boreal Owl, 32 which migrated later then in previous year. All callers run simultaneously during the night. As in previous years, the NSWO caller was placed in the west net lanes. The LEOW caller was placed in the station field while the BOOW caller was placed in the east net (pine grove) lanes.

We had the 50 NSOW recoveries (36 foreign and 14 returns), which was down from last season record of 92, however NSWO remain our main source of recoveries. Of the 13 returns banded and recaptured at Hawk Ridge were 8 from 2016, 4 from 2015; 1 from 2013; 1 from 2012.

Some of the noteworthy NSOW foreign recoveries were 2 from Thunder Cape - 1 each from 2011 and 2012. We had six Wisconsin banding sites recoveries included Linwood Station, and Falls Creek, Babcook, Suamico, Hudson Norwalk. We also had some from North Shore banding sites; French River, Tofte, Finland, Wof Ridge, and south near Victoria. Most notable was one from Volga, North Dakota from 2016, one from Whitefish Point Michigan from October 5, 2016 and the furthest record of one in the Adirondack Mountains in Dickinson Center from November 3, 2015.

We also had 3 previously banded Long-eared Owls, one return from 2016, another from French River, Minnesota from 2016 and one from Whitefish Point from April 8, 2017. Also one banded Barred Owl from the French River station from this year.

Many people make the banding stations run smoothly and efficiently. David Alexander and Miranda Durbin helped me staff the banding stations. Alan Moss, return worked the night shift at Hawk Ridge banding owls. Kate Maley and Alexandra Munters, this season's trainees, were much appreciated for their tireless efforts and enthusiasm to learn. I would also like to thank the numerous volunteers and HRBO staff who helped in many ways, including Karl Bardon, Alex Lamoreaux, Stephen Nelson communicating from the hawkwatch and others who helped in the stations, including Gary Leeper, Bruce Munson, Grace Glick, Ryan Steiner, Abbie Valine, and Karen Stubenvoll. Thanks to the education staff and volunteers for teaching and inspiring students and other visitors about birds and the bird research

conducted at Hawk Ridge. Thanks also to the Hawk Ridge Stewardship Committee for helping with maintenance of the Hawk Ridge Nature Reserve and banding site. Finally, I would especially like to thank my wife Kate for all she does and for her support.