

2024 Raptor Banding Report

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The fall 2024 season marks the 53rd year of the raptor banding and counting at Hawk Ridge. 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 and summer and wintering range of birds across North and Central America.

This season we had both Hawk Ridge and Moose Valley running full time, while Paine Farm ran when we had extra volunteers. Hawk Ridge was operated by primarily by Abbie Valine, while Moose Valley was operated by Kara Beer. A big thanks goes out to David Alexander who was there nearly all the time helping and teaching the new apprentices and trainees at the station. This season we had two banding apprentices, Sarah Needles and Jess Matyas. We also had a trainee rotating through each program area (count, banding, and education): Arzu Paul, Phil Stollsteimer and June Yost. Liz Fortuna was this season's owl bander.

This season total of 2234 raptors captured is the 2nd lowest and well below our season's average of 3547 since 2011. We banded 17 species of raptors, 11 hawks and 6 owls. This total includes 31 previously banded birds. Among the 2234 total raptors, there were 1280 diurnal (hawks) and 923 nocturnal raptors (owls). The Hawk Ridge station for hawk banding was in operation daily from August 15 to December 1. Moose Valley ran from August 29 to November 2, while Paine Farm ran from September 6 to October 27. We logged a total of 204 days, which is slightly above our average of 201 station days since 2011. A total of 1280 hawks were banded during the fall, with monthly total as follows: 44 in August, 825 in September, 397 in October, 10 in November and 0 in December.

This season owl numbers 1356, were slightly above last season total of 1219, but lower than expected with reports of productivity being good especially in the east. This season totals are closer to our average of 1356. Since 2011 we have followed a protocol using two caller units: one each for Northern Saw-whet (NSWO) and Long-eared owl (LEOW). In 2016, we started using a Boreal Owl (BOOW) and Eastern Screech Owl (EASO) call for about half the season, then the second half BOOW. We will continue this combination to see if we can detect movement of EASO. 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 a fair number of NSOW recoveries (28 foreign and 5 returns. NSWO remain our main source of recoveries. Of the 5 returns, 2 from 2020, 1 from 2021, 2 from 2022. Some of the noteworthy NSOW foreign recoveries from previous years came Wisconsin, Minnesota and surprisingly West Virginia. One our our NSWO was found breeding in Wisconsin Rapids, Wood County. We also had some from North Shore

banding sites; French River, Wolf Ridge and Tofte and Silver Islet, Thunder Bay Bird Observatory. We are still waiting on the remainder of the reports from the Bird Banding Lab.

I would also like to thank the numerous volunteers and HRBO staff who helped in many ways, including Sean McLaughlin and Marie Hosch for alerting the station of approaching raptors. Other who helped in various ways were Grace Glick, Ralph Larsen, Margie Menzies, Sara DePew. Thanks to Janelle Long, our Executive Director who helps with so many ways often not seen by many and to our new Research Director, Emily Pavlovic, for constant support and help with the banding research. Finally, I would especially like to thank my wife Kate for all she does and for her support.