



2025 Hawk Ridge Raptor Banding

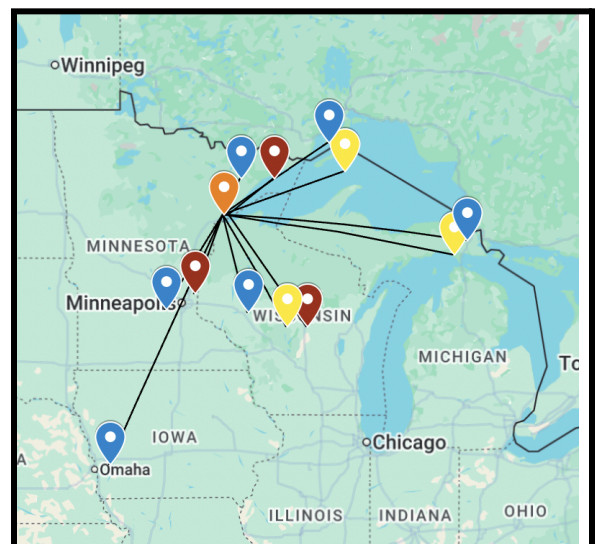
SEASON SUMMARY

The fall 2025 season marks the 54th year of raptor banding at Hawk Ridge. This season we operated three diurnal raptor banding stations. The Hawk Ridge station was run full time between August 15 and November 30 by Frank Nicoletti and Tim Baerwald. Moose Valley was run full time between September 1 and November 16 by Sarah Needles with assistance from David Alexander and Miranda Durbin. Paine Farm was run part time during September and October by Frank, David, and Miranda. Our Owl Bander was Maya Vernick who was assisted by apprentices and trainees as well as many staff and volunteers. This season we had two banding apprentices, June Yost and Kaia Hilgendorf-Roost. We also had three trainees that split their time between count, banding, and education: Soren Zappia, Loreen Lee, and Gabby Dowd.

Temperatures were above average (NOAA) this fall and fog through the end of September and October made raptor trapping challenging. A total of 935 diurnal raptors were banded this fall of 12 different species. Notable highlights were four Bald Eagles, the first Swainson's Hawk banded since 2023, and a color-banded Peregrine Falcon.

Despite the warm weather and occasionally rainy and windy nights, we caught the highest volume of owls at Hawk Ridge since 2020 – 1405 owls total. This included 1310 new owls, 57 local/foreign recaptures, and 35 season repeats. Northern Saw-whet Owl (NSWO) volume peaked during early to mid October, with two nights where we caught over 100 NSWOs. Our highest volume night was October 13th, where we caught 112 NSWOs. We caught our first two Long-eared Owls (LEOW) on October 13th as well. Our first Barred Owl was caught on October 15th.

This year, we had 41 NSWO foreign recaptures. Our foreign recaptures varied in original banding location, but none were banded unexpectedly far from HRBO. Some of the owls we banded at HRBO this year have already been recaptured at banding stations in MN, WI, and IN. Excitingly, this year we also recaptured a LEOW that was originally banded in May 2025 in Chippewa County, MI.



Map showing the locations of some Northern Saw-whet Owl foreign recaptures from fall 2025.

In addition to banding we also contributed to a number of banding related projects. 15 transmitters were deployed on raptors (Sharp-shinned Hawks, Northern Harriers, and American Goshawks) as part of the project on Linking Breeding Migratory Populations of Birds in Minnesota. Funding for this project was provided by the Minnesota Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund as recommended by the Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR). Feathers were collected for mercury and stable isotope analyses, and blood and swab samples were taken from 78 raptors for high pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) surveillance in partnership with The Raptor Center.

As always, there are many people to thank for help with this work including Sean McLaughlin, Marie Hosch, and Peter Mundale for alerting the station of approaching raptors. Others who helped in various ways were Grace Glick, Ralph Larsen, Margie Menzies (Education Director), Tim Burdhal, Janelle Long (Executive Director) and Emily Pavlovic (Research Director).