

# Raptorthon 2022

## Hawk Mountain's Counting for Conservation Team Report

*April 22<sup>nd</sup> 7:15 am.*

*Wind is gusting from the North and skies are partly cloudy and cool. I decided to head to Mountain early, hoping to see warblers before the raptors began.*

*I arrive 7:45 am and set up at front of the rocks.*



*Skies partly cloudy with a thick haze. Temperature is 45 degrees and visibility 15 km with winds steady 5-10 mph from the north. Just after 8 am the flight begins as two Sharp-shinned Hawks skim over the rocks from due South and head low over the valley past Hunters Field to northeast—seemingly traveling together and fighting the headwind.*



Figure 1. Sharp-shinned in flight by Shawn Carey.

*Soon thereafter a killdeer calls (?) stridently above me, and I look up to see a bird flapping along the ridgetop to northeast.. an odd bird for a forested mountain top.*

*Soon after the Black-and-white Warbler begins singing—Yay! My first of them for the year!*

*By 8:30 am the local vultures take advantage of the gusting winds and start circling off both slopes, I tally eight Turkey Vultures and three Black Vultures in the local flock. Shortly*

*after two Turkey Vultures appear higher overhead traveling from SW along ridgetop flapping deep flaps the whole way, clearly migrating as they disappear in the northeast over number 3! Near the end of the hour two Red-tailed Hawks fly northeast past the lookout and two Broad-winged Hawks skim overhead. The Raptorthon count is off to a great start!*

*Just before 9 am, Diego and Matthew arrive, the Science Trainees working with me today. They enter the early counts on the tablet and start scanning. The next hour is busy with ten migrant raptors and thirteen total raptor sightings.*

*For Raptorthon official totals I include migrating raptors as well as resident raptors. For any resident, I only count the highest number seen at one time, such as the 3 Black Vultures, 3 Red-tailed Hawks and 8 Turkey Vultures. We deem a bird a “migrant” if it comes from S or SW and leaves to N or NE and flies in direct manner, differing from local birds meandering movements or the birds heading west or south. Non-raptor migrants tallied for the morning include blue jays, tree and barn swallows and*



Figure 2. Matthew and Diego scanning for birds.

*occasional goldfinches. Diego spots a low flying flock of Double-crested Cormorants to add to our list. Tree swallows get the credit for one early Sharp-shinned Hawk sighting as their vociferous alarm calls and diving on the sharpshin above the lookout alerted me to its passing.*

*By mid-day, the sun has burned off the haze and birds are getting higher and harder to see. Sharp-shinned Hawks are added to the count each hour and we easily surpass the one-day high for the season. Ospreys pass occasionally and are a welcome sight. A local Cooper’s Hawk joins my tally and dives on migrating Broad-winged Hawks and follows with a display flight complete with fluffy undertail coverts flashing white above us. Bald Eagles are added to my list as migrants and as locals as some head west or south while others head north. All ages of eagles are spotted through the day including dark juveniles, white-belly birds, and full adults. Winds continue through the day, but ebb midday then pick up again. A quick flapping small falcon cuts over the ridge by East Rocks*

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Figure 2. dedicated to our mission -we did not stop for lunch... Matthew eats Fritos and still scans!

*mid-afternoon, as it flares up its grey plumage is evident—a Merlin!*

*At 3:30 pm Matthew spots a Broad-winged Hawk circling high overhead at limit of eyesight in clear blue skies. As we stare at it circling other Broadwings emerge from the high blue with four in one kettle at limit of vision. We must wonder how many hawks passed over unseen in that high blue sky!*

*Figure 3. A few visitors help spot including a new young birder and his grandfather*



*By 4 pm Matthew, Diego and I had spotted a total of eighty-four raptors of nine species of which fifty-two were migrating raptors. One of our best one-day counts to-date!*

*The other migrants included sixty-two birds of nineteen species, a mix of resident and migrants. See attached table for a complete list. Non-migrant raptors included Bald Eagle, both vultures, Red-tailed Hawk, Broad-winged Hawk and Cooper's Hawk.*

*Raptorthon was a fun and meaningful event. It allowed me a full day at North Lookout with two dedicated science trainees something I*

*rarely get to do. And we raised funds towards both Hawk Mountain's annual raptor monitoring program and the long-term archiving of our data with other datasets in HMANA's continental scale migration database.*

***Counting for Conservation** is truly what we were doing in our Raptorthon each year as we strive to maintain the stability of long-term monitoring efforts at Hawk Mountain and continentally so we can better track the numbers of the raptors and inform conservation planning at a national and international scale.*



*Figure 4. north view in morning.*

**One of the species we are concerned about is the Sharp-shinned Hawk (see map above). Trends in migrants at Hawk Mountain, and at many eastern sites, as well as trends in wintering birds in eastern states show significant declines. Research efforts are needed to understand this pattern and soon.**

**Your donation today helps us work to keep our finger on the pulse on raptor populations.**

**Thank you for your support!**

**Laurie Goodrich, Hawk Mountain and HMANA**

**p.s. IF you have already donated -- thank you for your support!.**

**If you made a pledge per bird or per raptor or per raptor species. It is your choice to only support migrants or all raptors. I attach both of the totals for you to consider.**

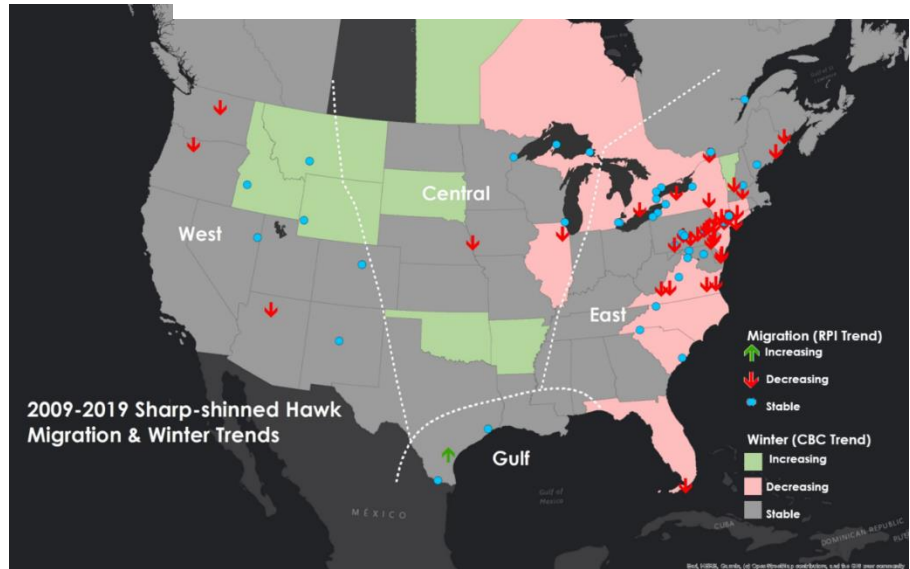
**Donations can be made directly in two ways:**

- 1. Easiest is to make a donation directly on HMANA Raptorthon page using a credit card [www.hmana.org/product/hawk-mountain-sanctuary](http://www.hmana.org/product/hawk-mountain-sanctuary) or [hmana.org/Raptorthon](http://hmana.org/Raptorthon) then select my Counting for Conservation Team OR**
- 2. You can send a check to me made out to HMANA, to**

**Goodrich, Hawk Mountain, 410 Summer Valley Road, Orwigsburg, PA 17961.**

**Proceeds from the Raptorthon are split 50:50 with Hawk Mountain and HMANA.**

*Figure 5. Trends from Migration Sites (arrows) and Christmas Counts (colors) for Sharp-shinned Hawk.*



**THANK YOU!!**  
**Laurie Goodrich**