

2020 HawkWatch

2020 Greene Valley HawkWatch

Commentary by Bob Fisher

Except for these two battling “dinosaurs,” 2020 was another “average” raptor year on the hill (see yearly totals excluding Broadwings in the Table below).

In this fifteenth year of the GVHW, no new high species counts were set. We registered one all-time low with just two Golden Eagles though it was a good year for Broad-winged Hawks –1,868 BWs, the third highest total in our 15-year history. TVs, Sharpies and Redtails as usual made up nearly 80 percent of GV’s total count (excluding BWs). Redtails up-ticked from their apparent slow decline in numbers, but Sharpies continued their drop-off. Mild weather over the last several days of November proved to be poor for raptor migration.



Here’s a look at the Numbers in our 15th season on the hill:

| Species | Turkey Vulture | Osprey | Bald Eagle | N. Harrier | Sharp-shinned Hawk | Cooper's Hawk | N. Goshawk | Red-shouldered Hawk | accipiters total | |
|---------------|-------------------|-----------------|-------------------|--------------|--------------------|---------------|------------------|---------------------|------------------|------------------------|
| 2020 | 963 | 46 | 101 | 42 | 353 | 62 | 1 | 37 | 416 | |
| 2019 | 1021 | 79 | 112 | 58 | 444 | 57 | 2 | 24 | 503 | |
| 2018 | 935 | 70 | 86 | 48 | 331 | 69 | 1 | 27 | 401 | |
| 2017 | 841 | 36 | 69 | 32 | 313 | 91 | 3 | 23 | 407 | |
| 2016 | 546 | 47 | 91 | 47 | 593 | 102 | 2 | 21 | 697 | |
| 2015 | 658 | 43 | 52 | 64 | 340 | 94 | 3 | 29 | 437 | |
| 2014 | 605 | 44 | 100 | 64 | 472 | 82 | 2 | 22 | 556 | |
| 2013 | 1078 | 30 | 57 | 40 | 563 | 90 | 4 | 37 | 657 | |
| 2012 | 763 | 65 | 60 | 75 | 463 | 146 | 3 | 16 | 612 | HIGH |
| 2011 | 512 | 44 | 35 | 52 | 646 | 117 | 5 | 22 | 768 | COUNTS |
| 2010 | 306 | 36 | 22 | 69 | 486 | 94 | 6 | 14 | 586 | IN |
| 2009 | 650 | 17 | 21 | 45 | 574 | 124 | 5 | 24 | 703 | GREEN |
| 2008 | 510 | 39 | 22 | 50 | 328 | 103 | 2 | 20 | 433 | LOW |
| 2007 | 471 | 17 | 12 | 60 | 682 | 164 | 10 | 13 | 856 | COUNTS |
| 2006 | 185 | 16 | 12 | 45 | 236 | 113 | 2 | 7 | 351 | IN |
| 15 year total | 10044 | 629 | 852 | 791 | 6824 | 1508 | 51 | 336 | 8383 | RED |
| 15 year avg. | 670 | 42 | 57 | 53 | 455 | 101 | 3 | 22 | 559 | |
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| Species | Broad-winged Hawk | Red-tailed Hawk | Rough-legged Hawk | Golden Eagle | Am. Kestrel | Merlin | Peregrine Falcon | Unknown raptor | TOTAL | Total minus Broadwings |
| 2020 | 1868 | 547 | 14 | 2 | 9 | 40 | 31 | 69 | 4187 | 2319 |
| 2019 | 4993 | 433 | 10 | 10 | 5 | 46 | 61 | 72 | 7431 | 2438 |
| 2018 | 423 | 449 | 11 | 4 | 12 | 45 | 46 | 64 | 2625 | 2202 |
| 2017 | 56 | 656 | 17 | 3 | 8 | 38 | 45 | 63 | 2286 | 2230 |
| 2016 | 4271 | 651 | 12 | 5 | 17 | 71 | 70 | 82 | 6632 | 2361 |
| 2015 | 240 | 559 | 11 | 11 | 5 | 45 | 60 | 47 | 2261 | 2021 |
| 2014 | 1596 | 682 | 27 | 7 | 12 | 50 | 28 | 44 | 3837 | 2241 |
| 2013 | 36 | 986 | 16 | 8 | 8 | 66 | 46 | 54 | 3119 | 3083 |
| 2012 | 4432 | 848 | 7 | 5 | 15 | 40 | 19 | 51 | 7008 | 2576 |
| 2011 | 716 | 836 | 17 | 5 | 22 | 54 | 37 | 42 | 3162 | 2446 |
| 2010 | 48 | 643 | 31 | 11 | 14 | 31 | 30 | 48 | 1889 | 1841 |
| 2009 | 73 | 893 | 10 | 3 | 22 | 29 | 40 | 41 | 2571 | 2498 |
| 2008 | 1745 | 788 | 17 | 10 | 14 | 31 | 16 | 40 | 3735 | 1990 |
| 2007 | 687 | 838 | 14 | 3 | 25 | 33 | 32 | 38 | 3099 | 2412 |
| 2006 | 786 | 318 | 2 | 6 | 5 | 26 | 8 | 27 | 1794 | 1008 |
| 15 year total | 21970 | 10127 | 216 | 93 | 193 | 645 | 569 | 782 | 55636 | 33666 |
| 15 year avg. | 1465 | 675 | 14 | 6 | 13 | 43 | 38 | 52 | 3709 | 2244 |

No rare/vagrant raptor species were seen this year so our raptor rarity hopes were dashed. Here's the history:
Mississippi Kite: 10/3/08, 10/11/11, 9/9/12, 9/20/12, 9/3/17, 9/17/17, 9/13 (2) and 9/17/19; Swainson's Hawk: 1 in 2012; 2 in 2013; 3 in 2014; 1 on 9/18/17; 1 on 9/14/18; 1 on 10/9/19; Snowy Owl: 11/14/07; Ferruginous Hawk: 10/15/10 and 9/25/12; Prairie Falcon: 9/21/14 and 10/17/17; Gyr Falcon 11/6/16.

187 SPECIES SEEN ~ Greene Valley Hawkwatch 2006-2020 (2 new to list in 2020 in green)

| | | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Gr. White-fronted Goose | Swainson's Hawk | Red-bellied Woodpecker | Common Yellowthroat |
| Snow Goose | Red-tailed Hawk | Yellow-bellied Sapsucker | Magnolia Warbler |
| Cackling Goose | Ferruginous Hawk | Downy Woodpecker | Blackpoll Warbler |
| Canada Goose | Rough-legged Hawk | Hairy Woodpecker | Palm Warbler |
| Mute Swan | Yellow Rail | Northern Flicker | Am. Redstart |
| Trumpeter Swan | Sandhill Crane | Pileated Woodpecker | Yellow-rumped Warbler |
| Tundra Swan | Whooping Crane | American Kestrel | Wilson's Warbler |
| Wood Duck | Black-necked Stilt | Merlin | Eastern Towhee |
| Gadwall | Black-bellied Plover | Gyr Falcon | American Tree Sparrow |
| American Wigeon | Am Golden-Plover | Peregrine Falcon | Grasshopper Sparrow |
| American Black Duck | Semipalmated Plover | Prairie Falcon | Chipping Sparrow |
| Mallard | Killdeer | Olive-sided Flycatcher | Clay-colored Sparrow |
| Blue-winged Teal | Spotted Sandpiper | Eastern Wood-Pewee | Field Sparrow |
| Northern Shoveler | Solitary Sandpiper | Eastern Phoebe | Vesper Sparrow |
| Green-winged Teal | Greater Yellowlegs | Say's Phoebe | Lark Sparrow |
| Northern Pintail | Lesser Yellowlegs | Eastern Kingbird | Savannah Sparrow |
| Ring-necked Duck | Upland Sandpiper | Northern Shrike | Henslow's Sparrow |
| Greater Scaup | Hudsonian Godwit | Warbling Vireo | Le Conte's Sparrow |
| Black Scoter | Buff-br Sandpiper | Blue Jay | Fox Sparrow |
| Common Goldeneye | Dunlin | American Crow | Song Sparrow |
| Hooded Merganser | Least Sandpiper | Horned Lark | Lincoln's Sparrow |
| Common Merganser | Pectoral Sandpiper | N. Rough-winged Swallow | Swamp Sparrow |
| Red-br Merganser | Wilson's Snipe | Purple Martin | White-throated Sparrow |
| Red-throated Loon | American Woodcock | Tree Swallow | White-crowned Sparrow |
| Common Loon | Bonaparte's Gull | Bank Swallow | Dark-eyed Junco |
| Horned Grebe | Franklin's Gull | Barn Swallow | Northern Cardinal |
| Double-cr Cormorant | Ring-billed Gull | Cliff Swallow | Rose-breasted Grosbeak |
| Anhinga | Herring Gull | Cave Swallow | Indigo Bunting |
| Am. White Pelican | Iceland Gull | Black-cap Chickadee | Dickcissel |
| American Bittern | L Black-backed Gull | Red-breasted Nuthatch | Bobolink |
| Least Bittern | Great Black-backed Gull | White-br Nuthatch | Red-winged Blackbird |
| Great Blue Heron | Caspian Tern | House Wren | Eastern Meadowlark |
| Great Egret | Black Tern | Winter Wren | Western Meadowlark |
| Cattle Egret | Rock Pigeon | Sedge Wren | Yellow-headed Blackbird |
| Green Heron | Eurasian Collared-Dove | Marsh Wren | Rusty Blackbird |
| plegadis Ibis sp. | Mourning Dove | Ruby-crowned Kinglet | Brewer's Blackbird |
| Turkey Vulture | Yellow-billed Cuckoo | Eastern Bluebird | Common Grackle |
| Osprey | Great Horned Owl | American Robin | Brown-headed Cowbird |
| Golden Eagle | Snowy Owl | Gray Catbird | House Finch |
| Mississippi Kite | Barred Owl | European Starling | Purple Finch |
| Northern Harrier | Short-eared Owl | American Pipit | Red Crossbill |
| Sharp-shinned Hawk | Common Nighthawk | Sprague's Pipit | Common Redpoll |
| Cooper's Hawk | Eastern Whip-poor-will | Cedar Waxwing | Pine Siskin |
| Northern Goshawk | Chimney Swift | Lapland Longspur | American Goldfinch |
| Bald Eagle | Ruby-thr Hummingbird | Smith's Longspur | Evening Grosbeak |
| Red-shouldered Hawk | Belted Kingfisher | Snow Bunting | House Sparrow |
| Broad-winged Hawk | Red-head Woodpecker | Nashville Warbler | |

- 98 species in all were seen from the hilltop during the 2020 hawkwatch season.
- 9/7 was memorable for a massive migration movement of dragonflies, with large numbers of Monarchs. Green Darners dominated, but the swarm included many Black Saddlebags and Wandering Gliders.
- Horned Larks, American Pipits, Lapland Longspurs (very early arrival on 9/17) and Snow Buntings (first seen on 10/30) as always kept us company, the longspurs and buntings on a daily basis in good numbers later in the season. On 11/8, 150+ longspurs flew around the hilltop – a very large flock!
- We recorded our last Chimney Swift, on 10/16, 4 days earlier than in 2019.
- Just over 16,000 Sandies flew over during the season; the biggest single day count was 5,865 on 11/17. This was down about 30% from 2019, perhaps attributable to the mild weather for most of the season.
- On 10/25 a family group of 3 Whooping Cranes flew by, giving all present great views.
- A very late group of swallows (likely Trees) flew past on 11/7.
- Speaking about the weather (and how can we not?), 40% of our winds this season had a mostly southerly component—80 of the 156 hours we spent on the hill in November had that southerly component.



But it's not all about the numbers, or the rarities, is it? So many great views of striking birds, some captured on camera, some not, the moments that keep us coming back...the birds, the friendships, but perhaps most of all, the genuine feeling of peaceful detachment from the hustle and bustle more than 200 feet below us. That feeling was especially valuable in this year of the Covid pandemic, noisy politics, etc.



One or more of our dedicated volunteer counters were on the hill for 562 hours during 2020, slightly higher than 2019 and a new record; the aggregate volunteer time on the hill totaled 1,925 hours! Special thanks to Margie Busic, Tony C, Katherine Howard, Jeff Smith, who logged over 340 hrs—now that’s dedication! Thanks to Vicky Sroczyński and Stan Zatarski for spending more than 100 hours on the hilltop, and thanks to the other counters who weren’t able to put in quite as much time, but who helped greatly in spotting and counting on many occasions.

As always, thanks to our dedicated team of volunteers, the DuPage County Forest Preserve District, and Waste Management for their support of our count!

