

Fall 2022 Greene Valley Hawkwatch



Luis Munoz captured this kettle of BWs, as they kettled up just to the SE behind the hill, on 9/26

Reversing Luis's picture to a negative – makes it easier to see those white specks against a dark background. Yes, these BW specks were counted, but all the BWs in this particular kettle were not in the frame in Luis's photo.

This spectacle we all hope to see every Fall, when the BWs pass through – but don't always experience – because 'big BW days' typically happen every 2-3 years, when brisk NW winds guide their passage over the Hill.

The total 2022 BW count was 3,544; all but 25 on 9/26 and 9/27, kettling and then passing by on NW winds, blowing briskly on both days. By contrast, 2021 was a very slow Broadwing year – 98, the 4th lowest count in GV's 17 year history. Most of late September last year, the winds were either S or NE.

Excepting BWs, 2022 proved to be a generally poor raptor year on the Hill – see yearly totals, excluding Broadwings, in the Table below. No new species high count was set in our 17th year of the GVHW, and we registered 3 all time lows: Sharp-shinned and Cooper’s Hawks, plus Redtails. Redtails and Sharp-shins continued their apparent slow decline in numbers, with Cooper’s Hawks now evidencing a similar pattern of decline, beginning in 2017. And for a 2nd consecutive year, zero N. Goshawks. October was an especially slow month for GV. Our count of 987 migrant raptors was the lowest since the first year of the hawkwatch in ’06.

A look at the Numbers in our 17th 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	
2022	695	41	88	60	230	48	0	39	278	
2021	935	48	90	48	404	74	0	41	478	
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	HIGH
2012	763	65	60	75	463	146	3	16	612	COUNTS
2011	512	44	35	52	646	117	5	22	768	IN
2010	306	36	22	69	486	94	6	14	586	GREEN
2009	650	17	21	45	574	124	5	24	703	LOW
2008	510	39	22	50	328	103	2	20	433	COUNTS
2007	471	17	12	60	682	164	10	13	856	IN
2006	185	16	12	45	236	113	2	7	351	RED
17 year total	10979	677	942	839	7228	1582	51	377	8861	
17 year avg.	686	42	59	52	452	99	3	24	554	
										Total minus Broadwings
Species	Broad-winged Hawk	Red-tailed Hawk	Rough-legged Hawk	Golden Eagle	Am. Kestrel	Merlin	Peregrine Falcon	Unknown raptor	TOTAL	
2022	3544	299	14	3	17	32	17	46	5174	1630
2021	98	472	10	3	16	42	39	50	2373	2275
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

No out of range/vagrant raptor species were seen this year – but a beautiful Short-eared Owl floated by around lunchtime on 11/17. Also noteworthy were a number of young N Harriers actively and successfully hunting over the hill in mid to late November. We believe that happened because the hill was mowed much later in the season. The resultant short grass made it easier for the harriers to spot mice and voles, and they took advantage.

Over the 17 years of the GV Hawkwatch, we've now recorded 191 different species – not bad for the top of a closed landfill! Our latest addition in 2022 – a Least Flycatcher on the hilltop on 9/3. That 191 includes 26 waterfowl species (geese, swans, ducks, loons and grebes); highlight rarities – Black Scoter and Red-throated Loon. 10 waterbird species (cormorants, herons, egrets and ibises) including Anhinga and plegadis ibis. And of course, there are the raptors...20 species in all, highlighted by Mississippi Kite, Swainson's and Ferruginous Hawks, plus Gyrfalcon and Prairie Falcon (and we just know a Swallow-tailed Kite is sure to flyover one day!). Other notable sightings: Yellow Rail, the now annual Whooping Cranes, 17 species of shorebirds, Snowy Owl, vagrants like Say's Phoebe, Cave Swallow, Sprague's Pipit, plus of course our various late fall arrivals, the regulars like longspurs and Snow Buntings, plus the 'less regular' crossbills and Evening Grosbeaks. Just illustrates keeping our eyes on the sky, and on the fence in front of us, pays dividends! Also noteworthy for 2022:

- Monarch butterflies were seen in small numbers well into November, and we had a couple of dragonfly migration days, to make up for our dearth of raptors.
- Horned Larks, Am. Pipits (1st on 9/16), Lapland Longspurs (1st on 9/22; 540 in several flocks on 11/10) and Snow Buntings (1st on 10/19) kept us company, especially later in the season.
- We recorded our last Chimney Swift, on 10/23, 3 days later than in 2021.
- 1, maybe 2 Western Meadowlarks, who hung out into late November
- Only about 7,500 Sandies flew over during the season; on our biggest day (3,235), most of them were seen travelling far to the east. 7,500 was half of 2021, probably attributable to the fact that on their big movement day, the majority were much further E over the city. We did see and count the now annual Whooping Cranes – 2 on 11/11!
- November swallows this year; just 1 Tree Swallow on 11/7.
- Inclement weather caused the count to be cancelled on just 3 days, so our low totals were certainly not lack of 'time on the hill'

What keeps us coming back...the birds, the friendships, but perhaps most of all, the genuine feeling of peaceful detachment from that busy world 200 feet below us. See you in 2023!

Well, if we can't spot raptors, how about a close up? Photo by Vicky S



Short-eared Owl: photo by Vicky S.



3 young harriers taking advantage of the short grass; photo by Laurel A



One or more of our dedicated volunteer counters/observers were on the hill for 604 hours during 2022; thanks especially to the indefatigable Jeff Smith, who pretty much carried the 2022 GVHW on his shoulders – up there daily, scanning, counting, then logging/entering data every evening. He was ably supported by the other counters and observers who weren't able to put in quite as much time, but who all helped greatly in spotting and counting on many occasions. We were on the hill an aggregated 1787 hours.

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