

Fall 2024 Greene Valley Hawkwatch



Viewing conditions were tough this fall – blue dome days seemingly dominated! So we sent an RFP to find the best available technology for spotting and IDing those occasional specks in the blue. Our budget was small, though...passing the hat for funding money raised just \$7.86. Fourteen proposals were received. After careful review, the contract went to Katherine H (her state-of-the-art tech solution is shown above); the review committee did note that \$6.00 for cardboard seemed a bit high, plus larger type was warranted for the species illustrations used in the ID guide photos.

What did we see/count with this revolutionary tech...not much! 2024 set an all time low Count for the Hill – yearly totals are in the Table below. Unsurprisingly, no new species high counts were set in this our 19th year of the GVHW, but 5 all time lows were set: N. Harrier (44% of their LTA), Sharp-shinned Hawk (1/3 the LTA), Cooper's Hawk (5% of the LTA!), Broad-winged Hawk (2% of their LTA) and Merlin (just over 1/3 their LTA). Though not a record low, even TVs were less abundant than 'normal', almost 50% below their LTA. One positive: Our blue dome finder technology worked – we tied our all time low for unknown raptors!

How bad was it? 650+ raptors below our previous all time low set in 2006! Excluding the variable year to year BW numbers, 2024's 1.88 raptors/hr rate is just 40% of the 19 year average rate of 4.76/hr! Did the weather, and the persistent 'blue dome', play a role in 2024's lack of birds? 40% of our time on the hill in 2024 was under a blue dome; the blue dome plus easterly winds (8% of hill hours) produced just 31 raptors! Blue dome conditions with more friendly westerly winds, did not exhibit the same dramatic lack of birds. Ignoring wind direction, a blue dome situation represented 38% of our season; during those periods, we counted 35% of our raptors. Looking at the numbers, the easterly wind dominance is most closely connected with our poor count – 201 hrs of easterly winds yielded just 209 raptors; the 386 hours w/o an easterly component produced a count of 919 raptors. But there's another angle to the blue dome effect – it's harder to find/see those specks. And on a global scale, the cloudless sky – [blue dome condition may be increasing](#), where we hawkwatch, for as yet undetermined reasons!

Species	Turkey Vulture	Osprey	Bald Eagle	N. Harrier	Sharp-shinned Hawk	Cooper's Hawk	N. Goshawk	Red-shouldered Hawk	accipiters total	
2024	375	27	74	23	137	5	0	25	142	
2023	728	39	70	57	442	56	1	31	499	
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
19 yr total	12777	784	1174	979	8037	1691	52	472	9780	
19 yr avg.	672	41	62	52	423	89	3	25	515	
Species	Broad-winged Hawk	Red-tailed Hawk	Rough-legged Hawk	Golden Eagle	Am. Kestrel	Merlin	Peregrine Falcon	Unknown raptor	TOTAL	Total minus Broadwings
2024	26	321	10	3	17	16	14	27	1128	1102
2023	604	291	11	3	18	35	23	50	2462	1858
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
19 yr total	26242	11510	261	105	261	770	662	955	66773	40531
19 yr avg.	1381	639	15	6	15	43	37	53	3710	2252

Greene Valley Hawkwatch is now up to 194 species recorded over our 19 year history – The lone 2024 newby, 3 Forster’s Terns on 9/28

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

Some general observations:

- Monarchs were seen in small numbers well into November; we had the expected dragonfly swarm migration days – Green Darners and Black Saddlebags, primarily.
- Our faithful companions were back; Horned Larks, Am. Pipits (1st on 9/7), Lapland Longspurs (1st on 10/1) and Snow Buntings (1st on 11/6); the longspurs and buntings as usual kept us company on a daily basis in good numbers later in the season. 300+ Bobolinks put on quite a show, as they headed S on 9/20.
- We recorded our last Chimney Swift, on 10/12, 7 days earlier than last year.
- Only 4,760 Sandies flew over during the season, though on a few mid November days we saw large numbers (but uncountable) in the far distance to the east. No Whooping Cranes this year – they’re not ‘annual’ yet! Except for Ichabod, one of Frontier Air’s ‘mascot’ planes.
- On 11/9 a very late swallow passed by, likely a Tree.
- Inclement weather caused count cancellations on just 2 days (9/22 and 11/5); on 11/21 Jeff S. got ‘snowed out’ after ½ hr, so our low Count was certainly not lack of time on the hilltop!

It 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 2025! Let's put our eyes on the sky once again!

Imm. Coop – eyeing a Lapland Longspur maybe... Photo by Jeff Smith



Who you kiddin', no such thing as a Pileated Hawk!... photo: Jeff S



Osprey...photo Jeff S

One or more of our dedicated volunteer counters/observers were on the hill for 587 hours during 2024; thanks especially to the indefatigable Jeff Smith, who logged 527 hours – up almost daily, scanning, counting, then logging/entering data in real time, including eBird checklists of our non-raptor flybys. Not only that – Jeff captured some great shots of the raptors who did pass by. 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. Our GV hawkwatching team registered an aggregated 1590 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!