



Eastern Massachusetts HAWK WATCH

Annual Meeting

Friday, September 8, 2023
7:00–8:00pm

▶▶▶ Virtual Meeting! ◀◀◀

Join us online via Zoom from
the comfort of your home

Details on page 2.

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*Cooper's Hawk (adult) in Eastern
Massachusetts. Photo by Eric Smith.*

A Message from the President 2023

By Brian Rusnica

Looking back upon another tremendous year of hawkwatching in Massachusetts, I am just endlessly impressed with the effort that so many individuals have made at our count sites and in the communities that we're a part of. New horizons were reached in 2022-23, with massive big count days, exciting results at our newest site, and real, tangible impacts in our local conservation community. Eastern Mass Hawk Watch signifies to me just how well a community built around a common cause can both invigorate the mind and delight the heart.

Our spring site at Adams Farm in Athol, MA went from a 10-day test run in April 2022, to a full-fledged rock-solid hawkwatch site in

spring 2023. A community of dedicated observers have taken this experimental effort into exciting new territory, logging over 2,000 hawks in around 200 hours. Site coordinators Mark Morris and Eric Mueller have created a close-knit, dedicated community around Adams Farm, carefully negotiating the relationship with business owners, integrating cooperation with the local Athol Bird and Nature Club, and most importantly, counting a lot of great birds. Seeing a new hawkwatch site grow before our eyes is a tremendously exciting development for the club, and signals that so much is possible when dedicated individuals apply themselves. Our organization could not be more proud of the work the team has done in Athol.

Big days and big flights were abundant once again this year at our sites. Wachusett Mountain had an explosive count of over 20,000 hawks this fall, a pinnacle not reached since 2013. A simply massive day on September 21st got us nearly 8,000 Broad-wings at Wachusett, and just under 7,000 at Mount Watatic. These jaw-dropping flights passed by us in just a couple of frenetic hours, humbly reminding us all that historic events can happen in remarkably short windows during peak migration.

At Pinnacle Rock in the Middlesex Fells, more big days were logged with three separate counts of over 100 raptors, including one in late October. Over 130 Broad-winged Hawks passed by the rock, helping set a new single-season record total for this coastal fall site, and creating all-time counts for four different species!

Plum Island registered a third straight year with over 1,500 migrants. Six days broke the century mark and a seventh fell just short. Kestrels came early and late this spring - we had exactly one calendar month between our first 100-Kestrel day on April 7th, and our

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Annual Meeting

Online Conference Call via Zoom

Date & Time: **Friday, September 8th, 2023**
7:00-8:00 pm

RSVP: **Shawn Carey at scarey@avfx.com**

Keynote Presentation: ***The Massachusetts Long-eared Owl Project***
by Sean Riley, DCR

Keynote Presentation

Sean Riley will discuss the Massachusetts Long-eared Owl Project, a look at the long-term study and monitoring of Long-eared Owls in MA. Specifically, this project looks to understand the winter roosting ecology of Long-eared Owls and how certain sites are used by these birds annually. The talk will touch on overwintering demographics, banding encounter data, and also look at the current breeding status in Massachusetts.

Meeting Logistics

The Board of Directors has scheduled a Zoom meeting to be held on **Friday, September 8, 2023 from 7:00–8:00PM** in lieu of our annual in-person meeting. We hope this will be our last virtual annual meeting of the COVID-19 era and look to return our normal in-person cadence as soon as possible. To attend **you must RSVP in advance** to EMHW Vice President Shawn Carey at scarey@avfx.com to receive a special link to the Zoom meeting.

We encourage members to renew their membership and vote for three EMHW directors in advance by mail, as you will not be able to renew or vote in the Zoom meeting. (You can renew by mail at any time, but voting will close Friday, September 15th.)

This year's Zoom meeting will be free and open to the public, so



Long-eared Owl in Eastern Massachusetts.
Photo by Eric Smith.

please feel free to share this information with friends and family. However **please note you must RSVP in advance**. Those that RSVP will be sent the official Zoom invitation link before the meeting. The schedule for our Zoom meeting will be as follows:

- Waiting Room opens: 6:30PM
- Business meeting: 7:00PM – 7:15PM
- Guest Speaker Sean Riley: 7:15PM – 7:45PM
- Q&A: 7:45PM – 8:00PM

We hope you will join us and continue to support EMHW by renewing your membership.

Sincerely,
EMHW Board of Directors

Keynote Speaker

Sean Riley, Department of Conservation and Recreation

Sean Riley is a lifelong naturalist, currently residing in Georgetown, Massachusetts. He is a reservation manager for the state of Massachusetts at the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR). The reservations include designations such as: Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas (IBA), Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) and Natural Heritage Priority Habitat sites. In addition to managing the reservations, Sean is involved in a number of long-term avian research projects, both with a number of owl species and Saltmarsh Sparrows. Sean is a federally permitted Master bird bander and the station manager of the Belle Isle Marsh Education and Research Station.

At left, Sean Riley with a Long-eared Owl in Eastern Massachusetts.
Photo courtesy of Sean Riley.



Poison Is Never the Answer

The Harmful Impacts of Rodenticides on Wildlife

By Stephanie Ellis, Executive Director of Wild Care

My name is Stephanie Ellis. I am the Executive Director of Wild Care. Wild Care is a wildlife rehabilitation hospital located in Eastham, MA. Our staff team of licensed wildlife rehabilitators treat over 1,800 animals per year including wild birds, small mammals, reptiles and amphibians.

Licensed wildlife rehabilitators are on the frontlines of recognizing the impacts that wildlife face in the natural world. We share our knowledge publicly and across state and government agencies, to reduce impacts and inform systemic positive change for wildlife. Wild birds like raptors are bellwethers for environmental health, and they are sounding an alarm that is loud and clear: poison is not the answer.

What are Rodenticides?

Rodenticides refer to various types of rat and mouse poisons. The most immediately hazardous are the Second Generation Anticoagulant Rodenticides or “SGARs.” These rodenticides work by disrupting the normal blood clotting or coagulation process so that animals suffer from uncontrolled internal bleeding and hemorrhage. The United States Environmental Protection Agency determined that Second Generation Anticoagulant Rodenticide products are so harmful, that they pulled them from consumer shelves in 2014. However, SGARs are frequently utilized by licensed pest control companies as the first line of defense for rodent control. First Generation Anticoagulant Rodenticides (FGARs) are less potent, but also cause widespread death and illness in wildlife. It takes FGARs longer to reach toxic concentrations within an animal’s body. They are far from harmless, and far from humane.

A Threat to Wildlife and More

When a raptor or a mammalian predator like a fox or coyote consume mice or rats that have eaten rodenticide bait, consumption leads to secondary poisoning and eventually death. Wildlife are not the only animals at risk. Rodenticides pose an unreasonable risk to children and pets. According to the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), between 1999 and 2003; 25,549 children under the age of six had poisoning symptoms after direct exposure to rodenticides. Seventy-two percent had been exposed to an SGAR called Brodifacoum. In 2014, 50,696 dog poisonings were reported in the United States due to rodenticide exposure. Hundreds of pets needlessly die each year due to exposure to rodenticides.

We are Killing our Natural Predators

Wild Care admits dozens of birds of prey into care every year. A staggering majority of the large raptors we receive, such as Red-tailed Hawks and Great Horned Owls, arrive suffering from secondary rodenticide exposure. Raptors are some of our greatest natural defenses against rodent overpopulations. A family of Barn Owls, for example, can consume over 3,000 rodents in one breeding season. These unintentional poisonings of our birds of prey decrease our ability to control rodent populations. The irony is, we are killing our natural predators with poison.



Great Horned Owl at Wild Care of Cape Cod. Photo by Kerry Reid.

Secondary Rodenticide Poisoning - Symptoms and Treatment in Wildlife

Raptors and other wildlife suffering from secondary rodenticide poisoning frequently exhibit lethargy, dehydration, confusion, neurological symptoms, and have debilitating anemia and may exhibit blindness. In cases with significant or repeat exposure, animals will have bruising of the skin, uncontrollable bleeding and internal hemorrhage. Birds that are brought into our hospital that are suspected for secondary rodenticide exposure are treated with Vitamin K to promote blood clotting, receive hydration, supportive care, and oxygen therapy in some cases. The treatment is often a long one due to the debilitating nature of secondary poisoning. For example, a poisoned young Red-tailed Hawk that arrives at our door too weak to stand or hold up its head, with severe anemia, will receive intensive care and may be administered Vitamin K for over 30 days until symptoms resolve and the bird’s blood begins clotting normally once again. Unfortunately, not all survive.

Ethical Dilemmas

In Massachusetts, wildlife rehabilitators are required to release rehabilitated wildlife within 5 miles of the location from which it was found, or within the same county. As you can imagine, it frequently poses an ethical dilemma for my staff to release birds of prey back to the exact location from where they were poisoned, after they have recovered. However, with widespread rodenticide use at homes, schools, and local businesses, *is there really ever a safe place to release wildlife?*

Safer and More Effective Ways to Manage Rodent Populations

Rodenticides are often utilized in search of a “quick fix” to control rodents. Scientific studies have shown that the most effective way to reduce rodent populations long-term is by utilizing Integrated Pest Management (IPM). This involves eliminating attractants

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Poison Is Never the Answer *(continued from previous page)*



*Red-tailed Hawk (juvenile) at Wild Care of Cape Cod.
Photo by Kerry Reid.*

like food and water, and excluding rodents from entering dwellings. Additionally, lethal rodent control strategies that involve snap traps, electric traps, and other non-toxic methods can be implemented. All of these methods must only be used in areas where children, pets, and wildlife cannot access them.

Don't Be Scammed

When you hire a pest control company to “solve” a rodent issue, they frequently deploy rodenticides in bait boxes. These bait boxes actually *become* an attractant for rodents by providing them with a food source. Rodents typically cache their food, removing the poison bait from the boxes and eating and storing it in other locations where it may now be accessible to wildlife, pets, and children. All the while, you continue to be billed by your pest control company to replenish the bait boxes on a regular basis, perpetuating the rodent “problem” and poisoning the environment. We commonly refer to this as the “bait box scam.”

Bird Populations Do Not Need Further Setbacks

A recently published study announced the loss of over 3 billion birds in the United States in the last 50 years due to human-related and environmental impacts. These impacts include vehicle strikes, loss of habitat and fragmentation, pesticide exposure, and warming ocean temperatures. By comparison, there are an estimated 340 million people living in the United States. Imagine losing our entire human population in a short span of 50 years? We would certainly never allow this to happen. *So, why are we allowing our birds to disappear, and at such an alarming rate?*

Sobering Stats on Avian Populations

- Currently, one in four bird species is in decline in the United States.
- One in eight bird species are threatened with extinction.
- Globally, 48% of birds worldwide are undergoing population declines.
- As of 2018, research found that 52% of raptors have declining global populations.

The statistics are dire. Our birds do not need additional population setbacks due to secondary rodenticide poisoning. There are numerous safe alternatives.

Safe and Humane Rodent Control Solutions

Please visit www.wildcarecapecod.org/wildlife-assistance/humane-rodent-control-solutions/ for more information.

Closing Remarks

I have worked in this field as a licensed wildlife rehabilitator for nearly two decades. I used to see raptors grace the sky and feel a sense of joy, freedom, and beauty. After years of this work, my inner monologue has changed. I still see a beautiful bird. Additionally, I wonder how much rodenticide it has been exposed to, and when it will succumb to it. I wonder if the bird is feeding its offspring tainted prey, or if it will end up in our wildlife hospital sick and disoriented, just another sobering statistic with no end to the poisoning in sight.

It has been proven that Integrated Pest Management is a much more effective, long-term, and environmentally safe solution for controlling rodent populations. The link above includes a list of recommended rodenticide alternatives that are safe for wildlife and the environment, as well as tips for removing rodent attractants, and excluding rodents from dwellings. My hope is to put an end to the senseless poisoning. Our raptors and other wildlife depend on it.

Questions? Please contact stephanie@wildcarecapecod.org.

Bills Relative to Pesticides in MA

Please visit malegislature.gov/Events/Hearings/Detail/4520 for more information.

Letters of testimony in support of proposed rodenticide regulations can be submitted to the Joint Committee on Environmental and Natural Resources:

jointcommittee.environment@malegislature.gov. ■

Message from the President (continued from page 1)

last 100-Kestrel day on May 7th. Site coordinator Bob Secatore guided our team to reach our second highest coverage total ever at Plum Island.

As an organization, we were very excited to be able to again contribute to several local conservation causes in 2023, affirming our group's commitment to the preservation of the birds we love and their habitats. This year, we have contributed to the Northeast Connecticut Kestrel Project, Tufts Wildlife Clinic, Green Berkshires/Berkshire Bird Observatory's American Kestrel project, the Friends of Belle Isle Marsh, the Massachusetts Birds of Prey Rehab Facility, Mass Audubon's Snowy Owl Project, Wild Care of Cape Cod, and Hawk Mountain's The Broad-winged Hawk Project.

I am excited to see what the future holds for Eastern Mass Hawk Watch and am extremely proud of what our group has accomplished; both in the field and behind the scenes.

Please enjoy this year's newsletter, and let us know what you think by reaching out to the EMHW Club Officers at e.masshawkwatch@comcast.net. ■

2022-2023 Rodenticides and Raptors Update

By Brian Rusnica, EMHW President

The use of second-generation anticoagulant rodenticides (SGARs) and their impact on raptors in Massachusetts remains a topic that EMHW is closely monitoring. Leading research shows that poisoning from SGARs has the ability to decimate ecosystems, especially urban ones, and jeopardizes the long-term viability of rodent-eating species like Red-tailed Hawk, Great Horned Owl, and Barred Owl. Locally, recent years showed that even species like Bald Eagle are vulnerable to the devastating effects of rodenticides. Below, we've summarized some of the developments in the fight against SGARs in Massachusetts since our last newsletter, and steps you can take to get involved.

June 17th, 2022 - *Three Great Horned Owls (Adult Female + 2 Chicks) found dead of suspected rodenticide poison in Arlington's Menotomy Rocks Park*

A family of Great Horned Owls made local headlines when a mother and two chicks turned up dead simultaneously in Arlington at a local park. Tests were not conducted but reported evidence was consistent with rodenticide poisoning.

September 14th, 2022 - *Broad-winged Hawk treated for rodenticide poisoning at Wild Care*

Wild Care Cape Cod treated a juvenile Broad-winged Hawk, found on the ground in Orleans. The team discovered the bird showed exposure to rodenticides, demonstrating that even migrant, non-urban species like this are not immune to the hazards in our local environments.

November 15th, 2022 - *Somerville's SMART program shows promising results; Brookline next*

Somerville's innovative use of Anticimex SMART rat traps led to the elimination of 1,050 rats in its 50-box pilot. The traps use electricity to kill rats without the use of poisons and also provide data to officials. The town of Brookline announced a similar program would be coming soon.

December 4th, 2022 - *Fourth Owl found dead of suspected poisoning in Arlington*

Another adult female Great Horned Owl was found incapacitated in Arlington, but died on the way to a care facility with symptoms consistent with SGAR-poisoning. The incident cast further local attention on the rodenticide issue in the community.

January 4th, 2023 - *Arlington bans SGARs on town property*

An Arlington Town Meeting approved a bylaw that prohibits the use of SGARs on town-owned or managed land. The ban does not apply to SGARs being used on private property, although the Town requested the ability from the state to extend this ban. The H.804 bill remains in a pending status in the state government.

February 22nd, 2023 - *Barred Owl in Faneuil Hall rescued, treated at Cape Ann Wildlife and released*

Regional headlines were made again when a team of wildlife rehabbers captured and treated a Barred Owl in Boston's Faneuil Hall district, after it displayed behavior consistent with poisoning. The owl earned the nickname "Owen", and despite losing an eye due to the encounter with rodenticides, was returned to the wild

later in April.

February 27th, 2023 - *Bald Eagle "MK" taken in by local rehabbers*

After showing worrisome behavioral symptoms for several days, local rehabbers in Arlington intervened to try and save an adult female Bald Eagle, nicknamed "MK" thanks to her identifying leg band. MK's chick "C25" died of rodenticide poisoning in July 2021, with cause of death confirmed by the Tufts Wildlife Clinic.

March 1st, 2023 - *MK dies at New England Wildlife Center rehab in Cape Cod*

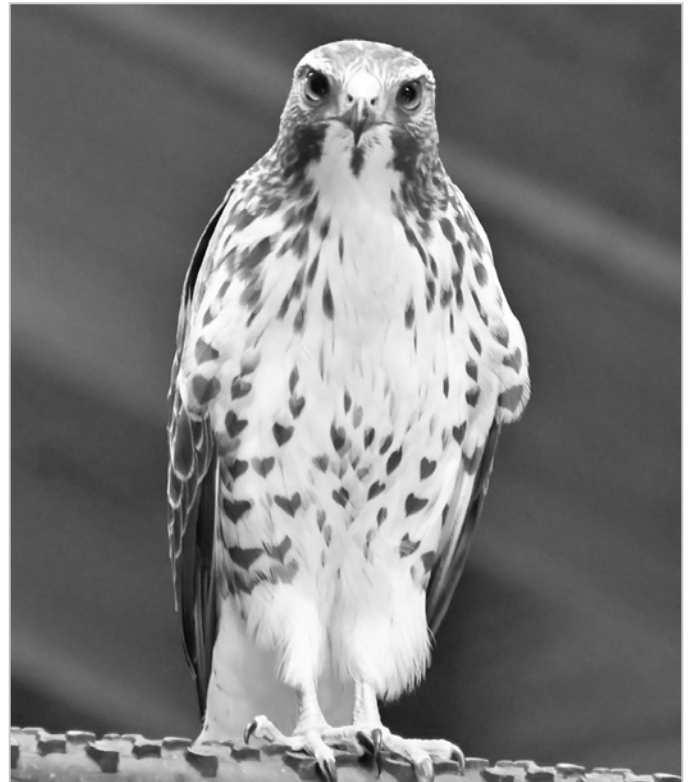
Despite intense efforts by the Cape Cod branch of the New England Wildlife Center to save the Bald Eagle MK - the poisoning damage was too extensive and the eagle could not be saved. A vigil in Arlington was organized the next day and was attended by approximately 400 people.

May 10th, 2023 - *Hearing of The Joint Committee on Environment and Natural Resources*

A state hearing allowed concerned citizens, local officials, and subject matter experts to provide testimony in favor of the Hawkins/Feeney bill which would help regulate the usage of SGARs in the state. The testimony was recorded and can be watched on the state website. Next steps for the bill are a vote by the committee which is expected soon.

Citizen Action - 2023 Update:

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*Broad-winged Hawk (juvenile) at Wild Care of Cape Cod.
Photo by Kerry Reid.*

Conserving American Kestrels in Berkshire County

Catching up with Ben Nickley of the Berkshire Bird Observatory

By Brian Rusnica, President, EMHW

One of EMHW's newest conservation project sponsorships is with the Berkshire Bird Observatory and their parent organization, Green Berkshires. Director Ben Nickley leads the BBO's conservation efforts, monitoring both breeding and migratory birds throughout the South Taconic Mountains. This year, the BBO's American Kestrel nest box project is in full swing. With the help of a team of volunteers, the BBO now boasts a sizable collection of 23 nest boxes across prime habitat on a variety of state and town lands, protected organic farms, and select wildlife management areas.

The BBO Kestrel project is in just its second season. Ben started the work in 2022 as a side venture apart from his full-time focus of songbird banding and research at Jug End State Reservation. The idea was sparked by Art Gingert, a conservationist who Ben says has been "an ambassador for Kestrels for decades in Connecticut." Art has worked with the Sharon Audubon Center to place dozens of Kestrel nest boxes all over the state. Being just over the border in southwestern Massachusetts, Ben connected with Art and received advice and valuable contacts. Ben worked with State Ornithologist Dr. Drew Vitz, MassWildlife, and enlisted help from a team including John Tower, Ben Barrett and Carl Nelson to stock the project with boxes. Nelson has been building Kestrel boxes for MassWildlife for years. By the end of the spring, the first BBO boxes were up and running. That initial breeding season saw early success: 13 Kestrels fledged from three occupied boxes.

One thing that Ben really appreciates about the Kestrel project is the "tangible conservation results. You are contributing to local and regional populations, with results that you can see and touch." Those real results drive human connection and have tremendous potential to further outreach and education as the project expands. When the Kestrel chicks reach a certain size, they are banded by Ben with an aluminum USGS band. This enters the birds into the national tracking database where their data can be recorded throughout their lives. Ben notes that volunteers are especially ecstatic to experience the banding



*American Kestrel (adult male) in Berkshire County, MA.
Photo by Ben Nickley.*



*American Kestrel (nestlings) in Berkshire County, MA.
Photo by Ben Nickley.*

process: "Who doesn't want to see a baby Kestrel in their hands?"

The project aims to help stabilize the declining American Kestrel population, but Ben is also interested in learning what happens to the birds that breed in the area. "It's a really interesting question to think about - where do the birds that fledge from our boxes end up? Do they stick around in our region? Will they come back and use our other boxes in the future?" Over time, Ben hopes to grow the project with a short-term goal of 30-35 total nest boxes. With enough data, Ben aims to "eventually do our own local analyses and try to understand what's going on with the birds in our region. We hope to increase box occupancy, and learn about what features in the landscape are productive for Kestrels."

The BBO project shares a common bond with EMHW, as both organizations contribute their datasets to national efforts. Ben notes, "we share our data as part of the American Kestrel Partnership under the Peregrine Fund. All of our data goes up to them for continental-scale analysis. Contributing to the bigger data set informs conservation and helps us understand declines both regionally and on a larger scale."

Ultimately, the reason why Ben dedicates so much time and passion to the project is his fondness towards the species. "The birds are the reason behind it...they're inspiring birds - just amazing pocket falcons." Ben shared a serendipitous moment during a songbird banding session last spring that brought things full circle for him. While he had banded thousands of songbirds, he was shocked to see that an American Kestrel, a male, had wandered into one of his Taconic Mountain mist nets.

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A Rookie Season to Remember

Catching up with Harry Wales, Official Counter at Quaker Ridge Hawk Watch

By Brian Rusnica, President, EMHW

In September, hawkwatchers eagerly refresh the Hawkcount. Org website, waiting for counts to roll in from the regional sites. On September 16th of last year, the Quaker Ridge hawkwatch report surely shocked many watchers. The Greenwich, CT site had an astounding 15,131 migrant raptors - a single-day number not seen in close to a decade in New England. Making that news even more exciting was knowing that Harry Wales was the official counter that day - a name and face well known to the EMHW family.

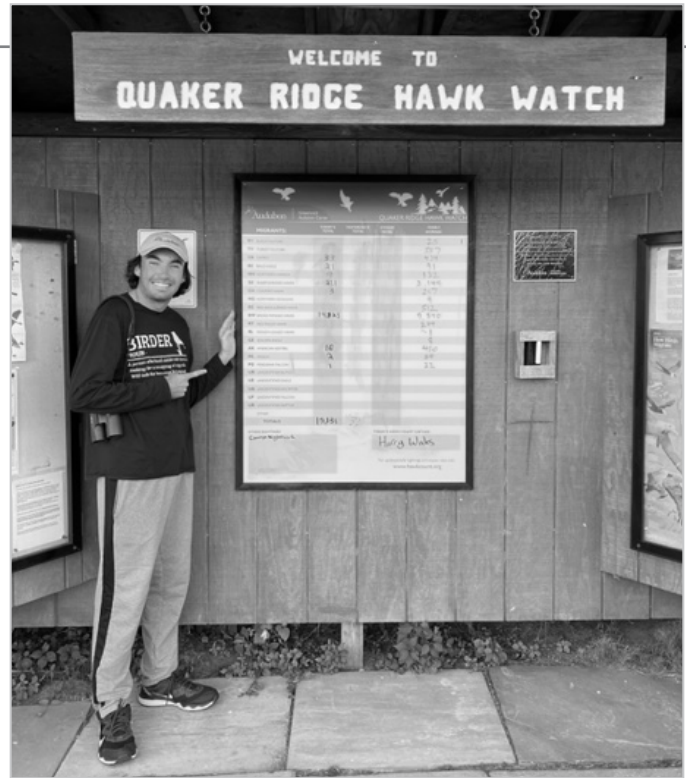
Harry began birding at a young age, starting up the hobby with his dad, Herrick. Harry recalls that a Rough-legged Hawk was his “spark bird” that really got him going: “One thing led to another, and I got obsessed with birds: I loved getting out, observing the behavioral clues with different species, learning migration and flight patterns.” Harry remembers his formative first hawkwatch too - a “good Plum Island day” of 200-300 migrants when he was in 8th grade.

Over his young adult years, Harry became a regular fixture at the Plum Island watch, and also traveled to Wachusett Mountain in the fall. Hawkwatching became more of a passion, something even worth missing school for, if the winds were right. At the EMHW sites, Harry learned from counters like Paul Roberts, Bob Secatore, and a host of other observers and was often commended for his “young eyes” and ability to quickly pick up birds at great distance.

It wasn't long before Harry became an extremely formidable general birder. Yet birding and the natural world ended up being more than just a hobby - Harry attended the University of New England as an Environmental Studies major, graduated in 2022, and landed his first counting position at Quaker Ridge through the Greenwich Audubon Center last fall.

As the season began, Harry felt “extremely honored, excited, and nervous.” He recalls the first migrant counted in August was an Osprey, and things were quickly off and running. Just a few weeks into the campaign, the massive September 16th flight broke loose. The day was “pure chaos” according to Harry. During an early walkaround, he noticed Broad-wing kettles forming immediately: “The birds were already moving and I thought this could be really big.” The morning count was a stunning 3,000 birds - and many, many more were on the way. Observers found kettle after kettle, including a single group Harry estimated at an enormous 1,100 birds. While he gauges that many hawks may have been missed in the chaotic flight, the final count ended with over 15,000 raptors - an unforgettable day.

As the weather got colder, Harry still turned up huge days and special birds. On October 28th, he counted 532 Red-shouldered



Harry Wales at the Quaker Ridge Hawkwatch, Greenwich, CT.

Hawks - a single-day site record and one of the highest migrant flights ever recorded of this species in the east. That same day broke the site record for Cooper's Hawk (115) and Turkey Vulture (391) as well. He even managed to squeeze in two Swainson's Hawks along the way. All told, records were set for four species at Quaker Ridge (Red-shouldered Hawk, Cooper's Hawk, Bald Eagle and Turkey Vulture). The final count of 35,405 birds was the largest in almost 30 years.

As for what's next for Harry - he hopes to enter a Master's program where he can further examine the relationship between climate change and bird populations. But first - another season at Quaker Ridge in fall 2023. While last year will be hard to repeat, Harry is still excited: “I love counting hawks - I'm a numbers guy. I really enjoy looking at totals and racking up the season numbers.”

While Harry grew up at Eastern Mass Hawk Watch sites - his future in birding and conservation will surely take him around the globe. Bucket list hawkwatch sites he wants to visit include “Corpus Christi in Texas, Cape May in New Jersey, Hawk Ridge in Minnesota, and Vera Cruz in Mexico.” Even though it may take a while, he's OK with that: “I'll be an old man and I'll still be counting somewhere.” ■

Conserving American Kestrels in Berkshire County *(continued from previous page)*

It would be the first Kestrel he had ever handled. As he untangled the bird to inspect it, he noticed it was banded. Checking the band number in the database, he was stunned to find this male to be one of Art Gingert's birds that had traveled in from Connecticut. It was inarguable evidence that Art's efforts were showing expansive results, and Ben felt the inspiration to carry on that mission and push it even further. The BBO Kestrel nest box project hopes to pass on that same inspiration to everyone who learns about their Kestrels, all while providing real, tangible conservation results for our region. ■

Raising Monarch Butterflies

By Ursula Goodine, Past President and EMHW Member

Since 2008, I have been submitting articles about Peregrine Falcons to the EMHW Annual Newsletter. This year, I have decided to write about my involvement in raising Monarch Butterflies (*Danaus plexippus*), as this insect is on the brink of becoming an endangered species and will be considered for placement on the Federal list beginning in 2024.

My adventure with Monarchs began in 2014, when a friend asked me to join her in searching for Monarch Butterfly eggs. What? Curiosity led us to inspect the Common Milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*) plants nearby, and we did find many eggs underneath the leaves. Since she had been doing this annually, I asked if I could help by taking some of the eggs

home with me. Instructions were given about each step in the process, to hatch the eggs, feed the caterpillars, and house them as they begin their metamorphosis. Not having done anything like this before, I found the project fascinating. Monarchs arrive here around July 7th, so eggs are harvested immediately, as sequentially arriving females continue to deposit eggs until late August.

When discovering an egg, the entire leaf is removed, and a water moistened 1" paper towel square is placed on the stem, to keep it from drying out. All leaves go into cups with a bit of water, and remain there for 3-4 days, until each egg hatches. The tiny caterpillar is placed on a new leaf, which it voraciously begins to eat. Since we didn't have any milkweed plants, frequent visits to a local pond were necessary to harvest more leaves. As the captives grew, they were placed in covered plastic containers to prevent escape. Keeping these critters fed was labor intensive, but I was committed. Just like human babies, all they did was eat, sleep and poop! Each caterpillar molts their exoskeleton 4 times, and between each molt is called an "instar". Frequently cleaning their containers lined with paper towels, was necessary to keep them healthy and very time consuming.

Once the larvae are 2" long, I place them in what I call "big boy tents", which were bought on line. These butterfly cages have a zippered vinyl top and solid bottom, with netted sides upon

which they crawl. Large branches of milkweed plants in water jars, provide the food necessary to prepare them for the next stage, "pupation". It normally takes two weeks for this to occur. The larva will then seek a place on the top of the cage and spin a silken button from which to suspend in a "j" shape, as it prepares

to shed its final exoskeleton. This all occurs before developing into a chrysalis. Once this is accomplished, my job is essentially done, as they no longer feed, but will be suspended for two weeks before emerging as a Monarch Butterfly. The entire metamorphosis takes approximately four weeks, which I find to be a truly miraculous transformation. Every day, I take tallies, and one day



*Monarch (Danaus plexippus) in Herndon, Virginia.
Photo by Judy Gallagher via Flickr.*

counted 17 eggs, 58 caterpillars, and 87 chrysalides, with a season release total of 237 Monarch Butterflies, which accounts for my dining room table being full of containers. Not too shabby!

However, there can be life threatening problems encountered, when "Black Death" (Nuclear polyhedrosis virus), rears its ugly head and kills the larva, no matter what stage it is in. Once detected, this horror necessitates bleaching all of the containers, utensils, and everything that has come in contact with any of the larvae/chrysalides. More work! This contagious virus can either be found in the soil, or carried by adult Monarchs, and is easily transmitted to others in various stages of development. Although serious, thankfully, only a small number succumb.

Significantly, national hawkwatch site coordinators enter counts of Monarchs in their Hawkcount databases, which are then reported by HMANA to biologists at Georgetown University for scientific trend analysis. Hopefully, what I and fellow Monarch enthusiasts do to bolster their numbers, is meaningful.

One of the joys of raising Monarchs is having neighborhood children visit to see this magical metamorphosis. A friend, who has a Pre-school Daycare, also brings her group by, as I show them the cycles of growth, and they delight when it is time for a Monarch's release. The looks on their smiling faces are precious, as they all chant "Bye, bye butterfly!" Can anything be better than that? ■

Northeast Connecticut Kestrel Project - 2023 Breeding Season

By Tom Sayers, Northeast Connecticut Kestrel Project

While it is still too early to provide definitive results of breeding and fledging success for the 2023 season, I can provide the information of what I know to be true as of now.

- Number of occupied boxes for the season = 49
- Number of young banded to date = 127
 - This number will increase by approximately 55 once all banding is completed.
- Number of adults banded for the first time = 10
- Number of recaptured (previously banded) birds = 23
 - This number will increase by approximately 5 once all banding is completed.

In June, I banded my 2000th American Kestrel. That number includes both adults and young that have been banded since I began in 2010.

Thank you again,
Tom Sayers

Northeast Connecticut Kestrel Project ■



American Kestrel (adult female) at Parker River NWR, Plum Island, MA. Photo by Brian Rusnica.

2022-2023 Treasurer's Report By Lynette Leka, EMHW Treasurer

Beginning Balance (7/1/2022) \$ 13,007.98 - 137 paid memberships

Income		Expenses	
	Memberships	3,565.00	
	Donations	761.00	
	Raffle	0.00	
	Car Magnet Sales	75.00	
	Silhouette, Mug sales	0.00	
		Annual Meeting	Speaker Fee/ -300.00
			Hall Rental 150.00
			Refreshments 0.00

		Annual Meeting Total	(300.00)
		Newsletters	Production -200.00
			Printing -471.75
			Mailing -194.40

		Newsletters Total	(866.15)
		Funding	HMANA -300.00
			Green Berkshires Kestrel -250.00
			Tufts Wildlife Clinic -250.00
			Massachusetts Bird of Prey Rehab -250.00
			Wild Care, Inc. -250.00
			Hawk Mountain Broadwing Project -250.00
			Friends of Belle Isle Marsh -250.00
			Snowy Owl Project -250.00
			Northeast Connecticut Kestrel Project -1,000.00

		Funding Total	(3,050.00)
		P.O. Box Rental	-216.00
		Printing Expense	-329.71
		Miscellaneous	-6.00

		Total Expenses	(4,767.86)

Ending Balance (6/30/2023) \$ 12,640.12 - 134 paid memberships

The Broad-winged Hawk Project: 2023 Update

By Brian Rusnica, President, EMHW

Researchers from Hawk Mountain continued gathering fascinating data from **The Broad-winged Hawk Project** during the 2022-23 Broad-wing migration season. Satellite and GPS/GSM telemetry allowed both researchers and the general public the ability to look in on the migration paths of several birds from New England as they made their way to Central and South America and back.

Broad-winged Hawks continue to show reported declines in breeding bird surveys and migration counts at hawkwatches. The project, started in 2014, aims to provide a full life cycle view of Broad-wings, tracking and studying them from breeding season into migration.

As of the end of the 2022 season, the team has recorded full data cycles from 25 tracked Broad-wing individuals, with five of them coming from New Hampshire and three from Connecticut. The fall 2022 migration had 11 individuals actively transmitting on their migratory routes, which lasted between 80 and 100 days and spanned across 10 different Central/South American countries.

In general, Broad-wings studied by the project show strong site fidelity and often return to the same breeding and wintering areas as previous years. An adult female from Connecticut, nicknamed “Frankie”, spent her offseason in Costa Rica two years in a row, residing in the exact same patch of a palm oil plantation. Another Connecticut adult female, nicknamed “CU HOME”, spent the winter in Colombia near the Venezuelan border for the second straight year. CU HOME is one of the few birds in the project that travels east after crossing the Isthmus of Panama.

An Ontario female nicknamed “Hugger” made an interesting stopover in a large park near Guatemala City - the country’s largest city with a metro population of around 3 million people. It’s interesting how we think of Broad-wings as a raptor that avoids urban areas in the United States - but with data from the project, we can see that they will comfortably use habitat in cities if needed.



Broad-winged Hawk (juvenile) at Wachusett Mountain, Princeton, MA. Photo by Eric Mueller.

Dr. Rebecca McCabe, during a recent Lunch and Learn Session with HMANA (Hawk Migration Association of North America), remarked that deforestation in Broad-winged Hawk wintering grounds has the ability to negatively impact hawks. Data from the project is being shared with conservation organizations with the goal of preserving key habitat when possible.

For the 2023 fall migration, the project hopes to add additional hawks to the roster from Vermont and Quebec. They also look to gather more evidence of pre-migratory movement in Broad-wings; birds that move north before their very long southward journeys. Tracked birds have been shown to disperse north for up to a month before heading south, and traveling up to 300 miles out of the way! The phenomenon continues to surprise the researchers.

To follow along with the fall migration, check out the below links from The Broad-winged Hawk Project and their Bird Tracker, which will go live in late August.

Hawk Mountain’s Bird Tracker

- hawkmountain.org/birdtracker

The Broad-winged Hawk Project on Facebook:

- facebook.com/TheBroadwingProject ■

2022-2023 Rodenticides and Raptors Update *(continued from page 5)*

Citizen Action - 2023 Update:

- Find your State Legislator: www.malegislature.gov/search/findmylegislator
- Ask your Legislator to support the relevant bills:
 - **H.825** - House Bill 825 “An Act Relative to Pesticides” from Rep. James Hawkins
 - **S.487** - Senate Bill 487 “An Act Relative to Pesticides” from Sen. Paul Feeney
 - **S.540** - Senate Bill 540 “An Act empowering towns and cities to protect residents and the environment from harmful pesticides” from Sen. Susan Moran
 - **H.814** - House Bill 814 “An Act empowering towns and cities to protect residents and the environment from harmful pesticides” from Rep. Carmine Gentile

- **H.804** - House Bill 804 “An Act authorizing the town of Arlington to prohibit use of second generation anticoagulant rodenticides by commercial pesticide applicators” - Home Rule Petition

Organizations to Join:

- Animal Legal Defense Fund: www.aldf.org
- Raptors Are The Solution: www.raptorsarethesolution.org
- Save Arlington Wildlife: www.savearlingtonwildlife.org

Support Organizations that treat sick and injured wildlife

- Tufts Wildlife Clinic: vet.tufts.edu/tufts-wildlife-clinic
- Wild Care of Cape Cod: www.wildcarecapecod.org
- New England Wildlife Center: www.newwildlife.org
- Massachusetts Birds of Prey Rehabilitation Center ■

**WACHUSETT MOUNTAIN
HAWK WATCH**

Fall 2022 Season Totals

Total Number of Days	76
Total Number of Hours	422.75
Black Vulture	4
Turkey Vulture	1,078
Osprey	200
Bald Eagle	303
Northern Harrier	52
Sharp-shinned Hawk	486
Cooper's Hawk	207
Northern Goshawk	0
Red-shouldered Hawk	125
Broad-winged Hawk	17,974
Red-tailed Hawk	193
Rough-legged Hawk	1
Golden Eagle	5
American Kestrel	149
Merlin	54
Peregrine Falcon	26
Unidentified Accipiter	52
Unidentified Buteo	52
Unidentified Falcon	10
Unidentified Raptor	148
Total	21,119

Celebrating 20,000 raptors at Wachusett Mountain, Princeton, MA. Photo courtesy of Eric Mueller.



Wachusett Mountain - Fall 2022

By Eric Mueller, Site Co-coordinator and EMHW Director

When I'm asked how the fall 2022 hawkwatch season on Wachusett Mountain went, the first word that comes to mind is "spectacular!" After several years of below-average results, we counted 21,119 migrating raptors this fall, more than double our 47-year average of around 10,000 birds per season, and the 5th highest total ever here. Although we had plenty of weather issues in the middle of the Broad-wing migration again this year (9 days of poor or challenging weather from September 13 to 30,) the bad weather often seemed to hold back the flights rather than leading them west of us, and each time it cleared, the birds came through our site in droves. We had 5 days of 1,000 or more birds each, with a high point of 7,908 birds on Sept. 21.

The season started slowly (in spite of my overly enthusiastic starting day of Aug. 12) and we didn't have a 100+ bird day until Sept. 12. By this time, the Putney Mountain site in Vermont had already had 4 days of 300-800 birds, and I began to worry that the Broad-wings were going to move west of us as they did last year. However on Sept. 14, the tip of the migration finally reached us, and we had counts of 216, 986, 2,202 and 2,015 birds over the next few days. With bad weather breaks interrupting the flow, the daily counts ran either very hot or very cold until Sept. 30 when the last big flights of Broad-wings moved through. We counted only 6 more "-wings" in all of October. In October, the flights of Turkey Vultures dominated the count, with nice numbers of Bald Eagles, as well as Red-tailed, Red-shouldered, Sharp-shinned and Cooper's Hawks.

Looking back on the season, five days stick out in my mind, for one reason or another:

Sept. 16 – Our first 1,000+ bird day of the year (we had just missed that mark the day before with a count of 986.) The day started slowly with a big shelf of clouds that blocked the sun all the way up into southern NH, but as the clouds began to move south just before noon, the Broad-wings began to move through in normal-sized kettles. Then about 1:45 PM, a huge kettle of 500+ birds formed far to the east of us. It split up and a group of about 250 birds came straight for us. As they approached, Ursula Goodine exclaimed that it looked like an armada of birds were coming at us. Suddenly they were right over us and around us, many of them no more than 50 to 100 feet above the summit, flying past us so fast that it was hard to concentrate on any one bird. Then just as suddenly, they were gone, and we sat there stunned and amazed. As the spell broke, we started cheering and applauding. We realized that we had just seen something incredible, probably a once in a lifetime experience. 2,202 birds for the day.

Sept. 21 – After 3 days of fog and rain, I told everyone that we could be in for a good day. But the day started with low clouds around us, and in the first 3 hours, we only counted 40 birds. I was waiting for comments about my forecasting abilities to start bubbling up, but just before noon, the Broad-wings began kettling and streaming past us in force. Big kettles came in waves, constantly breaking up and reforming, and even under the low ceiling, we could sometimes see multiple kettles in a single thermal. In only 90 minutes, around 7,800 birds swarmed past us. It was the largest number of raptors that I had ever seen in a single day, never mind in just 90 minutes. Paul Roberts notes that this day's total of 7,980 birds was the 11th largest daily hawk flight at Wachusett ever, and the 17th largest recorded by EMHW.

Sept. 30 – We were having a good, active day for late September (200+ birds by 12:30) when Steve Farrell noticed a kettle of 70+ Broad-wings that had sneaked past us up by the sun. Nice find! But after 2 subsequent hours of inactivity, we assumed that his sighting was going to be the highlight of the day. By 2:30 pm, everyone had left except four of us. Then as Jean Hampel was scanning to the north around Joe English Hill, she saw a huge kettle of approximately 500 birds rising up. Everyone

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Mount Watatic - Fall 2022

By Brian Rusnica, Site Coordinator and EMHW President

The 2022 fall hawkwatch season at Mount Watatic held one of the largest single-day flights in recent memory, helping contribute to our best season since 2010. A most memorable September reminded us to expect the unexpected and be sure not to blink!

Hawkwatchers logged 95.75 hours over 16 days of coverage at Watatic in 2022; somewhat down from previous years due to three total rainout days during mid-September. The season total of 9,332 raptors was a “personal record” in my 8 seasons of counting, and the best flight in over a decade at Watatic. We approached a formidable 100 hawks per hour average over the season; a feat achieved only six times at Watatic since formal counting began in the 80s. This year, I also experimented with the Trektellen migration tracking software, allowing us to stream real-time count numbers via a tablet to Hawkcount.org as they happened.

The success of our season came down to a single day - September 21st - and within that day, even just a couple of wild, fateful hours. That particular Wednesday’s weather did not seem prototypical for big numbers - we had overcast conditions with a low ceiling and very light NW winds. However, on our side were two preceding days of rain and fog, meaning the regular migrant movement was dammed up and waiting to overflow. After a solid but unspectacular morning, we started seeing repeated distant kettles appearing to our northeast, just after 12 noon. The groups grew in size from 50, to 200, to 300, and eventually a massive merging of multiple kettles created a 500-bird swarm that was dense, wider than it was tall, and chock full of Broad-wings. We continued to pick out larger and larger groups all along the far horizon, scoping huge streams behind swaying columns of hawks. Eventually Tom Pirro worked out a single scan of 1,000 Broad-wings running from east to northeast; a literal wall of hawks that left us nearly speechless. From 12 p.m. to 2 p.m. EDT, we observed a gargantuan migratory event that totalled over 6,000 Broad-wings - the largest such single-day event at Watatic in over 20 years. The final day’s tally landed at 6,774 migrant raptors.

In terms of migratory species, we logged our 3rd consecutive year of 100+ Bald Eagles with 110. A very special sight was observed on 9/25, when eight Bald Eagles, all immature or juvenile, kettled up above the southwest corner of the summit, well within naked eye view.

Two Black Vultures were logged in 2023; our second consecutive year with two, thus bringing our all-time total to five. Visitor Valerie Burdette scoped an impressive 98 Turkey Vultures in a single scan, all rising from a local roost to the east on 9/11. Dan Rossman made it out for two days in October, and during his count on 10/2, logged an immature Northern Goshawk and had a long, satisfying look at a Golden Eagle! The Goshawk represents our first since 2019 and the Golden was just our second in the past 12 seasons. We had multiple days hearing Barred Owls and I was lucky enough to walk right under one on an early hike near the beaver pond at the trailhead.

Fun non-raptor moments included a flock of 9 American Pipits on 9/17, a Cape May Warbler on 9/10 and a Wild Turkey scoped from the summit somewhere below in Ashby on a particularly slow count day.

Please reach out if you are interested in contributing to the Watatic count this coming September! ■

Broad-winged Hawk (juvenile) at Mount Watatic, Ashburnham, MA. Photo by Brian Rusnica.

MOUNT WATATIC HAWK WATCH

Fall 2022 Season Totals

Total Number of Days	16
Total Number of Hours	95.75
Black Vulture	2
Turkey Vulture	44
Osprey	54
Bald Eagle	110
Northern Harrier	12
Sharp-shinned Hawk	232
Cooper’s Hawk	46
Northern Goshawk	1
Red-shouldered Hawk	4
Broad-winged Hawk	8,745
Red-tailed Hawk	4
Rough-legged Hawk	0
Golden Eagle	1
American Kestrel	44
Merlin	8
Peregrine Falcon	3
Unidentified Accipiter	2
Unidentified Buteo	3
Unidentified Falcon	1
Unidentified Raptor	16
TOTAL	9,332



**PINNACLE ROCK
HAWK WATCH**

Fall 2022 Season Totals

Total Number of Days	33
Total Number of Hours	256
Black Vulture	0
Turkey Vulture	27
Osprey	29
Bald Eagle	27
Northern Harrier	11
Sharp-shinned Hawk	222
Cooper's Hawk	77
Northern Goshawk	0
Red-shouldered Hawk	5
Broad-winged Hawk	139
Red-tailed Hawk	61
Rough-legged Hawk	0
Golden Eagle	1
American Kestrel	25
Merlin	9
Peregrine Falcon	6
Unidentified Accipiter	16
Unidentified Buteo	4
Unidentified Falcon	5
Unidentified Raptor	33
Total	697

Pinnacle Rock - Fall 2022

By Craig Jackson, Site Coordinator and EMHW Member

This past fall we set a new seasonal record for the total number of migrating hawks, besting the previous record (1999) by 50 birds. While Sharp-shinned Hawks again gained top spot, they were not the reason we did so well. If last year's count could facetiously be called the "Year of the Dragonfly," this year was definitely the "Year of the Broad-winged Hawk." Not only did we see more than double our previous high seasonal count of 52, on two days — September 23 & 24 — our daily count on both days was higher than our previous seasonal high (60 & 55 birds, respectively). On both days the Broad-wings were not soaring and gliding per their usual flight behavior. Instead they were using powered flight, flying in front of, over, and behind the Rock.

We also set seasonal records for four other species — Bald Eagle, Cooper's Hawk, Red-shouldered Hawk, and Red-tailed Hawk. In addition to the new daily record for Broad-winged Hawk, we also set a daily record for Bald Eagle this year. Finally, to top off this record-setting year, we saw only our fifth Golden Eagle, an immature bird, on November 12.

At the end of September, thanks primarily to the Broad-wing counts of Sept. 23 & 24, which contributed to total counts of 114 and 111 raptors respectively, our total count was already the sixth highest at this site. Not having had a large movement of Sharp-shinned Hawks, which mostly come through in early October, we were very optimistic about having a big year. However, by October 23 we had only seen 40 more Sharp-shinned Hawks, and though our total count of 456 hawks was now our third highest, we were afraid we had missed the big Sharp-shinned flights, which had probably migrated west of us.

That all changed on October 27. When I got to the Rock at 8:00 AM the winds were strong from the WNW, and I was hopeful that there may still be some birds "in the pipeline." That first hour I saw two Sharp-shinned Hawks, and when the winds shifted to the northwest, in the next hour I saw seven Sharp-shinned Hawks, one Red-tailed Hawk, and one American Kestrel. Jack Miano and Fred Palmer both arrived in the next hour, and helped me count for the next six hours. At the end of the day, we had counted a total of 53 Sharp-shinned Hawks, set a new daily record for Bald Eagle (10), and our total count for the day (128) was our highest of the season. When we saw a migrating Sharp-shinned Hawk at 1:40 PM, we briefly celebrated our 548th bird of the season, making this the second best season at Pinnacle Rock. By the time Fred and I left the Rock at 4:30 PM, our total seasonal count was now 584 birds, 63 birds less than our best season. That number still seemed unreachable, but 600 birds became our new target. Two days later, on October 29, Jack and I saw our 600th bird at 10:45, fittingly another migrating Sharp-shinned Hawk.

Going into November we had seen 608 migrating raptors, 39 birds short of the seasonal high of 647 birds seen in 1999. However, November is generally the month with the fewest raptors at this site, so our chances of setting a new record seemed dim. A relatively high count of 19 birds on November 2 (with 8 Red-tails) buoyed our hopes and desire to set a new record. On November 7 as I approached our record number, I called Jack and urged him to come and set the record with me. Prior to his arrival, a Cooper's Hawk flew right over the Rock, the 647th bird of the season, tying our all-time high. Fortunately, Jack arrived a short time later and at 1:20 PM we saw and celebrated together our record migrating raptor, once more fittingly a Sharp-shinned Hawk, and our next-to-last migrating raptor that day.

Craig Jackson at the Pinnacle Rock Hawkwatch, Malden, MA.

Continued on page 17 ▶



Adams Farm (Athol, MA) - Spring 2023

By Mark D. Morris, Site Co-Coordinator and EMHW Member

The official dates for this season's hawkwatch at Adams Farm were set to be March 20 to May 7, but for Eric Mueller, Chris Eddy and myself, it really started on March 8.

That evening, the three of us gave a presentation about hawk migration at the Athol Bird and Nature Club (ABNC). The purpose was to raise awareness of and create local interest and participation in this hawkwatch in the ranks of the club and beyond. This turned out to be an excellent decision as David Small (President of ABNC for the past 40 years), Jeff Johnstone, Ernie LeBlanc and many others joined forces with Eastern Mass Hawk Watch (EMHW) members to create a formidable team of spotters that accounted for over 2,300 migrating raptors this spring! We also viewed a smorgasbord of local eagles, vultures, hawks and falcons that kept us all entertained as we watched for the migrants.

On the opening day of this season's hawkwatch, we were treated to an excellent start with 47 migrants, including 7 Sharp-shinned Hawks. The crew was able to identify nine different raptor species along with scads of Ravens, Common Crows, and a Fish Crow. Adams Farm has proven to be not only an excellent platform from which to spot migrating birds and raptors, but equally as good as a place to observe raptor behavior and test everyone's identification skills of immature, mature and molting birds.

Highlights in early April included Chris Eddy and me getting a thrilling close look at a Gray Ghost Northern Harrier that appeared just over the solar array to our left! He subsequently rose and joined forces with a Sharp-shinned Hawk and headed north...what a spectacular bird! April 6th saw our first (and early) single Broad-winged Hawk. And earlier that morning, appearing out of the fog from the south, a genuine Sandhill Crane flew by, just over the treetops. This would be the first of three Sandhills recorded on the count this spring.

April 18th was an awesome day to be a hawkwatcher. Eric Mueller and I pulled into the parking lot at the farm around the usual start time of 8:30am. We started our normal routines of grabbing gear and layering up for the day when I looked up and spotted three Broad-winged Hawks migrating under the cloud deck. The birds were moving early! We started texting and emailing other members of the hawkwatch as the internet came alive with reports of large groups of Broad-wings on the move in various places around the state. Soon, the crew showed up to witness big streams and kettles of migrating hawks. Everyone there was treated to a show, as no one amongst us had ever seen such large groups in the spring. The Broad-wings were not the only players that day as we had 18 Sharp-shinned Hawks, 7 Osprey, and 3 Merlin as well, with a final tally of 605 migrating raptors for the day.

April 24th was another exciting and rewarding day. At about noon, Broad-wings started getting up and moving north; singles and doubles to start, and then a kettle of sixteen. The flood gates opened after that as Joanne Hart (easily our best spotter this spring), Jeff Johnstone, and I watched a "river of hawks" develop over the cell tower just east of the farm store. I had Joanne focus her binoculars over the cell tower and just start counting while I logged the data. In a one-hour period, between 12:08 and 1:08 PM we had 487 Broad-wings come through! There were other raptors migrating in this "river" at the same height and direction, including Bald Eagles and Osprey, for a total of 544 birds.

Continued on page 18 >

ADAMS FARM HAWK WATCH

Spring 2023 Season Totals

Total Number of Days	39
Total Number of Hours	208.25
Black Vulture	0
Turkey Vulture	175
Osprey	64
Bald Eagle	13
Northern Harrier	17
Sharp-shinned Hawk	164
Cooper's Hawk	59
Northern Goshawk	0
Red-shouldered Hawk	13
Broad-winged Hawk	1,752
Red-tailed Hawk	8
Rough-legged Hawk	0
Golden Eagle	0
American Kestrel	31
Merlin	15
Peregrine Falcon	1
Unknown Accipiter	5
Unknown Buteo	18
Unknown Falcon	4
Unknown Raptor	33
TOTAL	2,372

Hawkwatchers of Adams Farm, Athol, MA.
Photo by Eric Mueller.



**PLUM ISLAND
HAWK WATCH**

Spring 2023 Season Totals

Total Number of Days	51
Total Number of Hours	284
Black Vulture	0
Turkey Vulture	83
Osprey	36
Bald Eagle	7
Northern Harrier	155
Sharp-shinned Hawk	240
Cooper's Hawk	26
Northern Goshawk	0
Red-shouldered Hawk	0
Broad-winged Hawk	0
Red-tailed Hawk	3
Rough-legged Hawk	1
Golden Eagle	0
American Kestrel	917
Merlin	133
Peregrine Falcon	4
Unidentified Accipiter	2
Unidentified Buteo	0
Unidentified Falcon	11
Unidentified Raptor	13
TOTAL	1,631

Plum Island - Spring 2023

By Bob Secatore, Site Coordinator and EMHW Director

Although the weather wasn't all that agreeable for our purposes at the Plum Island hawkwatch this season, we ended up doing pretty well nonetheless. With a total season count of 1,631 migrants, we exceeded the average total count for the past five years by over 300 birds. Watchers logged in 284 hours of watch time which was well above the average for the past five years.

In general, the weather, especially right in the heart of the season during the last two weeks in April, was not at all what we were hoping for. Too many days with easterly winds prevailing and/or rain pelting the platform. Despite these problems, however, we ended up tallying some decent numbers and had more than a few days when raptors, especially the Merlins, provided some spectacular views while flying through.

With a total of 917 of them showing up, a number well above the five year average of 642, American Kestrels really made the season for us. A strong, above-average surge during the first two weeks in April and again throughout the month of May more than made up for the modest K-bird counts in the last half of April. Merlins also flew through in better than expected numbers with a total of 133 of them rocketing by, a substantial increase over the five year average of 86 birds. This increase was for the most part due to the surge in numbers during May. In fact, while the five year average for Merlins in May is 34% of the average yearly total, this season a whopping 70% of our Merlins showed up in that two-week period.

This season's Sharpie total of 240 birds was close to the average for the past five years (250), even though we never enjoyed any days with really promising weather with fairly robust southwest winds during late April and the first two weeks of May. In general, the winds during that period were either pretty feeble or blowing from the wrong direction and it leaves me wondering what our count might have been if luck had favored us. As for our other species, 155 Northern Harriers passed through, above the five year average of 129. We also had 7 Bald Eagles, 4 Peregrine Falcons, 26 Cooper's Hawks and 83 Turkey Vultures.

The fact that we actually ended up in a much better stead than we should have this year is in very large part due to having a really great crew of watchers who faithfully showed up even on more than a few days when the birds had other ideas. Ted Mara (aka El Presidente emeritus) led the charge in this respect, constantly emailing members to encourage, goad and sufficiently annoy all prospective watchers to get out of bed in the wee hours of those cold, gloomy days in order to search gray skies at an even colder and gloomier parking lot. And, when it came to showing up at the island, Ted was there as often as I was myself. He also took on the job of scheduling people so that we had watchers committed to cover designated days of the week. As usual, Mark Schoene was always there especially in the earliest part of the season when weather conditions were dreariest. On some days that showed the least promise, he'd often visit the platform just to see if anything was moving. Will Martens, Janet Kovner, Herrick Wales and Paul Roberts all helped immensely by signing up for an assigned day of the week and faithfully showing up to cover that day. Brian Rusnica drove all the way over from central Mass on several occasions to cover on weekends. Others stalwarts that generously took the time to help out included Doug Chickering, Jack Miano, Tom Wetmore, Judd Nathan, Amy Maurer, Kathryn Chihowski, Susan Moses, Maryellen & Bob Stone, John Cannizzo, Chris Godfrey, Lisa Boisvert, and Mark Timmerman. My sincere thanks to all of you. ■



Northern Harrier (adult male) at Parker River NWR, Plum Island, MA. Photo by Judd Nathan.

Head of the Meadow Beach - Spring 2023

By Donald Manchester, Site Coordinator & EMHW Member

The fourth year at the Head of the Meadow Beach site faced many challenges, most especially bad winds and weather, neither of which were conducive to counters being on site. An unexpected and totally unforeseen challenge was the closure of the main path to the beach at the south end of the parking lot in early Spring to protect the Piping Plover and Least Tern nesting sites. The closure meant that beach goers were redirected to the north end of the parking lot where the hawkwatchers park. On busy beach days with all the cars parked at that end of the lot, it is sometimes difficult to have all views available. We were able to inform visitors of what we were doing, so at least we engaged with members of the public who may not have had any idea what we were doing otherwise.

We continue to be frustrated by having Swallow-Tailed Kites and Mississippi Kites reported in several sightings on the Cape, but not crossing the hawkwatch site. Part of this may be the limited view of Route 6 from the site. In previous years, the site at Pilgrim Heights did afford a better view of the Route 6 corridor than Head of the Meadow Beach. In a good weather/coverage year, the benefits of the otherwise unobstructed views at the Head of the Meadow Beach site outweigh the current Pilgrim Heights location. The Pilgrim Heights location was revisited this year to check on reports that many trees had been cut down and the viewing area improved. While the actual viewing spot was somewhat cleared, the valleys to the East and West are still completely overgrown, with extremely limited visibility in what we know to be the flight path of most of the migrants.

With 13 species counted overall this season (Mississippi Kite missing this year), Turkey Vultures and Osprey remain the highest counted species at the Head of the Meadow Beach site. Sharp-shinned Hawks, Cooper's Hawks, Red-Shouldered Hawks, and Northern Harriers remained at the same levels as in past years when accounting for the decrease in coverage. Peregrine Falcons had their best year ever since this site began with 9, more than any previous year's high of 5 for a season.

Broad-winged Hawks, Red-tailed Hawks, Merlins, and American Kestrels numbers were lower percentage wise. The count for Merlins was somewhat proportionally lower. American Kestrels were indeed much lower. The direction and speed of the wind during the American Kestrels' peak migration time may have led to them taking the dune route not necessarily visible. In contrast, at Pilgrim Heights they might have been more visible, but since the overgrowth on the dune side, they would still remain unseen. It's possible that sending someone up on the dunes (such is done at the Plum Island watch), might result in counting more of the American Kestrels on those days.

Highlights for the season include two Black Vultures. Non-raptor highlights added some excitement on some of the slower days with many avian visitors to the parking lot puddle, including local and migrant Fish Crows, American Crows and Ravens. Migrating flocks of Blue Jays and Cedar Waxwings continued to pass over the site, while Common Loons passed across our field of view on migration heading to the ocean. A very large group of migrating Double-Crested Cormorants, (129), deserves noting.

Even with the challenges limiting the coverage of the site, the average number of birds per hour was still better than the 2022 season and not much lower than the 2021 season.

Visitors are always welcome to the site. We continue to engage with beach goers, hikers, and vacationers as well as some residents. It's our hope that more hawkwatchers will stop by and participate, with increased visibility, and plenty of room to spread out, we can use all the eyes we can get!

Thanks to Bob and Maryellen Stone for their friendship and bringing their sharp eyes and a sense of humor to the hawkwatch. Special thanks to Maryellen for posting count numbers daily on Hawkcount. ■

HEAD OF THE MEADOW BEACH HAWK WATCH Spring 2023 Season Totals

Total Number of Days	18
Total Number of Hours	84
Black Vulture	2
Turkey Vulture	231
Osprey	66
Bald Eagle	5
Northern Harrier	12
Sharp-shinned Hawk	37
Cooper's Hawk	9
Northern Goshawk	0
Red-shouldered Hawk	2
Broad-winged Hawk	39
Red-tailed Hawk	38
Rough-legged Hawk	0
Golden Eagle	0
American Kestrel	37
Merlin	13
Peregrine Falcon	9
Unidentified Accipiter	1
Unidentified Buteo	1
Unidentified Falcon	1
Unidentified Raptor	4
Mississippi Kite	0
TOTAL	507

Bald Eagle (adult) at Adams Farm, Athol, MA. Photo by Eric Mueller.



Wachusett Mountain Report *(continued from page 11)*

jumped on their scopes to start counting. Then 25 minutes later, Jack Miano spotted a 700+ bird kettle in the direction of Mount Grace, and as that passed Chris Eddy found a 400-bird kettle forming up behind it. And finally, at 3:30, Jean spotted another 500-bird kettle directly to our north. Luckily everyone was on their game because the birds were streaming from all parts of the kettles, and as Jack, Chris and Jean cross-checked each others' counts, I furiously scribbled down the results. It was an amazing hour of hawkwatching! We ended up with a count of 2,478 birds for the day, which was one of the largest daily flights of raptors ever seen at Wachusett this late in the season.

Oct. 29 – It was the last day that the auto road to the summit was open for the season, and a nice group of observers gathered to honor the occasion. Paul Roberts and Steve Arena spotted a pair of large birds far to our northwest that were swooping up and down together quite rapidly, somewhat like Common Ravens, but they weren't as dark as Ravens and they soared with a bit of dihedral. After watching them intently for a while, Paul and Steve realized that they were Golden Eagles that appeared to be flight duetting, a pair-bonding exercise. As they moved south, the birds disappeared below the treeline, but several minutes later, Paul Vanderhoof noticed them rising up again to our west and we got to watch them for another few minutes. It was a very special sight for everyone who was able to observe them. In addition to that, we counted a total of 306 birds for the day, which included our all-time high daily count of Turkey Vultures, with 207 noted. Exceptionally nice for late October!

Nov. 15 – With the auto road closed, Bill Rasku and I hiked up the mountain and were joined later by Marty McNamara. In the first hour, Bill and I spotted a Rough-legged Hawk, which is one of the species that's relatively rare in the area and whose sighting is one of the reasons that we brave the bitterly cold days up here in November. A few minutes later, both a Northern Harrier and an eagle-shaped bird appeared in the distance. After watching the eagle for a while, we figured out that it was probably a Golden Eagle. The puzzling thing was that it had a whitish belly, but Paul Roberts later noted that he had seen such a bird himself, and that it was probably a Golden that was molting. With that assurance, we were able to celebrate our 3rd year in a row in which we've seen a Rough-legged Hawk and a Golden Eagle on the same day up here. 29 birds for the day.

We set several new yearly count records for our site this year:

- 76 days of observation (vs 73 each in 2020 and 2021. Not as many total observation hours, but still over 400.)
- 1,078 Turkey Vultures (vs 948 in 2021.) The number keeps rising steadily every year, partly due to our increased coverage in late October and November. The flight of 207 birds on

10/29/22 not only set our all-time daily number here, but is also the second highest count ever recorded by EMHW (the current record is 243 at Barre Falls MA on 10/23/17, with the third all-time being the former Wachusett record of 166 on 10/18/21.)

- 303 Bald Eagles (vs 232 in 2021.) This number has risen for 5 years in a row.
- 207 Cooper's Hawks (vs 166 in 2021.) This number has risen for 3 years in a row.
- 125 Red-shouldered Hawks (vs 93 in 2020.) This number has risen rapidly over the past few years, again partly due to our increased late season coverage. The flight of 23 birds on 11/2/22 was the largest single-day count ever seen here, beating out the 19 counted on 10/23/82.

We tied our annual record of 5 Golden Eagles (shared with 2015 and 2021.) We also had strong showings of Osprey, Northern Harriers, Sharp-shinned hawks, Red-tailed Hawks, American Kestrels and Merlins.

As I mentioned above, our total of 21,119 migrating raptors was our 5th highest total ever, only exceeded by our-all-time record of 36,229 in 2013, and by totals from a few years in the golden era of the 1980's (1983, 1984 and 1987.)

The 17,974 Broad-winged Hawks seen this year was the 6th highest total ever here, exceeded only by the record of 35,070 in 2013 and by totals from 1983, 1984, 1987 and 1988. Despite the large number of Broad-wings this year, their percentage of the total number of raptors seen for the year was a bit lower than average (85.11% vs 89.57% all-time.) This speaks well for the large numbers of other raptors that we were able to count this year.

I want to thank all of the folks who came out in all kinds of weather to help with the hawkwatch. It's been encouraging to see new faces as well as those of the long-time participants. I want to give a special shout out to those who made the commitment to come out on specific days each week – Bill Rasku, Will Martens, Jack Miano, Paul Vanderhoof and Mary Caulway. And also to Colleen Tank who once again took her vacation time to coincide with the heart of the Broad-wing migration. All of your commitments really helped solidify our coverage on the mountain. And my thanks to those who hiked up in the cold of November with me (and sometimes by themselves) to help us catch those special late-season birds – Bill Rasku, Marty McNamara, Paul Vanderhoof, Jean Hampel, Tom Gottschang and Jon Skinner.

Hopefully, we'll have another great fall season in 2023. I'm looking forward to seeing you all on the mountain! ■

Pinnacle Rock Report *(continued from page 13)*

Now that we had set a new record, I wondered if we could reach a hitherto unheard of goal of 700 birds at this site. We would have to observe 52 more raptors, once again a seemingly impossible number. We extended our end date to November 22, and saw a migrating Golden Eagle on November 12 and a very late migrant Osprey on November 20. Although we set a new high total for November of 89 birds, we fell three birds short of 700.

A new record could not have been accomplished without the help of many others. My heartfelt thanks to all of you for helping to set this new record: Bill Giuliano, Solon Gordon, Mariko Henstock, Mark Hessler, Hugh Holley, Jack Miano, Nicholas Morris, Emi Morse, Fred Palmer, Bud Porter, Mark Resendes, Oscar Ruiz, and Soheil Zendeh. ■

Annual Election for Board of Directors

According to the EMHW bylaws, the Board consists of nine directors. Last year Shawn Carey, Eric Mueller, and Bob Secatore were elected to two-year terms as Directors. Six current board members are up for re-election to the board. The members are asked to vote for THREE nominees only, and those elected will serve a two-year term. After the election, the six directors elected by the membership will appoint three directors to serve one-year terms on the board. The ballot is at the bottom of the membership form on the facing page.

Lynette Leka - In my 50s I bonded with a Gray Catbird in my Newton, MA yard - that was the beginning of an obsession with everything avian. Ten years later I retired from managing a lab at Tufts Nutrition Research Center in Boston, and moved to a pine/oak forest on an island surrounded by the Great Marsh, in Newbury, MA. From this location began twenty years of volunteering in many various roles, for Joppa Flats/Mass Audubon and the Parker River NWR, and falling in love with travel to Central and South America for neotropical birding.

Ted Mara - Ted is, by his own admission, a hawk junkie. Active as a spotter on Wachusett Mountain in the fall and Site Coordinator at Plum Island during the spring, Ted has served on the Board for 12 years and served as President from 2017 to 2020. He is also a generally out of control walking enthusiast. Other interests include history, genealogy, and Patriots football.

Will Martens - An avid birder and naturalist, Will has birded in North and Central America as well as the UAE. Favorite migrating raptor spots are Wachusett Mountain, Plum Island, Lighthouse Point (CT) and Cape May, NJ. Will assists in the

Adams Farm Report *(continued from page 14)*

The migrating birds and raptors that were observed this spring were fantastic, but this was only half of the story. The people - all the great people - who took time out of their lives to help this endeavor be successful and exceedingly enjoyable was truly awesome! Hanging out with the ABNC crew and our EMHW members daily, you get to know people and have fun telling stories and talking about life's topics. The good karma was spread, and guiding people on hawk identification and behavior became standard as I thought we all got better in that regard. Sharing knowledge was not limited to the hawkwatch members; many customers of Adams Farm were very interested in the event as Eric, Chris and I became "ambassadors" of the sport as we handed out Hawk Migration Association of North America (HMANA) brochures and cards for those who were interested.

This was such an incredible experience this spring, and one I will never forget. I want to give a special thank you to Eric Mueller whose tireless reporting and computer savvy has been and will be an invaluable and vital cog for the watch. Simply, there is no official spring hawkwatch at Adams Farm without Eric. Thank you David Small for being the perfect liaison between ABNC and EMWH and for all the behind the scenes activity to promote participation in the spring's watch, and your consistent attendance this spring. Thank you to Joanne "Jo Jo" Hart for her

weekly Great Meadows census in Concord which is also good for raptors.

Paul Roberts - Paul founded the Eastern Mass Hawk Watch in 1976, and has been a director for 43 years. He chaired the Hawk Migration Association of North America 1980-84, and served on the Board again from 2003-2011 and 2014 to present. Paul was President of the NorthEast Hawk Watch from 1994 to 2020. His leadership has led to the establishment of hawk watches at Wachusett Mountain, Mount Watatic and Plum Island.

Brian Rusnica - Brian lives in Townsend, MA and has counted hawks at the Mount Watatic and Plum Island watch sites since 2015. He is the current President of Eastern Mass Hawk Watch as of 2020. He has served on the Board of Directors for the NorthEast Hawk Watch since 2017. He serves as an administrator on the "Raptor ID" Facebook group, and has led raptor identification workshops for Mass Audubon. He has been featured as a guest speaker by the Hampshire Bird Club, HMANA, Mount Auburn Cemetery, and Nasketucket Bird Club.

Eric Smith - Eric grew up behind an Audubon Sanctuary, where he regularly visited the owls & hawks that were on display. He developed an interest in hawkwatching and photographing all birds of prey. He loves to visit Plum Island and Wachusett Mountain during migration, or going north for eagles and osprey in Maine. Eric thoroughly enjoys helping with the good work that EMHW does and has served on the Board for 12 years.

impressive spotting and attendance as well. I also want to thank Chris Eddy for her unflappable enthusiasm and positivity. Thank you to Chelsea White, Clare Barnes and Rick Adams, co-owners of Adams Farm, for their accommodating nature, their patience and understanding of what we are doing, and the vital access to their property that they provide to us. For those reading this article, please visit the Adams Farm store - buy a rib eye steak, some blocks of suet, or a jar of pickled eggs (I got a bit addicted to those myself!).

I salute all of the observers, both occasional and regular, for making a difference this spring. They are: Arnie Bergeron, Deb Bergeron, Dave Brown, Anne Cervantes, Glen Chretien, Lori Chretien, Bryan Difabio, Chris Eddy, Steve Farrell, Danielle Fauci, Dave Gates, Jean Hampel, Lynn Harper, Joanne Hart, Bonnie House, Jeff Johnstone, Sherry Johnstone (who supplied the watch with world class bagels!), Pam Landry, Ernie LeBlanc, Greg McGuane, Eric Mueller, Mike Plotkin, Paul Roberts, Jon Skinner, Juliana Skinner, David Small, Juliana Venderwielen, and Greg Watkevich.

AND the participants in the ABNC Friday morning outings, led by Jeff Johnstone. This spring, each and every one listed above played a part and contributed to this final report! ■



Name: _____

Street Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone #: _____ E-mail: _____

- I am a new member. I am renewing my membership.
- Contact me about helping at hawk watch sites.

Membership Dues:

Dues are for fiscal year September 1 through August 31 of the following year. Dues and gifts are NOT tax-deductible.

- Supporting \$40
- Contributing \$25
- Individual \$15
- Additional Gift to EMHW \$ _____

Total Amount Enclosed: \$ _____

Please make checks payable to "EMHW" and mail with this form to:
Eastern Mass Hawk Watch, PO Box 663, Newburyport, MA 01950

Annual Election for Board of Directors

There are five nominees on the ballot this year, with their biographies posted on the previous page. The members are asked to vote for THREE nominees only, and those elected will serve a two-year term. After the election, the six elected Directors will appoint three "Nominated Directors" to serve a one-year term.

EMHW Board Member Ballot

Please vote for only **three** (3) of the five nominees to appoint them to serve on the Board as "Elected Directors" for a 2-year term. See the previous page for information about each candidate.

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lynette Leka | <input type="checkbox"/> Paul Roberts |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ted Mara | <input type="checkbox"/> Brian Rusnica |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Will Martens | <input type="checkbox"/> Eric Smith |

cut along dotted line



Eastern Massachusetts
HAWK WATCH
P.O. Box 663
Newburyport, MA 01950

**ANNUAL MEETING
IS VIRTUAL!**

See Page 2 for Details

Eastern Massachusetts **HAWK WATCH**

Founded in 1976, Eastern Massachusetts Hawk Watch is an all-volunteer, member based organization whose mission is to promote the study, conservation, and preservation of hawks locally and on a continental scale by monitoring migration in Massachusetts; to share data for research and conservation purposes; to promote education and awareness of the identification of hawks and the issues related to migrating hawks; and to instill an appreciation for hawks in general.

Current Officers:

President: Brian Rusnica

Vice President: Shawn Carey

Treasurer and Membership Secretary: Lynette Leka

Recording Secretary: Paul Roberts

Thanks

Our sincere thanks to Shawn Carey, Stephanie Ellis, Ursula Goodine, Sabina Grady, Craig Jackson, Lynette Leka, Don Manchester, Mark Morris, Eric Mueller, Judd Nathan, Ben Nickley, Kerry Reid, Sean Riley, Paul Roberts, Brian Rusnica, Tom Sayers, Bob Secatore, Eric Smith, Maryellen Stone, and Harry Wales for their contributions to this newsletter.

Newsletter Design & Layout: Sabina Grady,
Grady Creative Services, www.gradycreative.com

Not a Member? Membership Lapsed?

Our annual dues are only \$15 and provide you with an annual newsletter which includes spring and fall hawk watch data. Additionally, the annual meeting alone is worth the value for we always provide exciting and educational speakers. We also host free identification workshops and other educational programs.

To renew or to become a member, fill out the form on page 19 and send a check made payable to Eastern Mass Hawk Watch, P.O. Box 663, Newburyport, MA 01950. *Thanks!*