



Eastern Massachusetts HAWK WATCH

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Please join us for this year's EMHW Annual Business Meeting on Friday, September 9th, at the Congregational Church in West Medford. Our Keynote Speaker this year is **Kate Davis**, Executive Director of Raptors of the Rockies. Kate will be pre-

senting *Raptor Conservation and Education in the West*. Her presentation will include many spectacular raptor photos taken by several of the top photographers in the field. Other activities include the vote for board members, information on fall sites, vendors, raffle prizes and refreshments. Please see page 2 for more detailed information about the meeting. Hope to see you there!

Annual Meeting Friday, September 9, 2011

6:00 pm Social Hour

7:00-9:00 pm Meeting & Keynote

Message from the President

All in all, it has been a rather odd year in terms of the weather and bird-watching. After an extraordinary pattern of warmish weather from mid-2010 until November 2010, it was really pleasant and conducive to species for reproducing young. The warmth of the spring 2010, the heat of summer later, and a very warm early fall, I suspected would mislead our visiting raptors. However, after early November 2010, the weather turned a notch colder. From that point on, the average monthly temperatures seemed to be below normal through June of 2011. It also turned out to be extremely snowy in the winter and quite cool and damp in the spring. All of this plagued reproductive activities of both songbirds and raptors. It may also have inhibited the advance of Broadwings to the North. I suspect our fall migrations might reflect this. It's hard to say.

Perhaps the most unusual observations have been the large sightings of Mississippi Kites in New England this year. We have also had some talks with the Loon Preservation Society in New Hampshire about their declining population to the North and the expanding population here in Southern New England. The Bald Eagle count for the year is way up over the previous and this bodes well. Personally, I'm looking forward to a great Fall Migration Season and hope to see a lot of birds. Because of the wind and the heat, last year wasn't very good. Let's hope!

Finally, looking to see a lot of familiar faces at the Annual Meeting. A great speaker this year, Kate Davis. Her book is fabulous! Also, as always, a raffle. And remember, this is a great send-off to begin the Fall Migration.

– Steve Olson, President EMHW

Eastern MA Hawk Watch
P.O. Box 663
Newburyport, MA 01950

www.massbird.org/EMHW

Annual Meeting

Details and Description

Date: **Friday, September 9, 2011**

Time: **6:00 pm Social Hour**
7:00-9:00 pm Meeting & Keynote

Place: **Congregational Church of West Medford**
400 High Street, Medford, MA
(directions on next page)

Keynote Speaker: **Kate Davis, Executive Director,**
Raptors of the Rockies

Keynote Topic: **Raptor Conservation and Education**
in the West



**Kate Davis with her
Peregrine Falcon, Sibley**

Kate Davis is founder and Executive Director of *Raptors of the Rockies*. A 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, *Raptors of the Rockies* rehabilitates injured or orphaned birds of prey and uses birds that cannot be released to educate school children and the public about western raptors and conservation. Kate has given over 1300 programs across western Montana and Idaho with her captive hawks and owls, which currently include 16 individuals of 12 species. These birds are also the subjects and source of inspiration for her photography, drawings, paintings, etchings, welded steel sculptures, and articles.

Kate won't be bringing her live raptors to Massachusetts, but she will be bringing some of the world's best raptor photography to complement her vast knowledge of raptors. Kate's first book, *Raptors of the Rockies*, came out in 2001 and is a brief introduction to the hawks and owls of the Rockies. Her second, *Falcons of North America* (2008), is a superb introduction to – and overview of – North America's six falcon species. Davis devotes the first 150 pages to describing falcons in general, focusing on morphology and physiology, behavior and feeding, nesting and breeding, and movements, and three chapters on falcons and people, including threats and conservation status. She then devotes 8 pages each (half of which are photographs) to an overview of our six falcon species.

Her newest book *Raptors of the West: Captured in Photographs* (2011), includes forty-four birds of prey in over 400 color photographs. *Raptors of the West*, as with *Falcons*, includes incredible photography from Rob Palmer and Nick Dunlop, as well as author/photographer Davis! Kate will have copies of her two most recent books available for purchase and will be happy to autograph copies that you purchase that night or that you bring with you to the program.

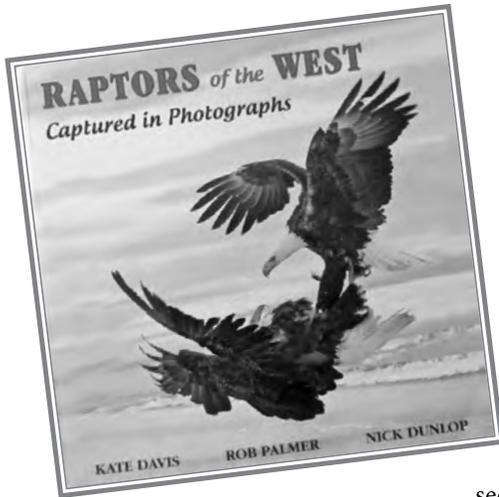
For more information on Kate and on Raptors of the Rockies, visit <http://www.raptorsoftherockies.org> or her raptor blog at <http://raptorsoftherockies.blogspot.com>. ■

For meeting updates check our website at www.massbird.org/EMHW.

Plus: Our annual business meeting including the vote for board members, information on fall sites, vendors, raffle prizes and refreshments!

Book Review: *Raptors of the West*

by Kathy Olson



Kate Davis' newest book, "*Raptors of the West – Captured in Photographs*", is pure eye candy for birders. The book is primarily a photo book with stunning pictures taken by Kate, Nick Dunlop and award winning photographer Rob Palmer. The photos are accompanied by captions detailing breeding, nesting, hunting and identification information on 45 different raptors. (Did you know a Northern Pygmy-Owl would be mobbed by a wren and a hummingbird?) The raptors are presented by their habitats rather than their species, making for a good learning tool. Eastern birders shouldn't be put off by the title, as at least half of the featured birds are also denizens of the East.

Rob Palmer's award winning photographs of Bald Eagles are reason enough to buy this book but you'll be delighted by the other 240 pages of gorgeous raptor photos. The Burrowing Owl shots would make you want to travel West just to see them interacting! This is a book for avid birders and those who are just learning birding. You'll want to own this book and give it as a gift. ■

Directions to the Congregational Church of West Medford:

(Additional parking can be found at the back of the public school next to the church.)

From the North: Take I-93 south; take Exit 32. Follow Route 60 west (which becomes High St.) about 1.3 miles to church (on left).

From the South: Take I-93 north through Boston; take Exit 32. Follow Route 60 west (which becomes High St.) about 1.3 miles to church (on left).

From the West: Take Route 2 east to Route 60. At end of exit ramp, turn left toward Arlington. Continue on Route 2, through two rotaries (another 0.6 mile) across railroad tracks (another 0.6 mile) continue 0.2 mile on Route 60 (High St.) to church (on right).

New Fundraiser!

EMHW Tote Bag

Multipurpose, large capacity, great for everyday use and gifts!
EMHW logo printed on front.

Natural color heavyweight canvas with navy gusseted bottom and handles. Keyring retainer hangs inside bag.

Available at the annual meeting for \$15 each.



And Then There Were Two

by Ursula Goodine, EMHW Board Member

My husband Dave and I have been trying to find the Tobin Bridge Peregrine Falcon nest site for more than three years. A pair had been seen inhabiting the area for quite some time, in fact Dr. Tom French* installed a nest box there, years before the birds had piqued our interest. Subsequently, the box was partially destroyed by storms, rendering it unusable for nesting. Finding another site was no problem for them, however we could not locate it. Determined to solve this puzzle, we searched the many stanchions, abutments and girders. Finally, on May 31, 2011, I spied a platform that exposed four fuzzy white bodies. Sweet! Excitement prevailed as we watched an adult fly in to feed the chicks. One would have thought we won the lottery!

Meanwhile, at another nest site, a Peregrine pair had only one hatchling out of four eggs. The age of this eyas was similar to the Tobin brood. Other visits to the bridge revealed the rapidly growing young. Thinking ahead to fledging time, we worried that they could drown in the Mystic River below. We contacted a yacht club nearby and gave the members information about the birds, emergency contacts, and a juvenile photo. Four days later, we received a call that one of the fledglings had crashed onto their deck. Wow! By the time we arrived, an animal con-



trol officer had the bird in a carrier. He had spoken to Tom and agreed to give us possession. Tom, who indicated that he wanted to band the fledgling, met us in Framingham where this was done. We took our unharmed captive home for the night.

Because of difficulty in releasing this male on the bridge, it was decided that the fledgling be taken to another location. Tom entrusted us to accomplish this. Next day, we released him on the roof of a nest building under the watchful eye of the resident female. She was the matriarch of the family who had only one offspring this year. "Toby" had to be prompted out of the carrier, but once free, he flew off with the adult in pursuit. She was giving her warning admonitions, as she would if confronted by any invader. This totally alarmed us. Had we subjected this youngster to deadly peril? He was flying about, screeching at her in response. Nervously, we rushed down to the street to see what had become of him. There he was on the roof, continuing his rant. This vociferous stranger would not relent. The harangue evoked another's fervor to join in. "Solo", who had already fledged, had been observing the situation, decided to be heard as well. This duet didn't bother her as she

Continued on page 6...



185 Alewife Red-Tailed Hawks

by Paul M. Roberts, EMHW Board Member



Many shoppers pulled over to watch the hawks, and a small army of observers and photographers lined the parkway as the chicks neared fledging. The first chick fledged at about 5:30 on a Saturday afternoon, “helicoptering” over the nest and suddenly turning east and flying across a jammed-back highway into the parking lot for a large Whole Foods Store. Dozens of literal “hawk watchers” formed a semi-circle around the confused young hawk, directing traffic around the two-foot high pedestrian and giving the bird an outlet to a fence, a hedgerow, and trees. Walking, trotting, hop-flying, running, and more, the kid eventually jumped

Hawk watchers might be more interested in the Mid-Winter Bald Eagle Survey, or in the Breeding Bald Eagle or Peregrine Falcon surveys, but the most popular hawks in Massachusetts are a pair of Red-tailed Hawks named Buzz and Ruby that have nested on 185 Alewife Brook Parkway in Cambridge for the past two years and successfully fledged three young each year.

Red-tails didn’t nest in large parts of Massachusetts fifty years ago, and certainly not in major metropolitan areas. Over the past several decades, however, they have moved into many cities, nesting particularly in cemeteries and golf courses, using clover leaves and tall vapor lights on interstate highways to establish hunting and breeding territories. More recently they have moved into the hearts of cities, nesting on building roofs, ledges, and fire escapes.

Red-tails have been nesting in Fresh Pond Reservoir and adjacent areas for years, but two years ago Buzz and Ruby started building a nest on a ledge at 185 Alewife Brook Parkway, which includes Routes 2 and 16, and across from a very busy mall. Thousands of commuters, only some of whom were waiting for a red light to change, photographed the hawks with cell phones, point-and-shoot cameras, and top-end camera with 500 mm lens or better.

on a car roof, onto a garage roof, and up into a tree, where it spent its first night away from home.

Its youngest sibling followed about 36 hours later, landing on a milk truck at 5:21 a.m. Working with a helpful, understanding truck driver, the hawk watcher crew, which had been on duty before 5 a.m., got the smallest chick to fly to a nearby mini-mall roof, where it spent the day exploring the wonder of HVAC units. The largest of the three chicks abandoned the nest about three hours later, sailing across Route 2 in the middle of

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“185 Alewife Red-Tailed Hawks”

(continued)

morning rush hour. It came to asphalt outside the main entrance to the Whole Foods store, attracting the attention of almost every shopper with a smart phone. The young hawk eventually flew into the Whole Foods window at the outdoor garden center, landing on potted tomato plants and working its way through sets of hibiscus. Cambridge Animal Control arrived and deftly recovered the bird and released it into a row of trees behind the nest building. All three chicks survived fledging and have made it seven weeks out of the nest. In mid-July, they began soaring for the first time and have dramatically expanded their “range.”

Buzz, Ruby and their progeny have been featured in the Boston Globe (online and in print), on several local television news shows, and even on public television. Based on last year’s nesting, this year Buzz is featured on the Cambridge City parking sticker! A number of videos of the hawks and their progeny have been posted on



YouTube. Google 185Redtails to find the special Yahoo group where a number of informative blog posts on the pair’s nesting have been posted, along with photos. ■

“And Then There Were Two”

(continued from p. 4)

had been accustomed to many of her previous offspring’s cries for food. Just another day in the life of a Peregrine mother! She remained aloof, began to preen, and eventually took a nap. This relaxed behavior put us at ease. The pleas to be fed were ignored and grew silent after the female flew off.

“Solo” decided to inspect this interloper and flew around him several times. Would he accept this outsider as kin? Only time would tell. Subsequent visits to the foster family revealed that this juvenile was indeed allowed to remain and was treated as one of their own. Witnessing playful flights between the two

adolescents further validated Tom’s belief that Peregrine Falcons view everything in their territory as being possessions. It didn’t matter that “Toby” wasn’t hatched from their nest. There was no concern that he was older and had juvenile plumage when released into their realm. They had taken ownership of him and his appearance in their dominion would trump any concerns about acceptance. And so it happened, once there was one, and now there are two! ■

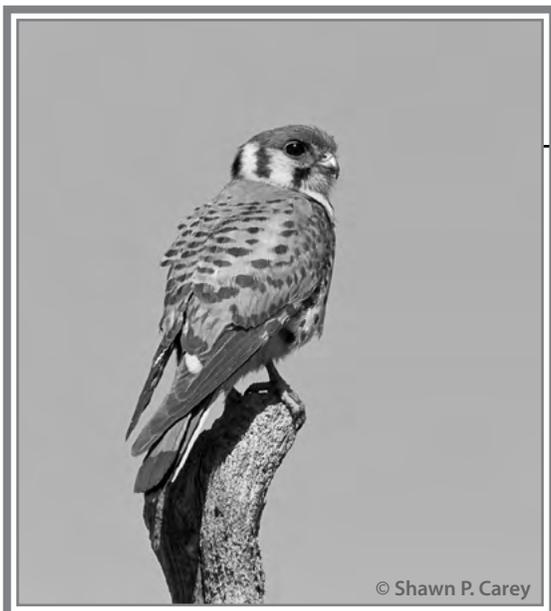
**Thomas French, PhD. Assistant Director. Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program, Division of Massachusetts Fisheries & Wildlife*

Want to Go Hawk Watching? Visit www.massbird.org/EMHW first

Visit the EMHW website for details and directions to individual sites across Massachusetts. Also included on the website are a list of resources, field guides, and a printable copy of the HMANA Daily Report Form (DRF) you can take with you into the field so you can record your sightings. Whether you plan to spend a few hours, few days, or few weeks watching the movement of hawks at your favorite spot, it is important to record what you see. This information helps EMHW gather an understanding of raptor migration in our area. Send completed DRF’s to: Paul Roberts, 254 Arlington Street, Medford, MA 02155.

Where Have All the Kestrels Gone?

by Joey Mason, EMHW Member



It's another summer with Broadwings whistling high overhead, Red-shoulders whining and Cooper's hawks silently skulking through my yard. Ospreys have made themselves a new nest high up on an unused communications tower near my house for their second year. There is a constant din of noise associated with it. Some neighbors enjoy the commotion. One couple has set up a scope and tripod on their back porch so they can watch the Ospreys through the whole nesting season. And this spring, I happened to look up and see an adult Bald Eagle soaring high overhead. How lucky am I to see all these raptors while standing in my own back yard? Isn't it wonderful to have a day that you get to view a bird of prey going about its daily business? But, how many people get to see Kestrels these days?

During the spring and fall migration, people are so lucky to have the option to get out to a hawk watch and view so many more raptors than I would see in my back yard in years. It was terrific to hear reports at the end of April this year that Kestrels were seen migrating through Massachusetts in high num-

bers. I was very hopeful that some Kestrels might stay for the summer in the nest boxes Mike Maurer and I have set up in southeastern Massachusetts.

From 1990 to 2000 we had 61-83% occupancy in our Kestrel boxes and we took for granted how wonderful that was, not knowing that might change. When it dropped to 27% for two years in 2006-2007 we knew we were in trouble. Last year the occupancy rate was 48%, so I was hopeful that maybe this year we might reach 50%. I am sorry to report that so far (as of July 14th) the 63 nest boxes that Mike Maurer and I have erected are only 31.7% occupied this year.

I am devastated, because I have treasured this small raptor since before we started this nest box project. The thought of losing this falcon in Massachusetts is inconceivable to me. The numbers of adult birds that used to return to nest in the spring just aren't there anymore. The habitat has not changed through the years in the cranberry bogs, either. This indicates that something is happening to them during migration or on their wintering grounds.

Kestrels have been documented being killed by planes, cars, raccoons, squirrels, methane burners, utility poles, drenching rains, West Nile Virus, screech owls and other raptors among other things. It has been documented by Hawk Mountain Sanctuary that Kestrel remains have been found in Cooper's hawk nests. Coops have been noticeably increasing

through the years. They are very adaptable to city and suburbia, and all the areas Kestrels may haunt. Kestrel kills by other raptors have been documented with a picture here or there, as well. Are these little birds finding enough food as the larger open farmland habitat is being developed along their migration routes?

The decline in Mass may not have correlated with the CDC reports of West Nile Virus, but veterinarians and rehabilitators saw many raptors die in captivity and in the wild from this disease in the early 2000s. Pesticides are always an issue, but pesticides have been used since the inception of our nest box project around the cranberry bogs. Why would we have good luck for 10 years and not now? Many of the more toxic pesticides were taken away a number of years ago and replaced with bio-friendly ones. The numbers of young produced in the occupied boxes are within normal ranges. With different stresses and so many things working against the survival of this species, maybe we can't blame one thing but many.

The first thing that people ask me is, "What can I do to help?" I think with all those raptor seeking eyes watching intently, that people must have individual observations of Kestrels being killed by Coopers hawks, Peregrines or the like. This is good data to share, dismal as that may sound.

Wouldn't it be interesting to determine how often Kestrels are observed at a hawk watch being tail chased by another raptor? How long are they chased? These episodes may weaken these small falcons and prevent them from foraging

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Current Situation at Mount Wachusett

by Steve Olson

On June 8, 2011, the Eastern Mass Hawk Watch had an informal meeting with Denise Morrissey, the supervisor of the Mount Wachusett State Reservation about access to the summit. The original plan was to have the road to the top open by July 1, 2011. As well, a new fire tower with an observation deck (solid) was to have been in place. Unfortunately, the project has been pushed back by two months. The positive news is that the road is finished and is currently limited to foot and bicycle traffic. No motorized vehicles are yet allowed. It is hoped that vehicles will be allowed on the road by Labor Day weekend, 2011. As well, this will open up the summit for the hawk migration season which would be starting at that point. From now until then, people should check in at the reservation headquarters to see if they can use the road during the weekdays. During the weekends, the road is open to localized traffic.

The main holdup for the detail is the construction of the new fire tower. Construction crews are working all this summer to get the new tower up and running. As of June 8th, the post holes had been drilled into the top of the summit. While the summit is accessible, parts of the new construction area are cordoned off and some areas may be off limits. Hopefully, all will go as scheduled and we will be able to use the summit by early September. ■

“Where Have All the Kestrels Gone?”

(continued)

for very much needed food. The hawks are already counted, so a percentage could possibly be determined. You are the observers, so write it up or share. If I get enough positive response I could compile these documented sightings of Kestrel happenings. I'd need dates and number of raptors seen that day. If you have observed an incident such as this, please send the information to me at raptorretrofit@comcast.net.

The one thing I do not support, is putting up more Kestrel boxes. Some may not agree with this and everyone is entitled to their opinion. That is why I am sharing mine with you. It is natural to think putting up more Kestrel boxes is the way to go in a situation like this. Everyone, including me, wants to do this. I commend anyone that takes the time to build nest boxes because it is a lot of work.

But wait. If Mike and I have 63 nest boxes up and they aren't all occupied, why would we put out more? There are

perfectly good boxes out there that have been occupied in the past, but have been vacant for several years now. If historic nest sites are not occupied across Massachusetts, please don't put out more.

If someone sees a pair of Kestrels hanging out in open habitat for a period of time, then that might be encouragement to erect a box. But there are specific criteria one should be aware of when placing a nest box. Boxes on the wooded edge only enhance the squirrel population and predation. Sticking a bunch of boxes up all over the state will only enhance the starling population.

We try not to allow starlings to nest in our boxes if we can help it. Most people when putting up nest boxes don't follow through or take the time to evict starlings. If you won't get rid of the starlings, please don't put up a Kestrel nest box. I have seen a lot of people that think they are doing something good, but are actually contributing to a problem. Starlings can hinder a Kestrel in producing young

and they are an invasive non-native competitor for nesting cavities.

We place shavings in the boxes to act as a substrate for the Kestrels to nest. It gives the eggs a cushion and prevents them from rolling around. Starlings will actually remove most of the shavings before they bring in their own nesting material. During this time, a Kestrel may usurp the box and lay eggs. But without the shavings or nesting material, the eggs don't get incubated properly because they roll out from under the female on the bare wooden floor.

Please keep your eyes peeled for any and all Kestrels as you go birding or hawk watching. Don't just tick them off on your bird list for the day, but really observe them because these opportunities may be few and far between in the future if this trend continues. No one knows for sure where all the kestrels have gone, so enjoy them when you can. ■

Barre Falls Dam - Fall 2010

by Donna Schilling, Contributor

BARRE FALLS DAM HAWK WATCH Fall 2010 Season Totals

Total Number of Days	49
Total Number of Hours	267
Black Vulture	1
Turkey Vulture	248
Osprey	218
Bald Eagle	65
Northern Harrier	51
Sharp-Shinned Hawk	1218
Cooper's Hawk	129
Northern Goshawk	6
Red-Shouldered Hawk	43
Broad-Winged Hawk	4834
Red-Tailed Hawk	268
Rough-Legged Hawk	1
Golden Eagle	2
American Kestrel	177
Merlin	61
Peregrine Falcon	20
Unidentified Raptors	25
Total	7367

The highlight of our 2010 season at Barre Falls was a Black Vulture observed on November 2. That bird brought the season's species total to sixteen, a feat not achieved at our site since 2001. We enjoyed above-average numbers for nine species, particularly Merlin (61) and Peregrine Falcon (20). Northern Harrier observations were up 30% from the five-year average, and a site record was set with nine individual Northern Harriers counted on one day, September 18.

Site Leader Bart Kamp, along with regular observers Dave Grant, Donna Schilling, and Don Gardella, began full-time coverage on September 10. Veteran Mt. Wachusett hawkwatcher Bill LaFleche also participated during the peak period. Mid-September weather was nearly ideal, with west to northwest winds, cool temperatures, and partly cloudy skies. Again this year, the daily high count of Broad-wings (1,270) occurred on September 15. Fortunately, however, that was not the last good flight. Favorable migration weather continued, yielding 2,137 Broad-wings during September 18-20, and a final push of 391 on the 23rd. Excluding Broad-wings, our September total was 979 raptors. This is well above our September average of 740 and is attributed to good numbers of Ospreys (152) and Sharp-shinneds (548) for the month.

The first half of October brought seasonable temperatures, generally favorable winds, but above-average precipitation that kept us off-site for five of the fifteen days. Highlights of this period were 60 Ospreys, 9 Northern Harriers, 449 Sharp-shinneds, and 52 Cooper's Hawks. All three Falcon species were recorded on seven of fifteen days, an uncommon occurrence at our inland site. Falcon totals for the period were 48 American Kestrels, 22 Merlins, and 10 Peregrines.

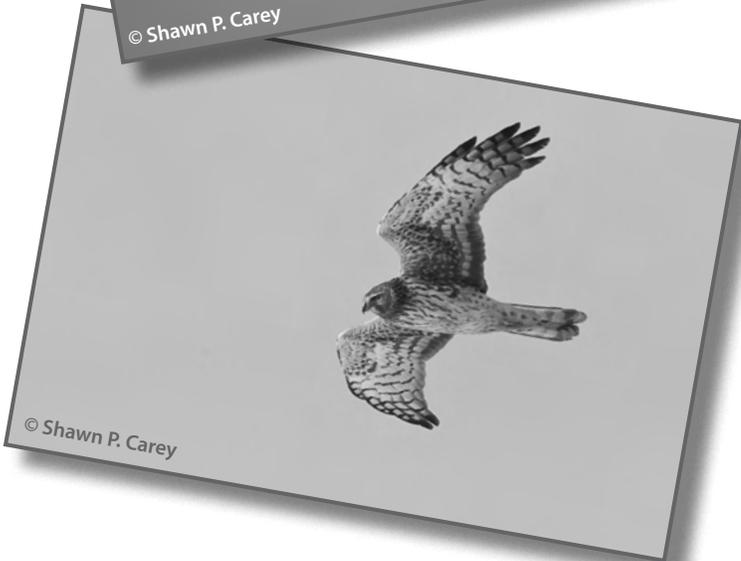
Red-tailed Hawks began moving on October 12, stalled, then picked up on the 18th. Migrants tallied during the last two weeks of October into the first week of November included 221 Sharp-shinneds, 4 Northern Goshawks, 36 Red-shouldered, 214 Red-tails, 1 Rough-legged, and 1 Golden Eagle. ■

Morris Island - Fall 2010

by Don Manchester, EMHW Member
and Morris Island Primary Counter

The Morris Island Hawk Count was down in 2010 because of persistent easterly winds and being at the Cape May Hawk Watch the first two weeks of October (peak flight time). On November 13th, 6 cave swallows showed up mixed in with a handful of tree swallows.

I would like to thank Michael Brokenshire for volunteering an extra set of eyes on the weekends. ■



MORRIS ISLAND HAWK WATCH Fall 2010 Season Totals

Black Vulture	0
Turkey Vulture	28
Osprey	31
Bald Eagle	0
Northern Harrier	6
Sharp-Shinned Hawk	291
Cooper's Hawk	56
Northern Goshawk	1
Red-Shouldered Hawk	2
Broad-Winged Hawk	1
Red-Tailed Hawk	32
Rough-Legged Hawk	0
Golden Eagle	0
American Kestrel	6
Merlin	26
Peregrine Falcon	36
Unidentified Accipiters	5
Unidentified Raptors	1
Total	522

Mount Wachusett - Fall 2010

by Steve Olson, Mount Wachusett Site
Co-Coordinator and current President of EMHW

MT. WACHUSETT HAWK WATCH Fall 2010 Season Totals

Total Number of Hours	88
Black Vulture	0
Turkey Vulture	0
Osprey	41
Bald Eagle	15
Northern Harrier	6
Sharp-Shinned Hawk	83
Cooper's Hawk	29
Northern Goshawk	0
Red-Shouldered Hawk	2
Broad-Winged Hawk	1360
Red-Tailed Hawk	0
Rough-Legged Hawk	0
Golden Eagle	0
American Kestrel	22
Merlin	9
Peregrine Falcon	2
Unidentified Accipiters	12
Unidentified Broadwings	2
Unidentified Raptors	255
Total	1838

In comparison to the previous ten years, the Hawk Count for Mount Wachusett was pretty dismal for 2010. There were a variety of factors responsible for this situation. One major issue was the lack of eyes for spotting as the road to the summit was closed effective July 1, 2010 and wasn't expected to re-open until July of 2011. See page 8 in this issue for the current situation about the Mountain. While the summit was accessible, the only way to the top was by using the extensive trail system that has been developed over the years. The fastest way up was the Pine Tree trail which is steep and rocky. Other trails do reach the top but they also meander quite a bit. So this factor alone kept people from doing a hawk count. Still, there were other factors that held the birds to a minimum count. It was an usually warm September with very few cold fronts moving through the area. With the lack of cooler air, one thought was that the migrating birds stayed to the North and flew West through upper New York State or southern Canada. The final factor were that the winds were not favorable for migrating birds. Many days, the wind blew out of the South or Southwest direction. The 2010 Fall migration season certainly wasn't what the Hawk Watchers had been anticipating. Hopefully, this coming migration season will be a reverse of last year.

The 2010 Fall migration watch was held from September 6 through October 2 with a grand total of 1838 birds flying over or around the summit. Last year, just as the previous year, the Broad Wing Hawks seemed to be moving during the second full week in September. A total of 88 hours were spend on the summit with a number of volunteers making the trek to the top. Many thanks to Paul Roberts, Ted Mara, Dave Brown, Rod Chase and all the other folks who decided to take a hike. ■

Mount Watatic - Fall 2010

by Tom Pirro, EMHW Board Member and
Mt. Watatic Site Coordinator (alurap@verizon.net)

Mount Watatic had just over 90 hours and 13 dates of effort for the season, spanning the dates of September 11th through November 11th, about 15% below average. A total of 69 hours on 8 dates in September, 7 hours on 2 dates in October and 14 hours over 3 dates in November.

“Opening day” was a bit late, on the 9/11, a modest NE wind brought in a nice flight of 388 raptors and we enjoyed hosting the EMHW’s guest speaker, Steve Hoffman, for the day. A few days of bad weather interrupted the coverage, but we were back at it on the 14th, cloudy conditions with a gusty west wind delivered a modest 192 raptors. It was cool and sunny on the 15th with a west wind and the Broad-winged flight got rolling, with a total of 829 BW’s along with 7 Bald Eagles for the day’s total of 875 raptors. The following day brought in just under 250 birds, but that was only a precursor for the four fine days of hawk-watching that followed.

Nearly complete overcast conditions of 9/17 didn’t provide good lift, but a respectable 691 raptors passed, including 653 BW’s which “set the table” for follow day. While the 18th was cloudy, the light wind was from out of the NE, a perfect wind direction for this site (provided it’s not associated with a storm), and while the flight started slowly, by late morning we were in the “thick of it”. The following are hourly totals for BW’s ; 10-11am (Standard Time) 534, 11-12 AM 2,890, 12-1PM 440 and 1-2PM 460. The day’s total was 4402 BW’s and 4499 for all species combined. Doug Williams, trip leader for a Stony Brook Mass Audubon field trip, showed up with his group about 10AM and left just after noon time; his lucky group and the others present saw about 50% of the season’s flight in that short time frame! The following two days, 9/19 and 9/20, also provided good flights, including 1,921 and 773 raptors respectively.

The highlight of October’s minimal coverage was juvenile Golden Eagle that passed very close over the hill on the 29th, about 5 minutes after arrival, a large dark raptor was viewed briefly over the Wapack Ridge, but disappeared below the horizon well to the northwest (too brief and too far!). Fortunately, five minutes later a raven showed up close and beside it was a Golden Eagle! November 1, was a “carbon copy” of the 29th, with a Golden Eagle (Juv.) showing just as I was “setting up shop”. As I snapped photos of the bird I heard a crash...the eagle likely heard a loud “Oh #\$\$%@” (it was that close!) ... apparently someone hadn’t fastened his scope to the hill, it’s tough finding a good scope caddy these days.

Other late season notables were 49 Red-tailed hawks on 11/1; one

Continued on page 14...

MOUNT WATATIC HAWK WATCH Fall 2010 Season Totals

Total Number of Days	13
Total Number of Hours	90.8
Black Vulture	0
Turkey Vulture	20
Osprey	81
Bald Eagle	31
Northern Harrier	16
Sharp-Shinned Hawk	346
Cooper’s Hawk	33
Northern Goshawk	3
Red-Shouldered Hawk	24
Broad-Winged Hawk	9018
Red-Tailed Hawk	119
Rough-Legged Hawk	1
Golden Eagle	2
American Kestrel	52
Merlin	9
Peregrine Falcon	2
Unidentified Raptors	1
Total	9774

Pinnacle Rock - Fall 2010

by Craig Jackson, EMHW Board Member and
Pinnacle Rock Site Leader (crleja@yahoo.com)

PINNACLE ROCK HAWK WATCH Fall 2010 Season Totals

Black Vulture	0
Turkey Vulture	3
Osprey	37
Bald Eagle	4
Northern Harrier	22
Sharp-Shinned Hawk	298
Cooper's Hawk	44
Northern Goshawk	4
Red-Shouldered Hawk	2
Broad-Winged Hawk	4
Red-Tailed Hawk	21
Rough-Legged Hawk	0
Golden Eagle	0
American Kestrel	17
Merlin	17
Peregrine Falcon	7
Unidentified Accipiter	32
Unidentified Buteos	1
Unidentified Falcons	6
Unidentified Raptors	21
Total	540

The 2010 Fall Hawkwatch on Pinnacle Rock was the second best ever in terms of the total number of hawks with 540 birds counted. Individual totals of many species also surpassed previous highs. Chief among these was Sharp-shinned Hawk with 298 birds being counted. New highs were also made for Northern Harrier (22), Cooper's Hawk (44), Bald Eagle (4), Merlin (17) and Peregrine Falcon (7). Most surprising, however, was that four Northern Goshawks were seen migrating, since previously no more than one had been seen in a season. The Osprey count (37) was significantly lower than the previous high (53 birds seen in 2003). Other counts significantly lower than previous highs were Red-shouldered Hawk (2), Red-tailed Hawk (17), and American Kestrel (17). For the second year in a row the count of American Kestrels was equaled by the number of Merlins, an event that would have seemed impossible before the recent drop in kestrel numbers.

As with any good year on Pinnacle, this year's count was primarily the result of good winds (strong and from the west) on week-ends. However, a great deal of the increase was also due to the added eyes of Jack Miano, who in the past had hawk watched on Mount Wachusett, but came to Pinnacle when Wachusett was closed to traffic. Finally, any good year is usually dependent on one (or more) really great day. That day occurred on October 9, when a new one-day record of 190 hawks was seen. Fortunately, not only Jack, but also Dave Brown was there that day to help me count hawks.

The day started out fairly slow, but by 9 AM (EST), the movement of hawks (especially Sharp-shinned Hawks) increased substantially. In the next 6 hours, 168 hawks were seen, with the highest number (53 -- almost a hawk a minute) being seen between 1-2 PM (EST). What was almost more impressive was that almost all these hawks were flying very low, and at one point there were at least seven Sharp-shinned Hawks in the sky easily visible with the naked eye. At the end of the day, not only had we seen the highest number of hawks, but the number of Sharp-shinned Hawks (125) clearly surpassed my previous high (98).

Unlike inland sites, hawk watching on Pinnacle Rock is generally pretty slow until the end of September/beginning of October. Nevertheless, September 19 will probably be etched in the memory of two neophyte hawk watchers who joined me this year. As we watched in amazement, an immature Bald Eagle soared over the rock, probably no more than 100 feet above us!

In October the situation improved. Hawks in double figures were seen migrating on eight of the twelve days we counted, and

Continued on next page...

Pinnacle Rock Fall 2010 Hawk Watch

(continued)

over four-fifths of the total number of hawks counted were seen in October. Three adult Bald Eagles were seen in the month, and even more exciting were two adult Northern Goshawks on October 11. That same day I also observed a very pale Merlin with a light gray back and no obvious streaking on the breast. It appeared to match pictures of the Richardson's (or prairie) subspecies, but since I could not photograph it, I can only note that it was a possible Richardson's. Late October to November is when large numbers of Red-tailed Hawks are migrating, and when I also hope for Red-shouldered Hawks and/or Golden Eagle to go by. None of these occurred. The only good count of Red-tailed Hawks was on October 31 (17), and no Golden Eagles and only two Red-shouldered Hawks were seen.

Other migrating birds can also be seen

from Pinnacle Rock. Large numbers of Double-crested Cormorants and Canada Geese are often seen heading south. The largest number of Double-crested Cormorants (500) was counted on October 9, with high counts also on September 18 (225) and September 26 (425). A high count of Canada Geese (350) was also made on October 9. [Both of these high counts were made on the same day that 190 hawks were being counted, so it is likely that some were missed]. However, probably the most unusual sighting was a group of 18 Nighthawks on September 19, with 40 Chimney Swifts on September 25 also being of interest.

While counting hawks on Pinnacle, I also try to keep track of dragonflies and butterflies, though I am by no means expert in identifying them. In general their numbers seemed to be down with the exception of one day. On September 19 there was a major migration of dragonflies. Most of these appeared to be

Common Green Darners, although I did identify at least one Black Saddlebag. I estimated there were at least 150 dragonflies migrating, but since at times there appeared to be at least 50 dragonflies in the air at once, that number could easily be doubled. The only other dragonfly sighting of interest was a medium sized yellow dragonfly (? meadowhawk ?) that I saw on the last day of my hawk watch, November 13, which seemed very late for a dragonfly.

As always there are many individuals to thank who helped me count birds on this site. Some, like a contingent of birders from Plymouth, only came one day; others were there more frequently. Below I have listed their names in alphabetical order. My apologies to anyone I have omitted:

Aileen and Rusty Briggs, David Brown, Caroline and Sam Chapin, Tim Factor, Dana Jewel, Jack Miano, Gerry and Ron Tremonte, and Soheil Zendeh. ■

Mount Watatic Fall 2010 Hawk Watch

(continued from page 12)

late Osprey, a kettle of 6 adult Red-shouldered Hawks, 3 Northern Goshawks and a light morph Rough-legged Hawk on 11/2; A few non-raptor highlights were

70 migrating Brant and a White-winged Crossbill on 11/1, 725 Migrating American Crows on 11/2 and another White-winged Crossbill on 11/11.

Thank You for all those that helped count and share the experience during the season. ■

Midwinter Bald Eagle Survey 2011

by Paul M. Roberts

The 2011 Annual Midwinter Bald Eagle Survey reported a record 107 individual Bald Eagles in the Commonwealth, breaking the 2009 record of 81 eagles. Thirty-three birds and a new nest were found at Quabbin, 18 along the Connecticut River, 11 on the Merrimack River, and 5 eagles each at Wachusett Reservoir and Lakeville/Middleboro. Smaller numbers were spotted at a number of locations across the state, including 2 at the Mystic Lakes in Arlington. At least 75 were adults and 23 were juveniles. ■

Barre Falls Dam - Spring 2011

by Donna Schilling, Contributor

BARRE FALLS DAM HAWK WATCH Spring 2011 Season Totals

Total Number of Days	23
Total Number of Hours	105

Black Vulture	0
Turkey Vulture	37
Osprey	92
Bald Eagle	21
Northern Harrier	9
Sharp-Shinned Hawk	96
Cooper's Hawk	21
Northern Goshawk	0
Red-Shouldered Hawk	7
Broad-Winged Hawk	633
Red-Tailed Hawk	112
Rough-Legged Hawk	1
Golden Eagle	1
American Kestrel	26
Merlin	2
Peregrine Falcon	2
Unidentified Raptors	12

Total	1072
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Spring hawk migration in Central Massachusetts unfolds at a much more leisurely pace than in the autumn. For the past few years, our March numbers have trended downward, and 2011 was no exception. Excluding Turkey Vultures, only 72 migrants were recorded that month.

Raptors were on the move after the April 1 snowstorm. On April 2, twenty Red-tails took advantage of moderate NW winds, and we counted our first Ospreys and first Peregrine of the season. A Golden Eagle on the 6th and a Rough-legged on the 10th provided much-needed excitement while we awaited the Broad-wings.

Measurable rainfall occurred on ten days during the peak inland migration period, April 10 to April 30, reducing our coverage for April to a disappointing 68 hours. Fair weather prevailed on nine days, during which we tallied 72 Ospreys, 78 Sharp-shinneds, 7 Cooper's Hawks, 621 Broad-wings, 16 American Kestrels, and a handful of the other species. By the time the rain cleared on the 29th, it was apparent that Worcester County migration was winding down, and we concluded the season's watch on May 1. ■



Pilgrim Heights - Spring 2011

by Don Manchester, EMHW Member and Pilgrim Heights Primary Counter

The Spring 2011 count at Pilgrim Heights was down in numbers mainly because hourly coverage was curtailed by endless days of rain. Hours were down by a 100+ and numbers were down by 600+.

Some highlights of the season were six BVs and ten MKs. An interesting aside is a total of Mississippi Kites that I've observed in thirteen years of counting is 63 with the addition of 10 this season. A common raven and common moorhen were two unusual sightings. The 289 AKs were the third highest for the site. I wish to thank the volunteers for their time at the watch. ■



› For more details on the daily and monthly records and summaries of the hawk watch sites featured in this newsletter, be sure to visit www.hawkcount.org. ◀

PILGRIM HEIGHTS HAWK WATCH Spring 2011 Season Totals

Black Vulture	6
Turkey Vulture	740
Osprey	83
Mississippi Kite	10
Bald Eagle	20
Northern Harrier	11
Sharp-Shinned Hawk	216
Cooper's Hawk	32
Northern Goshawk	2
Red-Shouldered Hawk	16
Broad-Winged Hawk	217
Red-Tailed Hawk	84
Rough-Legged Hawk	0
Golden Eagle	0
American Kestrel	289
Merlin	67
Peregrine Falcon	13
Unidentified Accipiters	1
Unidentified Falcons	1
Unidentified Raptors	2
Total	1810

Plum Island - Spring 2011

by Paul M. Roberts, Plum Island Site Leader
(temporarily for 2011) phawk254@comcast.net

PLUM ISLAND HAWK WATCH Spring 2011 Season Totals

Total Number of Days	15
Total Number of Hours	94.75

Black Vulture	0
Turkey Vulture	12
Osprey	34
Bald Eagle	5
Northern Harrier	144
Sharp-Shinned Hawk	218
Cooper's Hawk	25
Northern Goshawk	0
Red-Shouldered Hawk	0
Broad-Winged Hawk	1
Red-Tailed Hawk	10
Rough-Legged Hawk	0
Golden Eagle	0
American Kestrel	1206
Merlin	86
Peregrine Falcon	10
Unidentified Accipiters	3
Unidentified Buteos	1
Unidentified Falcons	2
Unidentified Raptors	9

Total	1766
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The Spring 2011 hawk migration on Plum Island was nothing short of spectacular. With 1766 hawks, we had the best season since Craig Jackson resurrected the spring watch at Plum in 2006, exceeding the previous record of 1154 in 2009 despite 36 hours less coverage.

Seasonal totals included a record 1206 American Kestrels, 218 Sharp-shinned Hawks, an incredible 144 Northern Harriers, 86 Merlins, 34 Ospreys and 10 Peregrines. Six-year record totals included Bald Eagle (5), Northern Harrier, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Cooper's Hawk (25), Red-tailed Hawk (10), and American Kestrel.

We had six days with more than 100 hawks; three days with more than 300 hawks, which makes for very enjoyable watching. The three best dates were April 6, 18, and 21. On April 6 we had 398 hawks, including a spectacular 56 Northern Harriers, with at least 28 adult males and 21 adult females. Because of strong northwest winds, almost all the birds were at or below eye level, one of the most exciting days I've ever had on Plum. Seeing 306 kestrels and 10 Merlins at or below eye level added to the excitement. April 18 brought 318 hawks, including 219 kestrels and 45 Sharp-shinned hawks. Three days later we had our biggest flight of the season, with 454 hawks, including 388 kestrels, 18 Merlins, 22 harriers and 11 sharpshins. Our biggest Sharp-shinned Hawk flight of the season occurred on May 6, when we had 115, along with 8 Cooper's Hawks, and a good late kestrel flight of 49 with 6 Merlins and 2 Peregrine Falcons.

My thanks to the following observers, without whom the watch could not be done. Kathryn Chihowski, David Goodine, Ursula Goodine, Tom Graham, Rick Heil, Craig Jackson, Ted Mara, Judd Nathan, Erik Nielsen, Simon Perkins, Bob Secatore, Mary Ellen Stone, Jeremiah Trimble, and Tom Wetmore. Special thanks to David, Ursula, Craig and Ted, who were site leaders, and special condolences to Craig, who after driving much of the coverage for five years, was unable to do so this year because of academic requirements. ■

Hawk Identification & Migration Classes with Paul Roberts

Identifying Hawks in Flight

Mass Audubon Habitat, Belmont, MA - (617) 489-5050 - www.massaudubon.org

Lectures: Wed. Sept 7, 2011, 7-9 p.m. and Wed. Sept 14, 2011, 7-9 p.m.

Optional Field Trips: Sat. Sept 10 (rain date 11th) – Pack Monadnock or Wachusett Mountain (looking primarily for Broad-winged Hawks, Ospreys, and Bald Eagles) and Sat. Oct 1 (rain date 2nd) – Lighthouse Point, CT (accipiters and falcons)

Fall is the time to see hundreds or even thousands of hawks as they migrate south. Learn how to identify them in flight, and find out where and when to see them. The first class introduces thirteen species and their identifying features. The second class introduces late migrants and focuses on the nature of migration and specifics on viewing those birds. The first trip (Wachusett Mountain Reservation, Princeton, MA or Pack Monadnock, Peterborough NH) will focus on the numerous broad-winged hawks and other buteos as well as Ospreys and Bald Eagles, while the second (Lighthouse Point in New Haven, CT) will focus on accipiters and falcons, including Cooper's Hawks, Merlins, and Peregrine Falcons. This may be the last time Paul will offer this unique class.

Winter Raptors

Ipswich River Sanctuary, Topsfield, MA - (978) 887-9264 - www.massaudubon.org

Lecture: Thursday, Nov. 10, 7-9 p.m., Ipswich River Sanctuary

Field Trip: Saturday, Nov 12, 8 a.m.- 2:00 p.m., Plum Island/Newburyport area

This two-part workshop will help you find, more easily identify, and more fully appreciate wintering birds of prey. In the evening slide/lecture, we'll study 14 species including the Northern Harrier, goshawk, the ubiquitous Red-tailed Hawk, Rough-legged Hawk, and extremely rare Gyrfalcon. The field trip to the Newburyport/Plum Island area will give us the opportunity to practice field identification skills and also look for Short-eared and Snowy Owls. Whether you are a beginning birder or more advanced, this workshop will help you increase your knowledge and skills for field identification.

Annual Election for Board of Directors

EMHW members need to vote for **three** of the six nominees to appoint them to serve as Elected Directors for a two-year term. (The ballot is at the bottom of the membership form on the facing page.) Biographical information on each candidate is below.

Steve Anderson has been hooked on hawk watching since a friend told him about the spectacle of the fall migration seen from Wachusett Mountain back about 1982 or so. Some of his other interests include golf, kayaking and canoeing, camping in remote places, and strumming his old Gibson.

Ted Mara has been a nominated director for several years and an active hawk watcher at Wachusett in the fall and Plum Island in the spring.

Steve Olson has been active in Eastern Mass Hawkwatch since 2004. He started at Mt. Wachusett during the fall migrations. In 2008, he took over as the Site Co-Ordinator from Jane Stein. He has served as President of EMHW since 2009 and has been on the Board since 2007.

Tom Pirro is a longtime EMHW board member and club member. He is the fall hawk watch coordinator for Mount Watatic.

Paul M. Roberts of Medford founded Eastern Mass Hawk Watch in the fall of 1976 and has served on the board ever since. He is currently President of the NorthEast Hawk Watch (NEHW) and a director and a past Chair of the Hawk Migration Association of North America (HMANA). Paul also teaches courses on hawk identification and migration for several Mass Audubon sanctuaries.

Eric Smith is a "nominated" director on the board this past year and a well known local bird photographer.



Eastern Massachusetts HAWK WATCH

Membership Form

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. I would like to give a FREE gift membership to:

GIFT MEMBERSHIP	Name: _____
	Street Address: _____
	City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____
	E-mail: _____

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 \$10
 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 or bring with you to the Annual Meeting.

EMHW Board Member Ballot

Please vote for **three** (3) of the six 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"/> Steve Anderson | <input type="checkbox"/> Tom Pirro |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ted Mara | <input type="checkbox"/> Paul Roberts |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Steve Olson | <input type="checkbox"/> Eric Smith |

cut along dotted line

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.

Our sincerest thanks to Ursula Goodine, Paul M. Roberts, Joey Mason, Donna Schilling, Don Manchester, Tom Pirro, Craig Jackson, Karen Olson and Steve Olson for their contributions to this newsletter.

Thanks to Ursula Goodine, Paul M. Roberts and Karen Olson for the photos accompanying their articles; and Shawn Carey for the use of his photographs throughout the publication. You can find more of Shawn's work at www.migrationproductions.com.

Newsletter Designer & Editor: Sabina Grady

Not a Member? Membership Lapsed?

Our annual dues are only \$10 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 workshop and other educational programs to which members get a discount.

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, PO Box 663, Newburyport, MA 01950. *Thanks!*

Give a FREE membership to a friend! Just check the appropriate box on your membership form and fill in the name of the person that you would like to receive a free membership (provided they are not already a member or a past member). We will make sure they receive the club newsletter and add them to our e-mail list which will update them on EMHW events.

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



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