

Press release – October 14, 2014

Over One Million Migrating Hawks Counted during International Hawk Migration Week

Hancock, NH - The Hawk Migration Association of North America (HMANA) celebrated its first annual International Hawk Migration Week (IHMW) September 20-28, 2014 by tallying over 1.2 million migrating hawks, eagles and vultures at 100 sites throughout Canada, the United States, and Mexico.

Each year hundreds of thousands of hawks, eagles and vultures make their journey from Canada and the United States through Mexico to wintering areas as far as South America. Dedicated counters at hawk watch sites document this movement starting as early as 1 August and continuing daily into December. Their daily numbers are reported to HMANA's online database, HawkCount.org. This particular week in late September was chosen due to the sheer number of hawks that are counted across North America.

One hundred watch sites from 33 states and provinces across the continent counted an astounding 1,203,067 raptors during September 20-28. Twenty-nine species were tallied, the vast majority being broad-winged hawks (1,125,597) - since IHMW took place during their peak migration. Other high counts included 24,899 Sharp-shinned Hawks, 8,909 Mississippi Kites, 8,724 Turkey Vultures and 7,192 American Kestrels.

Raptors tend to follow topographic features during fall migration such as north to south running ridgelines, coastlines, and river valleys. As they move further south, there's a funneling effect as they approach the southern US. The majority of hawks choose to avoid long water crossings so are then squeezed along the coast of the Gulf of Mexico and on through Mexico. This is why the Veracruz, Mexico watch sites counted more than any other at 812,949 during IHMW. Corpus Christi, Texas located on the US Gulf coast tallied 226,224 raptors. Other counts across the continent included 15,862 at Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory, MN; 4,151 Holiday Beach Conservation Area, ON; 4,811 at the Goshute Mountains, NM and 2,777 at the Florida Keys Hawk Watch, FL.

In addition to submitting their daily migration counts to HMANA's HawkCount.org database, sites celebrated across the map with hawk watching festivals, identification workshops and live bird of prey events. Dr. Laurie Goodrich of Hawk Mountain Sanctuary, Kempton, PA (the oldest hawk watch site in the western hemisphere) said: "IHMW is a fantastic demonstration of the popularity of hawk watching and the value of raptors in the environment."

About HMANA

HMANA (www.hmana.org) is a non-profit organization with a mission to advance scientific knowledge and promote conservation of raptor populations through the study, enjoyment, and appreciation of raptor migration. It oversees the online database, Hawkcount.org, an archive of count data with a wealth of information for birdwatchers and general public alike, including maps and directions to sites, average counts, population status and migration timing by species.

HMANA partners with Hawk Mountain Sanctuary PA (www.hawkmountain.org), Hawk Watch International (based in Utah: www.hawkwatch.org), and Bird Studies Canada (in Ontario: www.bsc-eoc.org) in the Raptor Population Index program, which aims to track changes in hawk populations for conservation purposes.

For directions and contact information for hawk watch sites near you, visit www.hawkcount.org.

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