



Raptorthon

How to find sponsors for your Raptorthon

Ask your friends, relatives, work colleagues, neighbors, visitors to hawk watches, etc., to make a donation or pledge to support of your Raptorthon. Tell them what you are going to do and try to convey your enthusiasm and commitment to the cause. Give them the information they need to make a decision whether to sponsor you. This can be done face-to-face, by telephone, by mail, or by email.

Prospective sponsors can be asked to sign up directly on your sponsor sheet or can be given an individual return coupon as described below.

Experienced “a-thoners” find that one of the easiest and most effective ways to get sponsors (and to retain them year after year) is to write a form letter asking for a pledge. Send your letter to prospective sponsors or hand it to them in person. An e-mail message is becoming increasingly popular as an alternative way to approach sponsors. Try to personalize each request as much as possible by adding special notes.

This is the easy way for people who don’t like to ask for pledges face-to-face. Most recipients like this kind of approach because it does not involve pressure tactics and allows them to respond as they see fit. Our experience is that most respond positively.

Your letter should contain the basic information about what you are going to do and why. It should be designed to make it easy for the potential sponsor to understand and reply. Providing a return coupon works very well.

Overleaf is a generic pledge request, which is intended to help you get started. Either photocopy it and fill in your personal information or, better still, write your own letter.

We have also provided an example of the kind of return coupon that should be sent with your letter or email. Again, fill in your own information and copy it, or design your own coupon to suit your own situation.

Sponsors should always be given a report on the highlights of your Raptorthon. They will appreciate hearing what happened and will be happier to make good on their pledges than if you merely demand payment. It will also help you to cultivate loyal sponsors to support you another year.

Here's how to do it -- a sample letter to a potential sponsor.

Customize underlined words to suit your situation (or write your own letter)

Include a return coupon

Dear John and/or Jane:

Will you sponsor me/ my team (the "Vultures") for an exciting day of raptor and/or bird watching?

Why am I doing this? I enjoy watching the spectacular flight of hawks. Their mastery of the air and large numbers as they fly together during their migrations are thrilling to watch. And spring is a great time to get outdoors and enjoy birds generally.

But there is another reason: I am taking part in a Raptorthon, organized by the Hawk Migration Association of North America, to support raptor conservation and hawk migration watching throughout North and Central America. As well, my Raptorthon will support my favorite local Hawk Watch site.

Accurate knowledge of population status and change is a fundamental building block of species conservation. Your sponsorship will help support HMANA's HawkCount.org website information system and database, which securely stores counts of migrating raptors from more than 250 sites across the United States, Canada, and Central America. The Raptor Population Index program takes these counts and uses them to provide a unique assessment of the health and trends of populations of North America's migratory raptors – information that is essential for effective conservation. A recent analysis has shown that most raptor populations are in good shape but has also revealed a widespread decline in our smallest falcon, the American Kestrel.

We need to continue monitoring Kestrels and other hawks to provide early warning of problems. This requires expert hawk counters at each watch site across the continent, as well as highly skilled help to maintain the huge data archive and use it to assess population status. Will you help support this important raptor conservation work?

To sponsor me with a **donation** or **pledge** to support my Raptorthon, please fill out the attached coupon and return it to me. Afterwards I will send you an account of the highlights of my Raptorthon.

I am looking forward to working hard to see as many raptors and other bird species as possible during my Raptorthon and I hope that I can count on your support.

Yours sincerely,

P.S. In case you are wondering, "raptors" means all kinds of birds of prey, including vultures, eagles, falcons, harriers, ospreys, and hawks. The latter term, "hawks" is often used to mean any or all raptors that are active in the daytime. "Raptors" also include owls, which are active mainly at night, and shrikes which are small predatory songbirds. I will count all of these species as raptors.

HMANA's mission

To advance scientific knowledge and promote conservation of raptor populations through study, enjoyment, and appreciation of raptor migration.