



ONONDAGA AUDUBON SOCIETY'S DERBY HILL BIRD OBSERVATORY NEWSLETTER

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FALL 2011

THE YEAR OF THE EAGLE

*by David Muir, Derby Hill Bird Observatory
Membership Secretary*

The eagle flight at Derby Hill this past season was phenomenal. To illustrate just how phenomenal, we need to put this year's count into historical perspective.

Starting in 1963 a number of volunteer observers assisted John Haugh in gathering data for his seminal study of Derby Hill, which, when published, included data from 1963 through 1969. Those same volunteers continued to provide data that Fritz Scheider reported annually in *The Kingbird* through the late 1960s and into the 1970s. In 1978, the first *Derby Hill Newsletter* was published using data also gathered by volunteer observers. For that period from 1963 through 1978, the record yearly flight for Bald Eagles was 11 (1964, 1967) with a season's low count of 2 in 1963 (with limited coverage) and 3 in 1968 (with more extensive coverage). The Golden Eagle counts over most of that same period were similar, although 1977 produced a record year of 25 birds, 10 of which flew past in one day, at that time an unprecedented occurrence.

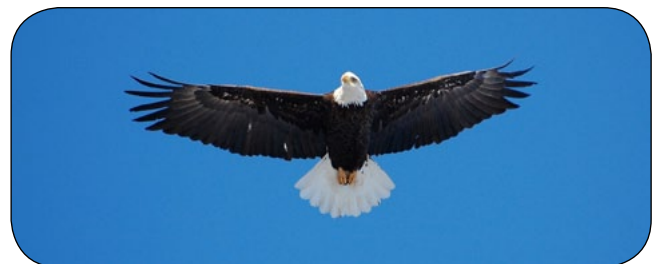
During that 15 year period there was daily coverage of the hawk flight only during the two central years of John Haugh's study, 1966 and 1967. The data for the other years was gathered sporadically, observers showing up when conditions looked to be favorable and when they had time. Then in 1979, we began our systematic collection of data from a resident hawk counter. But, despite this increase in coverage, eagle numbers remained close to what they had been. In 1979, a new record high for Bald Eagles was established with a total of 14 birds (there were 18 Golden Eagles), but in 1981, the Bald Eagle count dropped to 6.

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The early to mid-80s saw some years with over 20 Bald Eagles, but then over the last three years of the decade, the numbers began to increase dramatically: 29, 36, 49. Then after a few up and down years, 69 Bald Eagles were recorded in 1994, and 101 in 1995. The Bald Eagle count again exceeded one hundred in 1998 (129) and then surpassed two hundred in 2001 (224) and three hundred in 2006 (363), the record prior to this year.

The Golden Eagle count also increased significantly over the past thirty years, although not nearly as dramatically as the Bald Eagle count. It was ten years before the Golden Eagle count exceeded the record flight of 1977, reaching 26 in 1987. The total reached 55 in 1995, then dropped into the 20's and low 30's before sky-rocketing to 92 in 2000. The numbers for this species have then fluctuated radically over the last decade, with a high of 80 (2008) and a low of 34 (2010).

And then came 2011! The total count for Bald Eagles this year was 609! That is an increase of 246 or 68% over the previous record total. The Golden Eagle count was a record 111. That gives us a grand total of 720 eagles for the season. In 1972, my first season at Derby Hill, the total eagle count was 12 (6 of each). This year's total is an increase of 5800% over that earlier year! On April 27 of this year, my wife Janet and I were on the Hill when 70 Bald Eagles and a daily record 26 Golden Eagles flew past. There were 96 eagles in a single day! No one in 1972 would ever have dreamed that such a day was possible. Such a wonderful example of what concern for our environment and for species and their habitat can accomplish.



Mature Bald Eagle. Stock photo.

HAWK COUNT: SPRING 2011 A MONTHLY REVIEW

by Bill Purcell

MARCH

The season opened with 50 raptors on the first day of March and the first triple digit flight came on the 4th. As is often the case, snow and cold took their toll on the early part of the season as 6 of the first 13 days were not covered due to the weather. Totals of 478 on March 15th and 1288 on March 17th were the first substantial flights of the season. The 17th saw the peak flights for Cooper's, Northern Goshawk, Red-shouldered and Rough-legged Hawks but then cold weather arrived with mostly east or northwest winds from the 18th through the 29th. That is a peak period for the aforementioned species, and Turkey Vulture and most birds that chose to migrate at that time did so nowhere close to the lakeshore. Southwest winds on the 30th finally broke the pattern as 1418 birds were seen including 1220 Turkey Vultures, the high daily count.

There were 40 Golden Eagles for the month with 27 of them on March 15th and 17th. The first two Sandhill Cranes arrived on March 15th and 55,000 Snow Geese came past on the 12th. For March, 5549 raptors were counted over 107.5 hours on 23 days of observation. Precipitation and temperature data were close to the long-term average.



*Silhouettes of three Sandhill Cranes on 4/27/11.
Photo by Julie Covey*

APRIL

April was very wet with 8.5 inches of rain but from the 2nd through the 11th hawks worked around the rain.

The 12th had 2565 raptors and high daily counts for Northern Harrier, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk and American Kestrel as well as the first 113 Broad-winged Hawks of the season. Migration then slowed for the next 10 days with adverse winds and rain before the peak April flights ran from the 22nd through the 28th. There was a Swainson's Hawk on April 22. The 27th saw southeast winds and the high daily count for the season with 6319 hawks including peaks for Osprey and Broad-winged Hawk while the 70 Bald Eagles and 26 Golden Eagles were also seasonal highs. The Broad-winged total for the day was 4901 but radar indicated a large movement of some biota over Lake Ontario, quite possibly a large number of Broad-wings, but more work will have to be done on this issue in future years.

Regarding non-raptor flights, April 4th had a flight of birds that had been delayed by the weather. Some of the species included 52 Great Blue Herons, 67 Killdeer, 19 Wilson's Snipe, and 20,135 American Robins. There were also 440 Common Redpolls for the day. There were 7 Sandhill Cranes on April 25th and April 26th saw the peak flight of 330 Northern Flickers. The first wave of warblers and other neotropical migrants also occurred on the 26th including a record early Bobolink and 1200 Yellow-rumped Warblers.

April was covered for 203.25 hours over 29 days with a total of 26,449 birds. The temperature was 4° F warmer than normal and since the rain didn't fall all-day, every-day, raptors were able to migrate in timely fashion.

MAY

In years with good flight weather in late April, such as 2011, early May can be a little slow as most breeding adult raptors have passed the lookout by that time and adverse winds helped to slow migration over most days from the 2nd through the 12th. The last big push of juvenile Sharp-shinned Hawks came on May 13th as 290 were recorded and this day also had the first pulse of juvenile Broad-winged Hawks with 533. There was a good count of 12 Merlins on that day and the 1089 raptors for the day was the second

best of the month. Rain was a factor over four days beginning May 14th and then the weather warmed up. Juvenile Broad-wings picked up on the 18th and nine of the next twelve days had a hundred or more with the peak of 1071 on the 24th. The second Swainson's Hawk for the season came on May 22nd and unlike most Swainson's, it was in view for several minutes and photographed. Of the record-setting 609 Bald Eagles, 234 came past from the 22nd through the 31st. Passerine migration at Derby Hill was generally slow through May 11th and very good starting May 11th. Warm mornings bring flights of warblers, Blue Jays,

Cedar Waxwings, Baltimore Orioles and Scarlet Tanagers, but passerine migration was generally slow through May 11th. Birding was good for most of the rest of the month with some of the highlights: 3 fly by Prothonotary Warblers during the month, 4670 Blue Jays and 438 Baltimore Orioles on the 12th, 730 Pine Siskins on 13th and 2 Orange-crowned Warblers on the 14th. The high count for Common Nighthawks was 6 on the 21st and a Willet closed out the season on the 31st. May was covered for 175 hours over 29 days. The month was warm, 5.7° F above average, with 0.51 inches of rain above average.

DERBY HILL BIRD OBSERVATORY

SPRING HAWK WATCH SPECIES ACCOUNTS 2011

BLACK VULTURE

Two of these small, traditionally more southern vultures were seen in 2011, the 28th and 29th records of the species at Derby Hill. These sightings mark a seventh consecutive year the species has been recorded during the spring movement, in contrast to only two individuals recorded the first decade of standardized counting at Derby Hill. Black Vultures in the spring at Derby Hill likely fall into one of two categories: (1) birds that failed to breed and are simply wandering northward in a post breeding dispersal or (2) birds overshooting a traditional northern boundary during their regular, annual spring movement and potentially expanding the breeding range for the species northward. Regardless of the reasons behind the movement, the Derby Hill data scientifically back up what many northeastern birders can tell you anecdotally: that sightings of this species are becoming more frequent at more northern latitudes in recent years.

TURKEY VULTURE

The season total of 10467 Turkey Vultures is the site's fifth highest count behind 2009, 2008, 2010, and 2006. This slight downward hiccup in numbers still falls well within normal interannual variation of an exponentially increasing long term population index for the large dark scavenger at Derby Hill; the average count for the last five years marks a tenfold

increase over the average of the first five years of standardized counting for the species. Unlike the last three years, which all saw one or two single day counts of 2000+ of this species, the 2011 Turkey Vulture count seemed quite spread out temporally, with only two days topping 1000 individuals counted. The first was the year's peak flight on March 30th with 1220 individuals tallied, with the other four digit day being April 11th, very much on the tail end of the normal peak window for migration for the species at Derby Hill.

OSPREY

The big news concerning Derby Hill Ospreys in 2011 is a new record early date at the site with an individual seen on March 19th, besting the 2003 record by five days. For the season, the 364 Ospreys tallied in 2011 is a rebound from 2010's showing of 280 of the long winged raptor, but is shy of the 32 year average for the site of 430 birds. Counts of the species at Derby



*Osprey. One of many seen on April 27th.
Photo by Julie Covey.*

Hill have been variable over the past 15 years, with a tally of 707 individuals as recently as 2008. The peak day count for 2011 came on April 27th with 87 individuals noted passing the north lookout.

BALD EAGLE

Weather, fate, and perhaps a bit of decent reproductive success lined up for an amazing Bald Eagle count at Derby Hill in spring 2011. The 609 tallied from March 1st to May 31st is over double the season count for the site for all but two previous years, 2006 and 2009. Even the May 2011 count of 396 of the big birds alone shatters the previous season record of 363 in 2006. Indeed this number would lead one to believe that much of this year's amazing flight was attributable to southeastern winter breeding birds that disperse northwards in late spring. The peak daily flight of the season came on April 27th. The 70 Bald Eagles tallied that day marks the second highest daily count for the species at Derby Hill behind 2006's May 18th flight of 73 birds. Numbers for the first half of the count were above average for the



Bald Eagle among other raptors. Photo by Julie Covey.

species in 2011 as well, these flights likely composed of summer breeding birds headed for New England and Canadian breeding grounds. The March total of 50 Bald Eagles, while not a month record, is an above average count for the month even in just the last decade. Who among the regulars when standardized counting was started in 1979 could have fathomed a Bald Eagle flight like this? A tribute to one of the Endangered Species Act's poster children for sure!

NORTHERN HARRIER

Harriers had a decent showing in 2011 with 602 individuals tallied. This is quite the rebound from 2010's all time low count for the species of 273 individuals, but discerning a long term trend for the species from the Derby Hill data should be attempted only with a healthy dose of salt. The variability of the counts of this species at Derby Hill is a priority for future research. Is reproductive success highly variable from year to year for northeastern populations, or are they less facultative migrants than some other raptor species? More accurate notes on age and sex ratios from year to year could shed some light onto answers to these questions, along with comparisons of Derby Hill spring data to late winter surveys for the species. The peak flight for Harriers at Derby Hill in 2011 came on April 11th with 70 individuals; the second highest daily count for the season came quite late on May 13th with 65 birds tallied.



Sharp-shinned Hawk. Photo by Julie Covey.

SHARP-SHINNED HAWK

The 2011 total of 4111 for North America's smallest Accipiter marks a strong showing relative to 2010's second lowest count on the books in Derby Hill's 33 years of standardized counting. The 2011 count is still, nonetheless, shy of the 32 year historical average for the species of 4670. Counts of Sharp-shinned Hawks at Derby Hill have been quite variable over the last decade, varying from 1510 in 2005 to 4212 in 2008. As such, without excessive data mining, the Derby Hill data does not really support or deny the recent theory of migratory short stopping in this species proposed by some raptor biologists. Ten dates in 2011 from April 10th to May 13th saw Sharpie counts of over 100, with a peak daily count of 809 birds on April 11th.

COOPERS HAWK

The 2011 Cooper's Hawk total of 158 is the lowest count on record at Derby Hill, just 21 birds lower than the previous all time low count from 2010, and a far cry from the historical average for the species of 471. Fortunately for the species, the recent plunge in numbers at Derby Hill does not seem to be replicated by other sites throughout the northeastern states. Only two dates in 2011 saw Coop flights of at least 20 birds, with a pathetic peak daily total of 23 individuals on March 17th.

NORTHERN GOSHAWK

The movements away from the breeding grounds in the non breeding season for Northern Goshawk are better described as irruptive or invasive than many of Derby Hill's other raptor species. The 47 counted in 2011 were welcome sights to all observers present, and mark the highest count for the species at the site since 2004. This season's count, however, falls well within the predictable norms for the large Accipiter with a cyclical life history. It should not be interpreted as any type of start to a recovery from a human induced crash in the bird's numbers, but does bode well for an upswing in numbers at Derby over the next few years, perhaps pushing back above the 32 year average for the species of 55.

RED-SHOULDERED HAWK

2011 saw an all time low count of Red-shouldered Hawks at Derby Hill, with the 313 tallied being 8 birds fewer than the previous all time low count recorded in 2010. While the reduced hours of coverage in March of 2010 should be taken into account in any analysis (the latter 10-15 days of the month usually see the peak flight of the adults of this striking raptor), the downward trend in the last decade for this species is significant, both biologically and statistically. Derby Hill is one of the most ideally situated sites for monitoring the extreme northeastern population of the colorful Buteo. The downward trend in numbers are surely a call for more study to find out what is going on with the population of the species that passes Derby Hill each spring. There is no denying that 313 is a far cry from 803, the latter number being the average count for the previous 32 years of standardized counting.

BROAD-WINGED HAWK

One of the first things learned by anyone regularly frequenting a hawkwatch from year to year or trying to make sense of data collected from hawkwatches is that the Broad-winged Hawk is a fickle bird. Just a few hours from Derby as the Buteo flies, Braddock Bay observed a number of spectacular Broad-winged flights in spring of 2011, with a season total for the species of 67895. Many of these birds failed to read the same books we humans do, and did not hug the lakeshore on their journeys northeast. Crude interpretations of local Doppler radar would suggest that many of the birds actually ventured out over the open water of Lake Ontario, cutting its southeast corner so to speak and bypassing Derby Hill. Nonetheless, counters at Derby Hill came up with a respectable tally of 19008 of the small long distance migrants in 2011. 2011 saw six days with four digit counts of Broad-winged Hawks, with a peak flight of 4901 on April 27th.

RED-TAILED HAWK

2011's count of 3476 migrating Red-tailed Hawks figures to be the 3rd lowest count in Derby Hill's 33 years of standardized counting, behind 2010 and 2007. One might be further disheartened by a comparison of this year's tally to the 32 year historical average of 6551. For the optimists, it is worth noting that only a slight downward trend is detectable over the 33 years of data, and an analysis of birds seen per hour of observation does away with that downward trend entirely. It is completely conceivable that the three counts of less than 4000 birds in the past five years are just a fluke. Only three days in March of 2011 saw Red-tail flights of over 100 birds while April saw seven days with triple digit counts for the species. The peak daily flight was on the later side of average on April 11th with 453 individuals tallied.

SWAINSON'S HAWK

A few of these western, long winged and long distance migrants grace east coast and great lakes hawk watches with their presence each season. Observers at Derby Hill on April 22nd were treated to a look at one of these elegant Buteos. A second Swainson's Hawk passed the site one month later on May 22nd.

Species Accounts continued on page 8

Derby Hill Daily Counts - Spring 2011

Daily Hawk Count - March 1 through 31, 2011

Date	Obs Hrs	BV	TV	OS	BE	NH	SS	CH	NG	RS	BW	SW	RT	RL	GE	AK	ML	PG	TOTAL
3/1/2011	5		5		2				1				38	3		1			50
3/2/2011	0																		0
3/3/2011	5		3				1		2				60	4					70
3/4/2011	5		14		7	3	2	5	4	2			70	6	4				117
3/5/2011	0																		0
3/6/2011	0																		0
3/7/2011	0																		0
3/8/2011	3		12		1		1	2	1	3			34	1		1			56
3/9/2011	4		3			1		4		1			25	7					41
3/10/2011	0																		0
3/11/2011	5		17		4	2	6	8	3	9			91	16	7	1			164
3/12/2011	4		17		1		1	4					31	3			1		58
3/13/2011	0																		0
3/14/2011	4		12		2								17						31
3/15/2011	8		208		7	7	12	11	3	35			155	25	12	3			478
3/16/2011	0																		0
3/17/2011	7		624		19	9	39	23	9	134			382	32	15		2		1288
3/18/2011	4		90		1	2	2	1		7			6						109
3/19/2011	3		37	1	2				1	2			16						59
3/20/2011	6		114		2	5	15	5	1	16			77	18			2		255
3/21/2011	5					4	3									4	1		12
3/22/2011	2		9			2							1						12
3/23/2011	6		113					3					5	2					123
3/24/2011	6		131		2		1	1		2			20	1					158
3/25/2011	2		65				1						4						70
3/26/2011	0																		0
3/27/2011	1		47																47
3/28/2011	7		453			1				1									455
3/29/2011	6	1	443	1		2		2		3			13	2	1				468
3/30/2011	7		1220	2		6	10	20		22			127	5	1	4	1		1418
3/31/2011	5		4				2			1						2	1		10
Total: Mar-11	108 hours	1	3641	4	50	44	96	89	25	238	0	0	1172	125	40	16	8	0	5549

Daily Hawk Count - April 1 through 30, 2011

Date	Obs Hrs	BV	TV	OS	BE	NH	SS	CH	NG	RS	BW	SW	RT	RL	GE	AK	ML	PG	TOTAL
4/1/2011	0																		0
4/2/2011	8		794		3	7	14	7	2	17			161			1			1006
4/3/2011	7		249		2		7	2		7			43	1					311
4/4/2011	10		101	15		26	49	4					5	18		11	2		231
4/5/2011	6		76	6		3	2	1		1			9			1			99
4/6/2011	6		154	3		13	8	4		7			36	2	1	4	1		233
4/7/2011	7		105	4	1	14	20			2			61	3	1	2			213
4/8/2011	8		295	2	3	18	58	3	1	5			137	6	2	3			533
4/9/2011	8		814	7		32	43			2			179	14		5			1096
4/10/2011	12		822	3	2	36	148	2	2	6			273	25	2	12	1		1334
4/11/2011	9		1004	10	3	70	809	15		6	113		453	28	2	52			2565
4/12/2011	5		19	1		2	17	1		1			8	1					50
4/13/2011	5															1			1
4/14/2011	5		19				3				2		2						26
4/15/2011	6		69	3		2	12				6		17	2		1	1		113
4/16/2011	2			7		6	1						2		1	5	2		24
4/17/2011	9		160	5	12	18	61	1	1		124		141	4	6	5	3	1	542
4/18/2011	5		20		2	4	12	1	1		79		12	1		1			133
4/19/2011	5		4			1	9	1		1	25		3						44
4/20/2011	9		72	12	7	24	161	2		2	48		13	2		17	7		367
4/21/2011	3		6								1								7
4/22/2011	10		171	10	16	11	255	3	2	2	1077	1	79		7	2	2	1	1639
4/23/2011	9		87	2	4	28	296	1	1		1699		53	3	5	16	3		2198
4/24/2011	7		65	5	4		21				790		9	2					896
4/25/2011	7		103	13	15	2	43	1	1	3	1834		53		1	7			2076
4/26/2011	10		136	10	2	25	253	1		2	257		4			33	3		726
4/27/2011	13	1	344	87	70	30	674	5	5	3	4901		113	15	26	42	2	1	6319
4/28/2011	5		216	14	14	3	120			3	2837		30	2	6	4	1		3250
4/29/2011	5		8		1		7				16		3						35
4/30/2011	7		18	2	2		31	2		2	317		8						382
Total: Apr-11	203 hours	1	5931	221	163	375	3134	57	16	72	14126	1	1907	129	60	225	28	3	26449

Daily Hawk Count - May 1 through 31, 2011

Date	Obs Hrs	BV	TV	OS	BE	NH	SS	CH	NG	RS	BW	SW	RT	RL	GE	AK	ML	PG	TOTAL
5/1/2011	10		129	5	12	11	188	1	1	1	151		49	1	4	3	1		557
5/2/2011	8		7		1	12	73				14		2	1		1			111
5/3/2011	3																		0
5/4/2011	5		3								5		2						10
5/5/2011	5		1	1	2	1	3				6		1			1			16
5/6/2011	8		35	9	13	7	47	2			54		20	2	1	2	2		194
5/7/2011	6		40	3	33	6	65	2	1	2	133		31		3	2			321
5/8/2011	5		11				7	1			8		7	1		2			37
5/9/2011	5			1			7				3								11
5/10/2011	5						2				7		2						11
5/11/2011	5		33			1	9						2						45
5/12/2011	7		45	5	2	4	33		2		19		19	1		1		1	132
5/13/2011	11		52	31	34	65	290	1	2		533		58	2	1	7	12	1	1089
5/14/2011	6			7		1	24				1								33
5/15/2011	0																		0
5/16/2011	0																		0
5/17/2011	4						1				1								2
5/18/2011	7		16	9	7	1	55				20		8			1	1		118
5/19/2011	8		29	25	20	5	30	1			104		33		2	1			250
5/20/2011	6		4		1	1	4				58								68
5/21/2011	5		11	4	17	9	9	2			326		9	1					388
5/22/2011	7		120	8	25	10	18	1			511	1	21	1		1			717
5/23/2011	8		24	11	39	17	6				257		33	2		2			391
5/24/2011	6		68	4	47	5	2				1071		28						1225
5/25/2011	6		29		6	2					187		2						226
5/26/2011	5		1	1	5	4	2	1			12								26
5/27/2011	4																		0
5/28/2011	7		86	6	46	9	4				708		25						884
5/29/2011	7		88	6	66	9	1				551		38						759
5/30/2011	5				1														1
5/31/2011	7		63	3	19	3	1				142		7						238
Total:	176	0	895	139	396	183	881	12	6	3	4882	1	397	12	11	24	16	2	7860
May-11	hours																		

Count Summary - March 1 through May 31, 2011

Date	Obs Hrs	BV	TV	OS	BE	NH	SS	CH	NG	RS	BW	SW	RT	RL	GE	AK	ML	PG	TOTAL
Mar-11	108	1	3641	4	50	44	96	89	25	238	0	0	1172	125	40	16	8	0	5549
Apr-11	203	1	5931	221	163	375	3134	57	16	72	14126	1	1907	129	60	225	28	3	26449
May-11	176	0	895	139	396	183	881	12	6	3	4882	1	397	12	11	24	16	2	7860
Total:	486	2	10467	364	609	602	4111	158	47	313	19008	2	3476	266	111	265	52	5	39858
Spring 2011	hours																		

An explanation of the abbreviations used in the above tables may be found on the final page of this newsletter.

OAS TREASURER'S REPORT: DERBY HILL BIRD OBSERVATORY 2010-2011

7/1/11 through 6/30/11

Income

Derby Hill Donations	\$3584.00
Donations from Box at DH	84.48
Transfer from OAS	2000.00
Total Income	\$5668.48

Expenses

Affiliations	\$50.00
Contracted services	4500.00
Derby Hill Maintenance	758.85
Derby Hill Sanitation	578.31
Derby Hill Utilities	1876.42
Newsletter	802.67
Total Expenses	8566.25

Ending Balance: \$2033.82

ROUGH-LEGGED HAWK

The 266 Rough-legged Hawks counted in 2011 is over double the all time low count of 2010. Like Northern Goshawks, this arctic breeding Buteo is a non facultative migrant with varying numbers moving varying distances south from the breeding grounds for the winter, in addition to experiencing regular, semi-predictable population crashes. Many raptor biologists believe, largely based on numbers observed at Derby Hill and other hawk counts, that the species suffered a massive reproductive failure in the summer of 2009 (making for fewer birds headed north past Derby in the spring of 2010). A good reflection on the summer 2010 breeding season comes not only from the sheer numbers observed at Derby Hill in spring 2011, but also from the count of 31 birds in the last half of April and the month of



*Immature, Rough-legged Hawk, light morph.
Photo by Julie Covey.*

May. Rough-legged Hawks moving north that late in the season are likely young of the previous year. The peak flight for the species came on March 17th with 32 individuals tallied.

GOLDEN EAGLE

2000 was billed as “Y2K, the year of the Golden Eagle” by the powers that be at Derby Hill, after weather that spring made for spectacular, record breaking daily and season counts for the species. 2011 does not have a three digit alpha numeric code to associate with it, but did break new records for the species for both the season and the peak single day count. 111 were tallied for the season, with three days of double digit counts: 12 on March 15th, 15 on March 17th, and the new single day record of 26 on April 27th.

AMERICAN KESTREL

Like Harriers, Sharpies, Rough-legs and to a lesser extent Ospreys, the 265 Kestrels tallied in 2011 is quite the rebound from 2010’s all time low count for the species at Derby Hill. The small falcon that has conservationists so concerned should not, however, be deemed out of the water based on the 2011 count. Three springs in the last decade saw counts pushing 400 Kestrels at Derby Hill. Furthermore, numbers in the last decade are a far cry from those at the site in the early 1980’s, which ranged from 400 to 800+birds

Derby Hill Notable Sightings for Spring 2011

Great Blue Heron	55	4 April
Snow Goose	55,000	12 March
Sandhill Crane	2	15 March
	7	25 April
Wilson’s Snipe	19	4 April
Common Nighthawk	6	21 May
Northern Flicker	330	26 April
Orange-crowned Warbler	2	14 May
American Robin	20,135	4 April
Common Redpoll	440	4 April
Pine Siskin	730	13 May

per season. Seven days from April 4th to April 27th in 2011 saw double digit Kestrel counts, with a peak flight of 52 birds on April 11th.

MERLIN

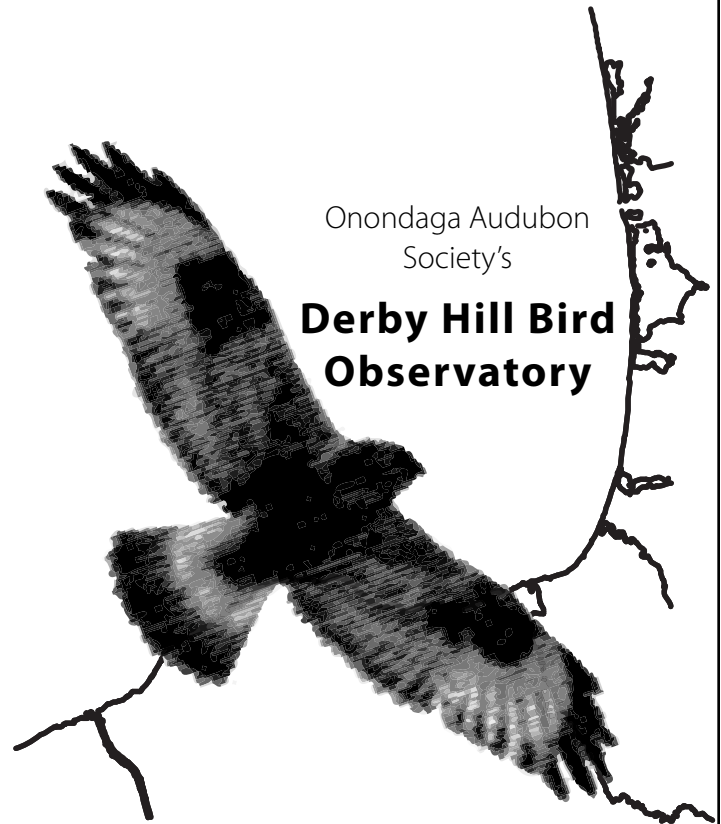
Unlike the other two falcon species, Merlins had a great showing at Derby Hill in 2011. The 52 recorded as migrants ties 2008 as the second highest count on the books, just one bird off the all time high count for the site of 53 in 1995. The peak daily flight of 12 birds on May 13th is also not too far off a record mark; the highest single day count of the species at Derby Hill being 14 on April 30th, 1996.

PEREGRINE FALCON

Derby Hill has been witness to some of the highest spring counts anywhere in the world of species like Rough-legged Hawk, Northern Goshawk, Red-tailed Hawk, and even Bald Eagles. The site is not, however, ideally situated for a species like the Peregrine Falcon. Lake Ontario poses little hindrance in migration for such a long distance power flyer; the lake shore is not, therefore, a diversion line concentrating the species at Derby Hill. A handful are, nonetheless, counted most seasons (only two springs in the late 1980's missed the species entirely), and one can see an upward trend over the 33 years as the Endangered Species Act poster child has recovered from DDT poisoning. 2011's tally of 5 individuals does not exactly fall in line with this upward trend, but anyone who would try to say anything meaningful about the species' population based on this low number should not be trusted.



BIRD FESTIVAL AT DERBY HILL



On May 12th 2012, Onondaga Audubon will hold its first ever Bird Festival at Derby Hill. Located on the shore of Lake Ontario, in the town of Mexico, Derby Hill Bird Observatory is known as one of the best locations to witness the spring raptor migration. Not only that, but many migratory song birds and water fowl can be seen there as well. The Onondaga Audubon Society has an active and enthusiastic board of directors that wants to create more opportunities for education, conservation and advocacy. It is our goal to have this as a yearly festival to raise money so that OAS will be able to fund these opportunities. The festival is in the planning stages but may include such activities as raptor identification seminars, bird walks, ongoing raffles, native plant sale, food vendors, and kid's activities. To make this a success, OAS is looking for volunteers to help with aspects such as finding donations or donors, manning booths, help with parking or facilities, leading bird walks, or other needs that may arise. If you are interested in helping with this exciting event please contact Jason Mauro at jmauro@ocs.cnyric.org or call 315-474-3778.

YEARLY COMPARISON OF DERBY HILL HAWK COUNTS: 1979-2011

<i>YEAR</i>	<i>TV</i>	<i>OS</i>	<i>BE</i>	<i>NH</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>CH</i>	<i>NG</i>	<i>RS</i>	<i>BW</i>	<i>RT</i>	<i>RL</i>	<i>GE</i>	<i>AK</i>	<i>ML</i>	<i>PG</i>
1979	1009	692	14	667	9371	464	55	951	33055	7525	432	18	548	14	3
1980	948	275	12	518	7970	618	35	1226	34056	7819	247	18	420	12	1
1981	1118	286	6	621	6760	618	31	695	17519	5257	584	15	493	15	4
1982	1129	312	20	787	7319	606	140	964	21720	8009	463	14	529	11	2
1983	1437	270	15	1077	6142	608	162	859	40108	8166	478	15	839	10	2
1984	1600	342	22	914	11852	676	174	964	39673	8459	563	20	435	17	1
1985	1623	268	15	592	4587	373	21	520	27974	4474	149	13	551	15	2
1986	2139	268	24	738	5707	466	57	836	14845	6400	265	14	287	11	2
1987	2624	358	29	705	6361	546	89	836	17642	8576	347	26	363	14	6
1988	2980	414	36	1134	5919	504	45	1029	15371	7313	411	27	824	13	0
1989	3575	389	49	812	2667	410	27	595	10988	7441	248	26	306	23	0
1990	2538	643	54	650	5327	303	7	956	23490	4663	298	31	382	19	7
1991	3210	517	48	711	4006	373	39	561	18564	5256	418	34	304	14	8
1992	3156	392	39	595	2925	313	47	676	10718	7407	445	26	221	6	1
1993	4784	528	46	520	3744	411	73	1523	20941	9672	257	32	296	13	2
1994	6086	500	69	1043	5973	822	126	1280	17104	10008	538	22	734	29	12
1995	7537	520	101	1554	6145	1176	77	1805	23426	19531	656	55	931	53	6
1996	5148	327	68	460	4356	478	62	811	15327	7751	345	27	474	47	9
1997	6680	295	55	471	3295	446	34	523	12864	5029	212	22	399	23	6
1998	5764	1063	129	575	4743	563	69	766	16355	6324	140	32	219	35	10
1999	5170	558	92	459	3597	303	14	593	9806	4603	209	23	343	38	14
2000	6012	393	115	536	2782	369	39	853	13652	5281	475	92	283	46	7
2001	7785	533	224	512	3364	381	21	753	17855	4786	336	58	356	26	1
2002	4948	293	93	499	2510	338	56	678	9922	5805	254	67	238	26	9
2003	8581	435	201	552	3821	431	58	723	19121	6760	303	75	217	39	2
2004	6676	343	228	596	2732	452	54	930	12661	4700	462	55	354	24	15
2005	6834	278	137	423	1510	330	26	501	8928	4022	369	49	158	29	4
2006	11375	503	363	474	2706	349	29	578	9442	4859	251	41	216	33	11
2007	8291	365	244	590	2413	413	16	363	8349	3366	254	47	325	39	9
2008	12762	707	290	792	4212	332	19	533	19214	5543	287	80	392	52	21
2009	13250	392	313	446	2851	426	21	508	16453	4555	310	41	253	24	15
2010	11655	280	273	273	1772	179	17	321	11212	3455	112	34	143	22	14
2011	10467	364	609	602	4111	158	47	313	19008	3476	266	111	265	52	5

Derby Hill Bird Observatory Membership

Name _____ Email Address _____

Address _____ Date _____

Individual	\$20	Supporting	\$50
Family	\$25	Patron	\$100
Contributing	\$30	Benefactor	\$1000

Please make checks payable to **Onondaga Audubon Society**. Please write **Derby Hill** on the memo line. Contributions are tax deductible.

Send to:

Dave Muir
2679 Dunbar Woods Road
Marcellus, NY 13108

A note from the Sanctuary...

November 2011

Dear Friends of Derby Hill,

As noted earlier in the newsletter, 2011 was a wonderful year for eagles at Derby Hill. I hope that most of you were able to visit the hill for at least one those marvelous eagle flights. Those eagles and all of the other migrating raptors were recorded by Seth Cutright who was again our hawk counter, and we thank him for the fine job that he did.

Birds were not the only things flying over the hill this year. Some hearts took wing as well. In the summer two couples were married on Derby Hill. As far as I know, these are the first weddings to be held there. On July 9, one of our neighbors, Danielle Lichtenstein was married to William Rombough. And, on September 10, David Riposo, whose family owns a cottage on Mexico point, was married to Jacqlyn Witmer. The weather was lovely for both weddings and according to the participants, everything went splendidly for each.

The trails and lawn were in perfect condition for each wedding party thanks to the work of Ken Hodgson. Ken's regular mowing continues to keep the hill looking wonderful as does Maryanne Adams' work on the gardens. This year, Rudy Capek also helped with the gardens.

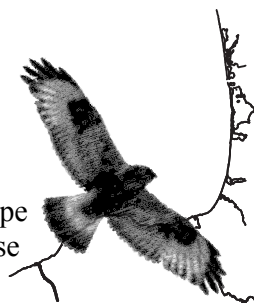
Other workers included Bill Purcell, who again did some trimming, and Diane Emord, who along with Diana Green, did a very conscientious job monitoring the bluebird boxes. The boxes, however, only produced three fledged bluebirds, all from the same nest at the South Lookout. The boxes did produce 49 young tree swallows from 9 nests, and 9 young House Wrens from 2 nests.

This year I have begun playing a more limited role at Derby Hill. I will be continuing as membership secretary, but all operations and programs at Derby Hill will be under the direction of a special committee formed by the Board of Directors of the Onondaga Audubon Society. One of the first goals of that committee is to set up a fund raising Derby Hill Festival. The projected date for that Festival is May 12.

Finally, as Derby Hill membership secretary, let me make our annual appeal for your continued financial support of the operations and maintenance of Derby Hill. Our annual contributions again have fallen short of covering our budget, so we need your generous contributions. To those of you have contributed over this past year, we extend our deepest gratitude. To those of you who for whatever reason did not contribute this past year, we ask that you again join us.

Let me add one final suggestion. A couple of our members have told me that they have asked family members to celebrate their birthdays or special holidays, not by giving them gifts, but by giving gifts in their names to Derby Hill. We would greatly appreciate it if others among you might make the same request.

Thank you,
Dave Muir, DHBO Membership Secretary



Derby Hill Bird Observatory

Sage Creek Dr. & Grand View Ave., Mexico, Oswego County, NY

Mail: PO Box 620, Syracuse, NY 13201

Address Service Requested

First Class Mail

Correspondence & Address corrections to:
information@derbyhill.org

*See bottom of address label for your
membership renewal date.*

DERBY HILL RECORDS

Species & Abbreviation Key	Earliest Arrival	Latest Departure	High Season Total	Peak Day	Number	Usual Peak Period
Black Vulture (BV)	19 Mar	02 June	4	3/25/03	3	x
Turkey Vulture (TV)	22 Feb	14 June	13,250	4/2/09	2671	Apr 1 - Apr 30
Osprey (OS)	19 Mar	15 June	1,063	5/24/98	194	Apr 20 - May 15
Am. Swallow-tailed Kite	16 Apr	x	1	4/16/76	1	x
Mississippi Kite	10 May	25 May	1	5/10/90	1	x
Bald Eagle (BE)	23 Feb	02 June	609	5/18/06	73	Mar 15 - May 20
White-tailed Eagle	24 Apr	x	1	4/24/93	1	x
Northern Harrier (NH)	15 Feb	14 June	1,554	3/24/94	235	Mar 20 - Apr 20
Sharp-shinned Hawk (SS)	20 Feb	20 June	11,582	4/28/84	3,019	Apr 5 - May 10
Cooper's Hawk (CH)	19 Feb	31 May	1,176	4/1/81	158	Mar 20 - Apr 10
Northern Goshawk (NG)	15 Feb	06 June	398	3/29/73	88	Mar 1 - Mar 30
Red-shouldered Hawk (RS)	20 Feb	31 May	1,805	4/5/93	722	Mar 15 - Apr 10
Broad-winged Hawk (BW)	29 Mar	26 June	40,108	4/22/85	18,493	Apr 20 - May 5
Swainson's Hawk (SW)	31 Mar	31 May	1-2/yr	x	1	Apr 20 - May 20
Red-tailed Hawk (RT)	13 Feb	20 June	19,531	4/11/95	4,581	Mar 10 - Apr 20
Rough-legged Hawk (RL)	12 Feb	02 June	656	2/22/81	165	Feb 20 - Apr 20
Golden Eagle (GE)	24 Feb	27 May	111	4/27/11	26	Mar 15 - Apr 20
American Kestrel (AK)	19 Feb	20 June	931	4/15/72	296	Mar 20 - Apr 20
Merlin (ML)	05 Mar	23 May	53	4/30/96	14	Apr 10 - May 10
Perigrine Falcon (PG)	06 Mar	22 May	21	5/10/96	5	Apr 20 - May 10
Gyr Falcon (GY)	16 Feb	07 April	1	x	x	3 singles only

Also, UR = Unknown Raptor, RA = Rarity