

The 2019 spring season marked the 42nd consecutive season that standardized hawk counts have been conducted at Braddock Bay. It also represented the 33rd year that the hawk count was conducted by Braddock Bay Raptor Research. A total of 63,763 migrant raptors of 19 species were counted during 693.75 hours on 90 days (1 March through 31 May). New single-day records were set for Bald Eagle, Peregrine Falcon, and Short-eared Owl. The single-day record was tied for Black Vulture. A new season record was set for Bald Eagle.

Dunkadoo

For the first time, raptor and weather data were entered through Dunkadoo using a smartphone app. Dunkadoo automatically sent this data to HawkCount.org simplifying data entry for the counter and making the count totals immediately available to the public on the internet. An eBird checklist was also submitted each day with a complete count of all bird species and many photos.

March

In March, 4,017 migrants were counted during 231.25 hours. March started off slow and cold. The first decent push was on 15 March with 247 migrants. This was the peak day for Red-shouldered Hawks with 72.

Two Short-eared Owls were seen within a few minutes of each other on 24 March. Both were seen at scope-distance above the pines beyond the parkway. This was the first time more than one short-eared owl has been recorded in a single day.

The peak day of the month was 28 March with 982 migrants. Turkey Vultures were the most numerous raptor in March with a total of 3,112. Three out of the season's six Northern Goshawks were in March. Seven Black Vultures was the highest ever March total for this species.

April

In April, 37,070 migrants were counted during 231.25 hours. The peak day for Turkey Vultures (3,529) and Cooper's Hawks (28) was 8 April. The peak day for Ospreys was 12 April with 47. An adult dark-morph Red-tailed Hawk and a light-morph Swainson's Hawk were seen on 13 April. This was the peak day for Red-tailed Hawks with 154.

The peak day of the month was 18 April with 8,032 migrants and was the highest day for several species, including Northern Harrier (89), Sharp-shinned Hawk (702), Rough-legged Hawk (8), and American Kestrel (75). The peak day for Golden Eagles was 21 April with 4.

Turkey vultures were again the most numerous migrant of the month with 17,794. The overall weather patterns in the second half of the month resulted in many days of northeasterly winds. This resulted in a smaller total of Broad-winged Hawks past Braddock Bay as the wind kept them away from the lake shore. In April, we counted



Juvenile Bald Eagle. A new season record was set for this species in 2019. Photo by David Brown

| Braddock Bay Hawkwatch Monthly Totals by Species—Spring 2019 | | | | | | |
|--|-------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| Species | March | April | May | TOTAL* | Season Average ** | Peak Day* |
| Black Vulture | 7 | 0 | 4 | 11 | 2 | 4 on 3/21 |
| Turkey Vulture | 3112 | 17794 | 4907 | 25813 | 11578 | 3529 on 4/8 |
| Osprey | 5 | 196 | 228 | 429 | 230 | 47 on 4/12 |
| Bald Eagle | 70 | 291 | 833 | 1194 | 242 | 128 on 5/20 |
| Northern Harrier | 79 | 457 | 244 | 780 | 825 | 89 on 4/18 |
| Sharp-shinned Hawk | 62 | 2038 | 1155 | 3256 | 5859 | 702 on 4/18 |
| Cooper's Hawk | 54 | 134 | 33 | 221 | 522 | 28 on 4/8 |
| Northern Goshawk | 3 | 2 | 1 | 6 | 38 | 1 on 3/22 |
| Red-shouldered Hawk | 228 | 92 | 5 | 325 | 725 | 72 on 3/15 |
| Broad-winged Hawk | 0 | 14984 | 14715 | 29699 | 29169 | 7478 on 5/5 |
| Swainson's Hawk | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 on 4/13 |
| Red-tailed Hawk | 287 | 721 | 392 | 1400 | 4035 | 154 on 4/13 |
| Rough-legged Hawk | 26 | 30 | 7 | 63 | 338 | 8 on 4/18 |
| Golden Eagle | 8 | 16 | 6 | 30 | 25 | 4 on 4/21 |
| American Kestrel | 65 | 285 | 78 | 428 | 569 | 75 on 4/18 |
| Merlin | 6 | 21 | 29 | 56 | 25 | 10 on 5/1 |
| Peregrine Falcon | 3 | 7 | 38 | 48 | 15 | 13 on 5/1 |
| Mississippi Kite | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 on 5/20 |
| Short-eared Owl | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 2 on 3/24 |
| TOTAL | 4017 | 37070 | 22676 | 63763 | 54645 | |

* Numbers in bold represent new season record **Season averages are from 1977-2019.

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just under 15,000 Broad-winged Hawks, whereas the Derby Hill Bird Observatory counted over 37,000. This difference can be explained by winds that were unfavorable for us and favorable for them.

May

In May, 22,676 migrants were counted during 231.25 hours. On 1 May we had 13 Peregrine Falcons which was a new single-day record. The peak day for Merlins was the same day with 10. The peak day of the month was May 5th with 8,666 migrants, including 7,478 Broad-winged Hawks and a dark-morph Red-tailed Hawk. This was the last day of Bird of Prey Days and, though a light northeasterly breeze was pushing the migrants inland, visitors were able to look through our scopes and see large kettles of Broad-winged Hawks.

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On 6 May we broke the single-day bald eagle record with 124. We broke it again on 20 May with 128. A subadult Mississippi Kite was seen on 20 May in the morning during a period of good thermals. Many broad-winged hawks were migrating in the same period but the kite was not associating with any other birds. It soared at high altitude then streamed off in the usual migration direction. We also had 4 black vultures on the same day, again tying the single-day record, and the first we had seen since 24 March.

Our May total of Broad-winged Hawks was 14,715, compared to over 26,500 at Derby Hill. Derby Hill had a record season with over 63,000 Broad-winged Hawks and nearly 102,000 total migrant raptors. This difference shows the effect that weather patterns have in bringing migrants within sight of each of our sites. Overall the weather stayed cool throughout May. Only a few days were warm enough for t-shirts and even on the last day of the count I was wearing my heavy winter jacket and signature orange hat.

We set a new season record for Bald Eagles with 1,194. Derby Hill also had a record season for Bald Eagles. Our season total of 48 Peregrine Falcons was only 3 less than the record.

Non-Raptors

A total of 203 species of birds, including raptors, were recorded throughout the season. Snow Geese were recorded on ten days in March with a peak of 1,800 on 18 March. The peak day for Canada Geese was 14 March with 27,500. Six cackling geese were recorded including four on 13 March.

Migrating flocks of Tundra Swans were seen throughout March with a high count of 850 on 14 March. A Trumpeter Swan was in a flock of Tundra Swans on 13 March. Mute Swans were present for the whole season with a high count of 150 on 10 March. Twenty-three species of ducks were recorded with the highlight being Eurasian Wigeon which was seen on 24 March and 8 April.

Sandhill Cranes were seen on 24 days with a high count of 11 on both 7 and 8 April. Eleven species of shorebirds were recorded, and several additional species were seen nearby from the east spit.

Seven species of gulls were reported including Glaucous Gull, Iceland Gull, and Lesser Black-backed Gull. Black Tern was seen on 27 April, 9 May, and 10 May. Forster's Tern was recorded on 7 May. A total of four American White Pelicans were recorded on 8 April, 18 April, 15-17 May, and 26 May.

Northern Shrike was recorded from the beginning of the season through 12 April. Philadelphia Vireo was seen on 23 and 25 May. A massive swallow migration occurred on 1 May with an estimated 4,000 barn swallows and 3,000 tree swallows.

Common redpoll was recorded on eleven days from early-March through mid-April. Flocks of pine siskins migrated through on three days in early-May. Lapland Longspur was reported on 14 March, 21 March, and 8 April.



A new single day record of 13 Peregrine Falcons was set this spring. Photo by David Brown

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Snow Bunting was recorded on 6 days in March.

Vesper sparrow was seen on 9 and 25 April. A pair of Orchard Orioles was observed building a nest in late-May. The peak migration of Red-winged Blackbirds was 28 March with 5,000. Rusty Blackbirds were recorded on 14 days with a high of 285 on 8 April. Twenty-four species of warbler were documented, including Mourning Warbler and Canada Warbler.

Acknowledgements

This was my first season as hawk counter at Braddock Bay and several individuals were vital in helping me have a successful season. Thanks to Daena Ford for managing all the administrative parts of the hawk watch including my housing, equipment, and paycheck. Thanks to Mike Tetlow for teaching me about how weather patterns affect the flight, for his overall guidance, and his help on busy days. Thanks to Greg Lawrence for sharing his knowledge of the area and the hawk watch based on his experience as 2018 hawk counter. Thanks to all of the other volunteers and visitors who assisted with the count. Thanks to Ken Kaiser and his dog Caesar for allowing me to share their home.



Northern Shrike. Not a raptor, but a regular visitor at the hawkwatch for almost half of the season. Photo by David Brown