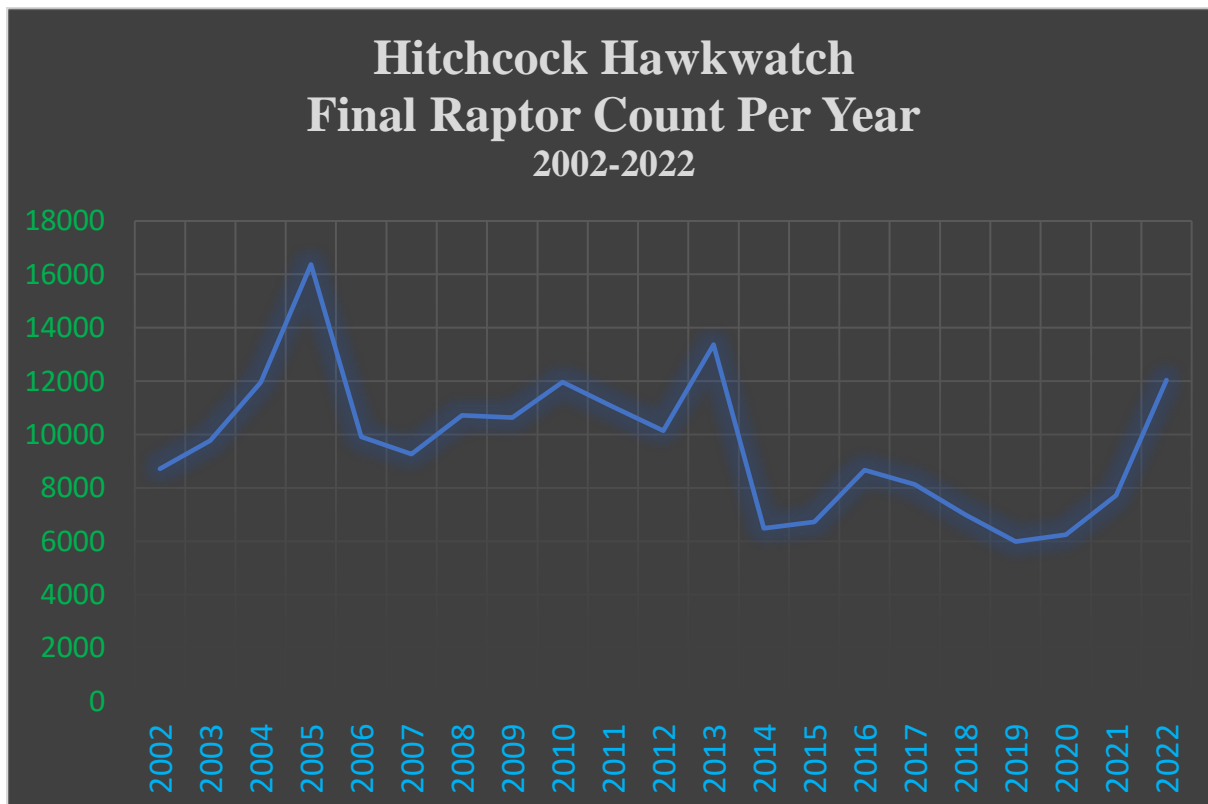
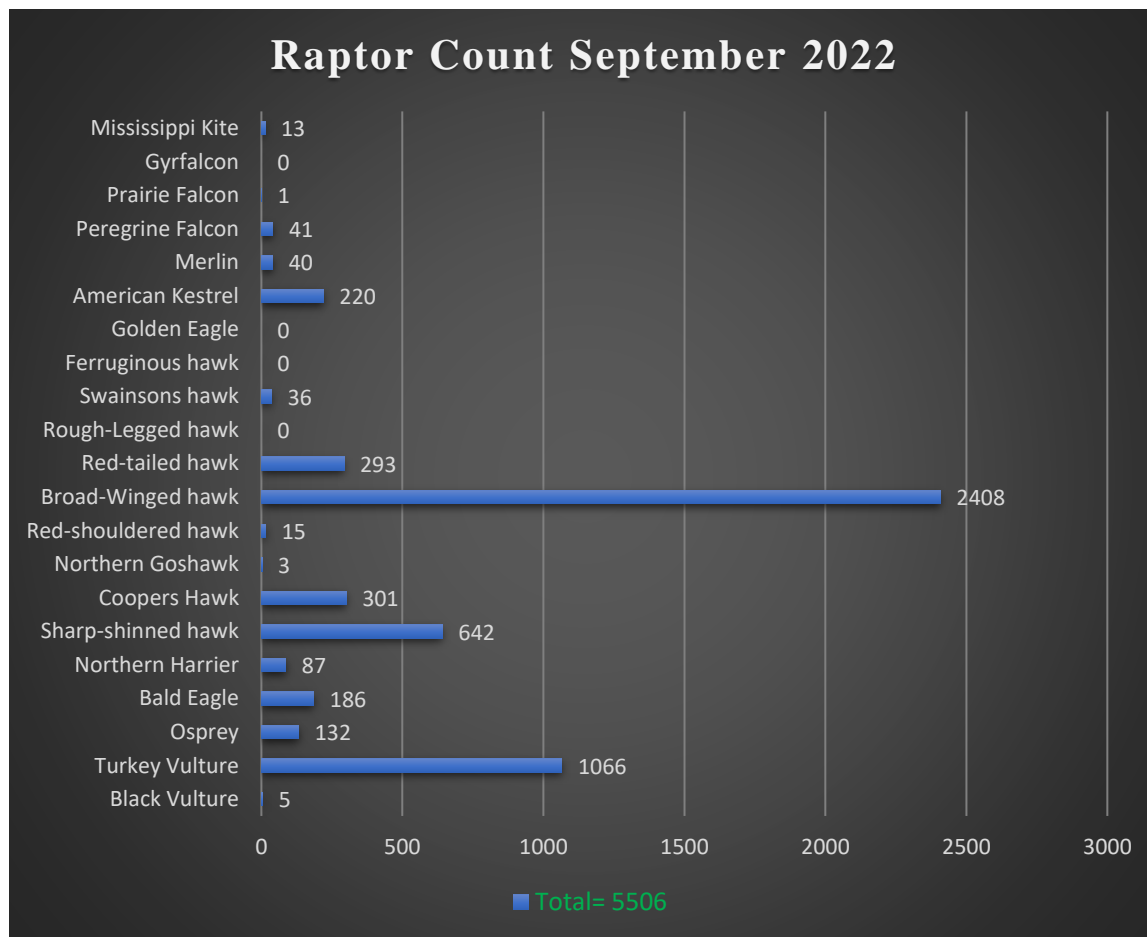


# HITCHCOCK HAWKWATCH FALL MIGRATION 2022

*By Mick Bressler*

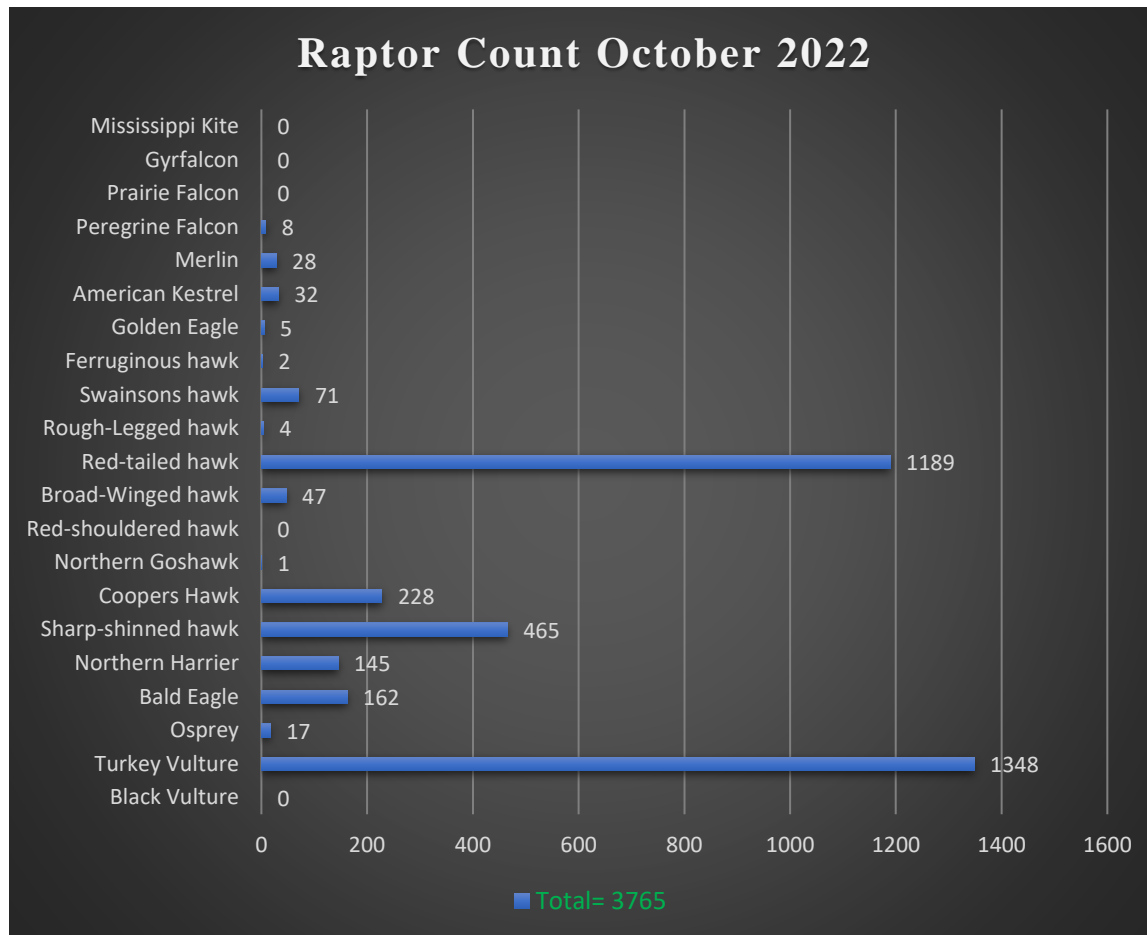
2022 marked the 21st consecutive hourly season at Hitchcock Hawkwatch surveying for diurnal raptors for the Fall migration. A grand total of 202,867 diurnal raptors of 22 species have been recorded/counted with a total of 14,627.3 hours being logged in survey time for the last twenty-one fall migrations. A season total of 12,033 raptors of 21 species were counted this season with 701 hours of survey effort, averaging a 17 raptor per hour passage rate. Surveys were conducted from September 1<sup>st</sup> to December 13<sup>th</sup>. The 3<sup>rd</sup> highest season on record and the first year to tally 21 species of raptor in the fall migration. Eight of the 21 species, which included- Red-tailed hawk, Broad-winged hawk, Turkey vulture, Sharp-shinned hawk, Bald eagle, Cooper's hawk, American kestrel and the Northern harrier, comprised 94.8% of the overall season total. The other 5.2% of 13 raptor species, accounted for only  $\leq 1.25\%$  per species and with 0.3% for unidentified raptor species, concludes the 2022 season total. The Hitchcock Hawkwatch twenty-year Fall migration average is about 9,542 diurnal raptors counted a season and has been riding below average for the last eight years. But not this year, Hitchcock strikes again with an energetic migration with adrenaline running and raptors flowing through the skies. A solid flight for an amazing flight line was observed. Good to see a rebound and in the hopes to many more.





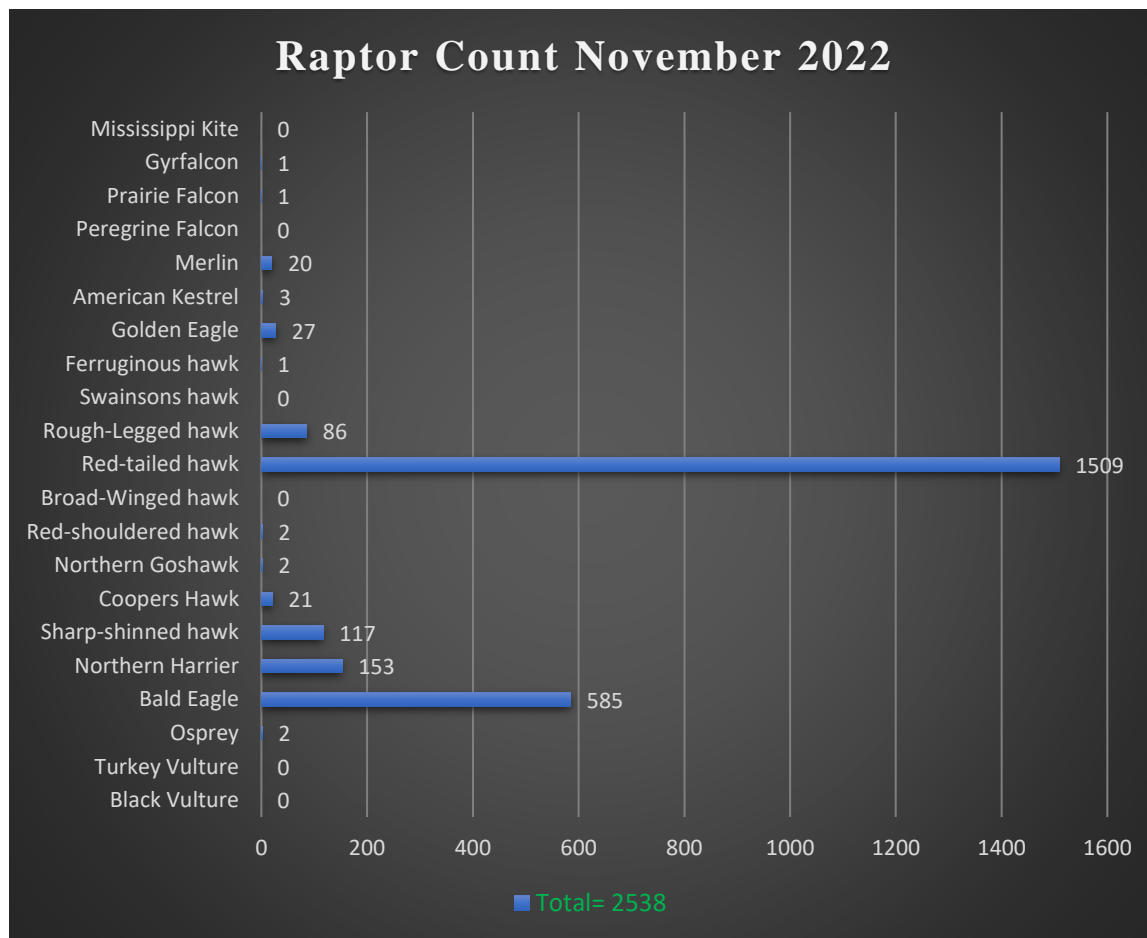
45.75% of raptors that were counted for the season was in September with 17 spp. recorded. The most numerous raptor was Broad-winged Hawk, supporting 43.7% of the overall count in this month.





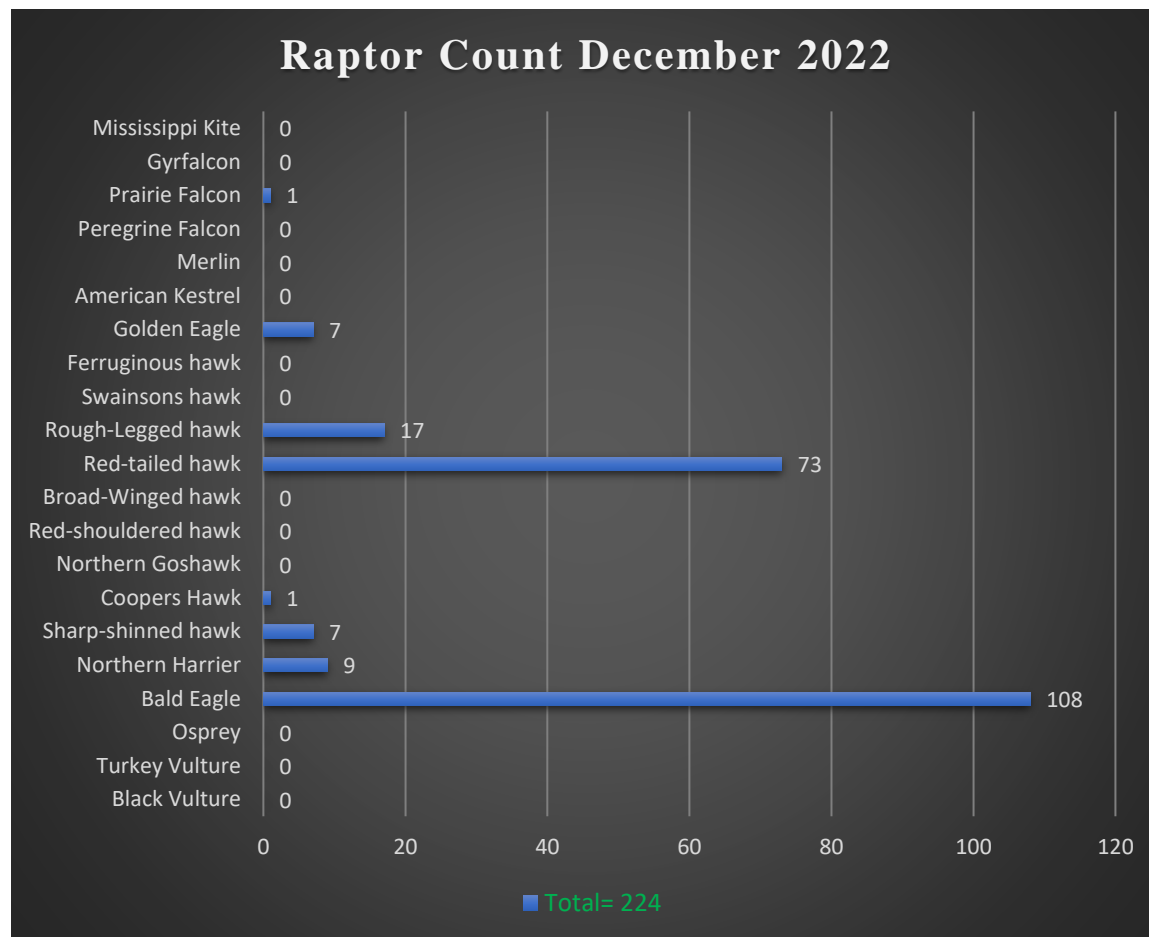
31.28% of raptors that were counted for the season occurred in October with 16 spp. recorded. The most numerous raptor was Turkey Vulture, supporting 35.8% of the overall count in this month followed right behind by the Red-tailed Hawk with 35.6% & Sharp-shinned Hawk with 12.4% of the count in October.





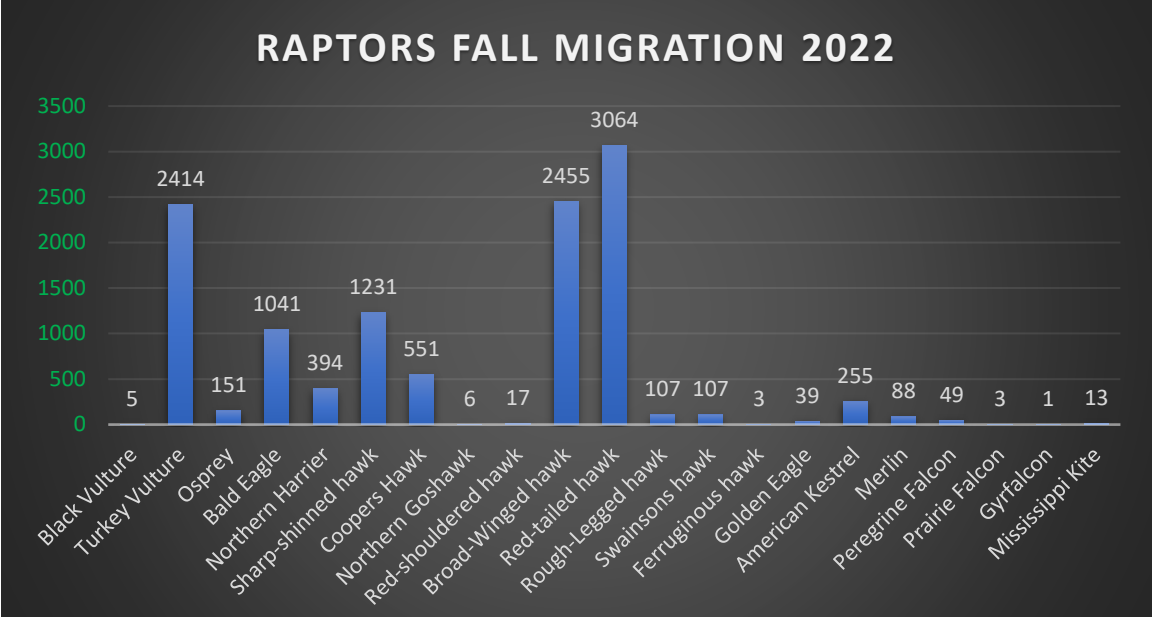
21.1% of raptors that were counted for the season was in November with 15 spp. recorded. The most numerous raptor was Red-tailed Hawk, supporting 59.4% of the overall count in this month followed by the Bald Eagle with 23.1% and the Northern harrier at 6% of the count in November.





1.86% of raptors that were counted for the season was in December with 8 spp. recorded. The most numerous raptor was Bald Eagle, supporting 48.2% of the overall count in this month followed by the Red-tailed Hawk with 32.6% of the count in December.







**Black vulture-** Season Total: 5, High count: 2, First detected/counted 09/16 and Last detection/counted 09/21. A rare migrant to the hawkwatch and has only been counted twice at Hitchcock on 09/22/02 and 08/20/2005. Vultures and in this case BLVU, will be and are becoming less of a rare sighting with BLVU starting and continuing to expand their range northward in response to a warming climate.

Black Vulture (*Coragyps atratus*)



-Photo by Mick Bressler

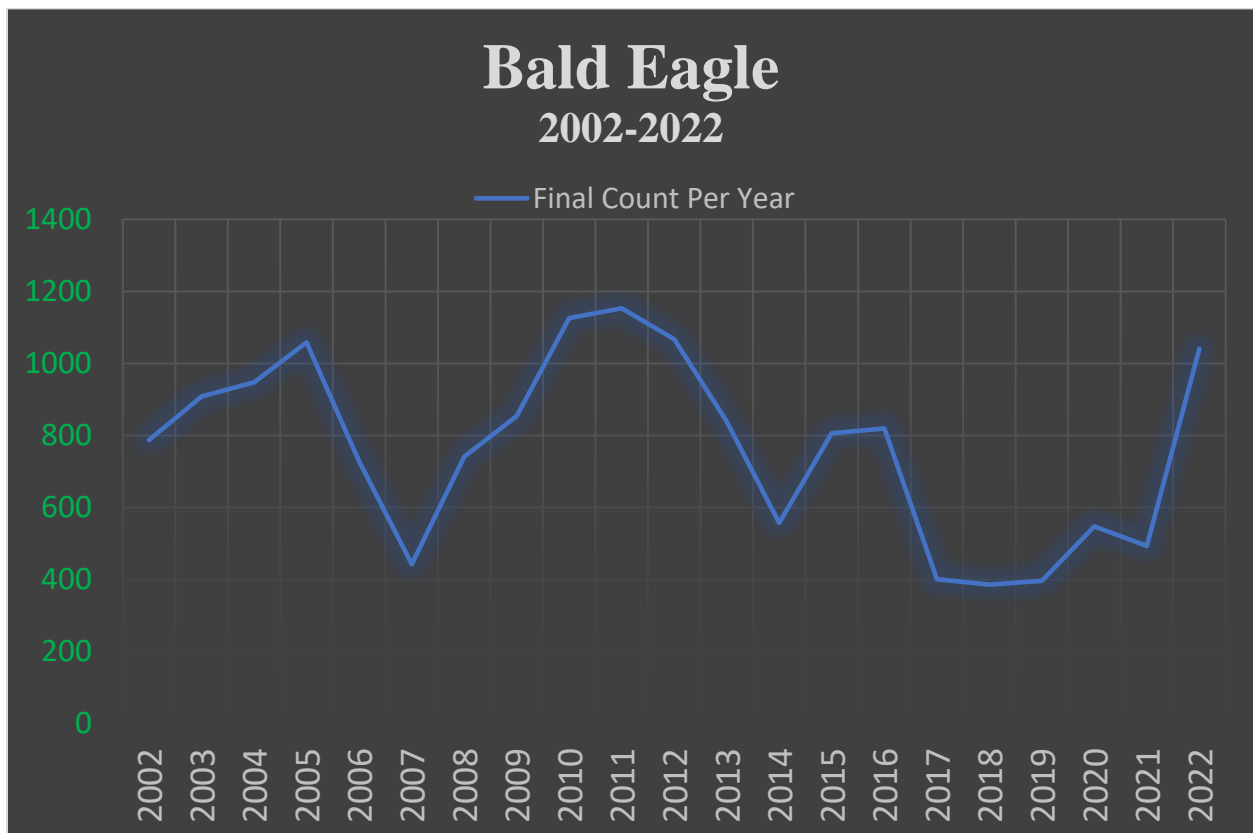
**Turkey vulture-** Season Total: 2414, High count: 174 on 09/05 & 167 on 10/16, First detected/counted 09/02 and last detection/counted 10/29. Peak flight was after the first week of October. 55.8% of the TV were counted in October. TUVU made for 20% of the overall season total.

**Osprey-** Season Total: 151, High count: 28 on 09/17, First detection/counted 09/01 and last detected/counted 11/07. Other than the two birds sighted on 11/07, peak flight was mid-September and pretty much fell off after the first week of October. 1.25% of the season total.

**Bald Eagle-** Season Total: 1041, High count: 92 on 11/30, First detection/counted 09/02 and last detected/counted 12/11. Peak flight was mid-November but overall November had a steady flow of BAEA flying through with 56.2% of the Bald eagles being counted in November. Cold-fronts and

powerful N & NW winds brought on BAEA in force, mostly riding down the western bluff. Good to see a strong flight this year after a five year low. Comprising 8.7% of the overall season total.

Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*)





**Northern harrier-** Season Total: 394, High count: 48 on 11/04, First detection/counted 09/04 and last detected/counted 12/11. Peak flight was the last week of October until mid-November. A steady and strong flight for NOHA this year. A few good observations of NOHA streaming, one after the other flowing steady on the northern winds esp. on the front & backside of a couple mid-season storms that blew through. 3.3% of the season total.

Northern Harrier (*Circus cyaneus*)



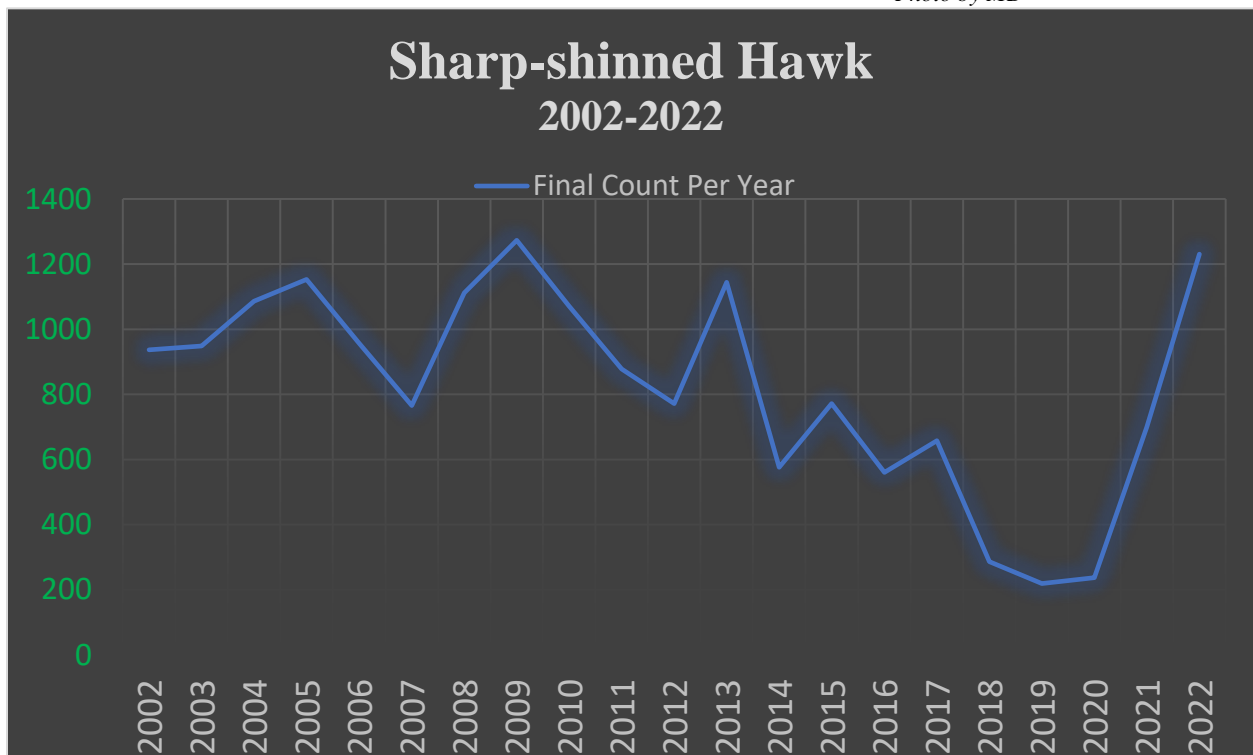
-Photo by MB

**Sharp-shinned hawk-** Season Total: 1231, High count: 171 on 09/22, First detection/counted 09/01 and last detected/counted 12/10. Peak flight was around the third week of September and they kept a steady pace thereafter, dropping off mostly after the first week of November. 52.2% of the SSHA were counted in September and 37.8% counted in October. So overall a big hit for the Sharp-shinned hawks with their migration being well-distributed over the duration of the Fall migration survey. A welcoming uplift to an eight year low. Overall an excellent flight by the SSHA & COHA this year. The SSHA comprised 10.2% of the season total.

Sharp-shinned Hawk (*Accipiter striatus*)



-Photo by MB

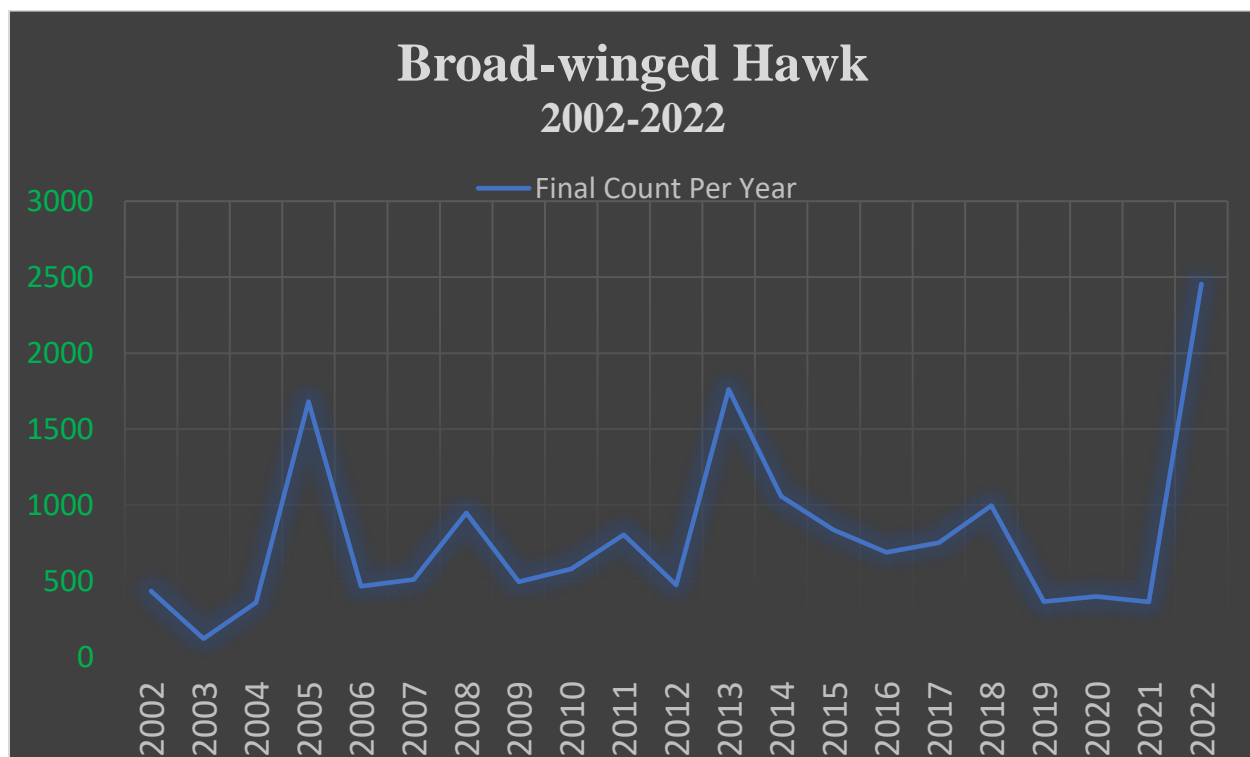


**Coopers hawk-** Season Total: 551, High count: 67 on 09/22, first detection/counted 09/02 and last detected/counted 12/11. Peak flight was around the third week of September and dropped off after the first week of November. 54.6% of COHA were counted in September and 41.4 % counted in October. COHA covered 4.6% of the season total. More recently, COHA are increasing across the country, co-adapting in urban to suburban environments where there is potential of suitable structural habitat and an ample source of food/prey base. Although COHA are still definitely found out in the wildlands that are undisturbed by people, the components of maybe green spaces/parks with groves of trees and openings, abandoned lots with brushy habitat, fallow fields emulating grasslands with pockets of trees, restoration and connectivity of riparian corridors, along with the reliable bird-feeders for easy pickings, is likely to call on the Cooper's hawk these days. Aiding in a higher probability of an upswing in their populations.

**Northern Goshawk-** Season Total: 6 only observed a single bird each detection. First detection/counted 09/16 and last detected/counted 11/13. The average count per fall migration is about 5 birds. Three adults and 3 young/juvenile NOGO were observed. All but one N. goshawk was seen initially flying low(er) pumping over the tree canopy coursing the landscape. An elusive forest dwelling raptor, this bird seems to remain elusive while migrating by Hitchcock, one may tend to wonder how many may go by low and undetected with our busy sky gazing eyes, balance in technique is key.

**Red-shouldered Hawk-** Season Total: 17, High count: 3 on 09/22, First detection/counted: 09/02 and last detected/counted 11/06. Peak flight was just after mid-September with 15 RS sighted in the month of September, no RSHA in October and two more juvenile birds coming through later on 11/05 & 11/06.

**Broad-winged Hawk-** Season Total: 2455, High count: 1145 on 09/22, First detection/counted 09/02 and last detected/counted 10/09. Peak flight was the 3<sup>rd</sup> week of September. 98% of BWHA were counted in September. Our second biggest hitter of the season with an impressive flight, bursting through in the later half of September. A Hitchcock season record. BWHA comprised 20.4% of the season total.



Broad-winged Hawk (*Buteo platypterus*) kettle



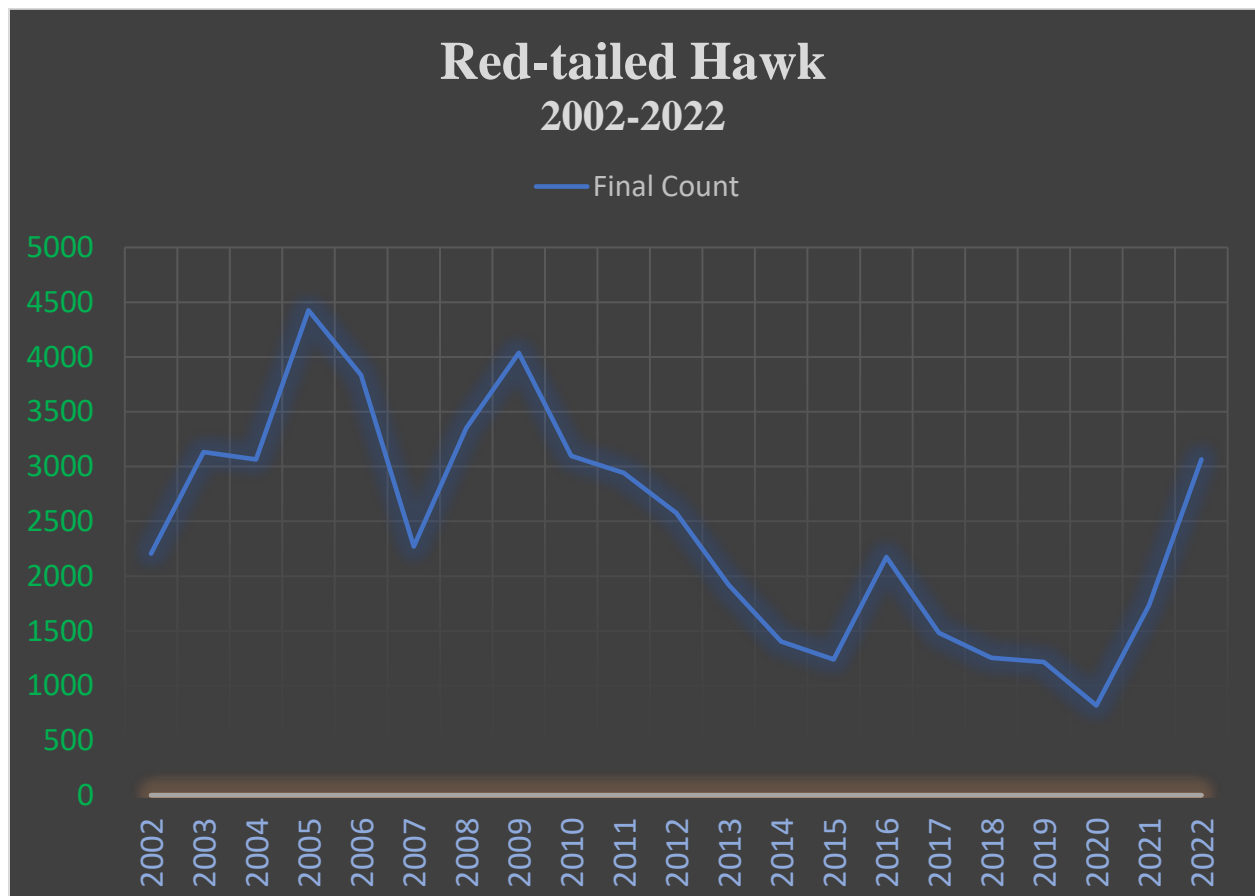
-Photo by MB

**Red-tailed Hawk**- Season Total: 3064, High count: 404 on 11/04, first detection/counted 09/02 and last detected/counted 12/11. Peak flight began near mid-October and ran strong until the first week of November. RTHA was our biggest hitter, covering almost 26% of the overall season total. 49.2% of the RT were counted in November. 5 subspecies were noted, including: Borealis, Calurus, Abieticola, Krider's and Harlan's. The RT action here was a major highlight and added to the excitement throughout the season with a steady flow of migrants & diversity. The Red-tailed hawk is an underrated overrated bird, meaning, this champion of hawks may be ubiquitous across N.A but thankfully it comes through here in style and in many flavors. Good to see the Red-tailed Hawk this season on an upstroke from a 9 year low.

Red-tailed Hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*)



-Photo by MB



**Rough-legged Hawk**- Season Total: 107, High count: 14 on 11/16, first detection/counted 10/14 and last detected/counted 12/11. Peak flight started after the first week of November. 80.4% of the RLHA were counted in November. RLHA nomadic movements and cyclic shifts in their northern prey base could potentially influence the Rough-legged hawk's southward movement and flight passage rate. Excellent season for RLHA flying through with several dark-morphs sighted.

Rough-legged Hawk (*Buteo lagopus*)



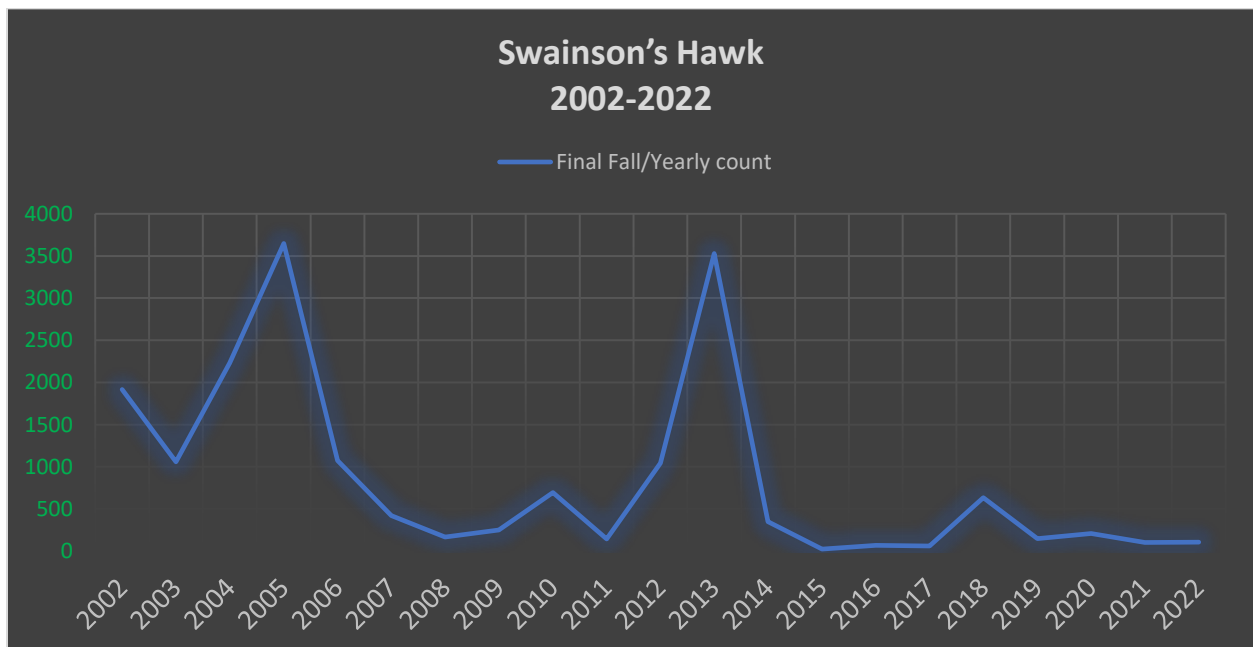
-Photo by MB

**Swainson's Hawk**- Season Total: 107, High count: 25 on 10/04, first detection/counted 09/16 and last detected/counted 10/14. Flight peaked mid-September for a few days and picked back up briefly in the first week of October. Been about 10 years since a big push of SWHA came through with one quick pulse of a respectable number in 2018, otherwise a linear decline for big numbers but SWHA still makes its presence and is counted every season. This area seems to be the eastern threshold of migrating SWHA so predictability of a strong flight is low and fluctuates year to year. Ideally, timing and weather conditions/patterns need to be just right, typically with a cold snap or front to the north and broad NW winds, pushing them our way but apparently constellations in the cosmos need to align just right as well, being those conditions were observed but the flight was still light. All in all, a fantastic raptor to be cutting by this site.

Swainson's Hawk (*Buteo swainsonii*)



-Photo by MB





**Ferruginous Hawk-** Season Total: 3, first detection/counted 10/14 and last detected/counted 11/16. Low numbers at this site but the Ferruginous hawk has been counted here for all but five of the 21 years at Hitchcock. Seems to be more the eastern extreme for migrating FEHA and overall a great bird & beautiful Buteo to be sighted at the hawkwatch.

Ferruginous hawk (*Buteo regalis*)



-Photo by Mick Bressler

**Golden Eagle-** Season Total: 39, High count: 6 on 11/27, first detection/counted 10/18 and last detected/counted 12/11. 69.2% of the GOEA were counted in November. A king of the sky (or queen) takes its pass by here, albeit in low numbers but a wonderful, big raptor to bless the tower with its magnificence and power, a stunning bird indeed and a good count this season.

Golden Eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*)



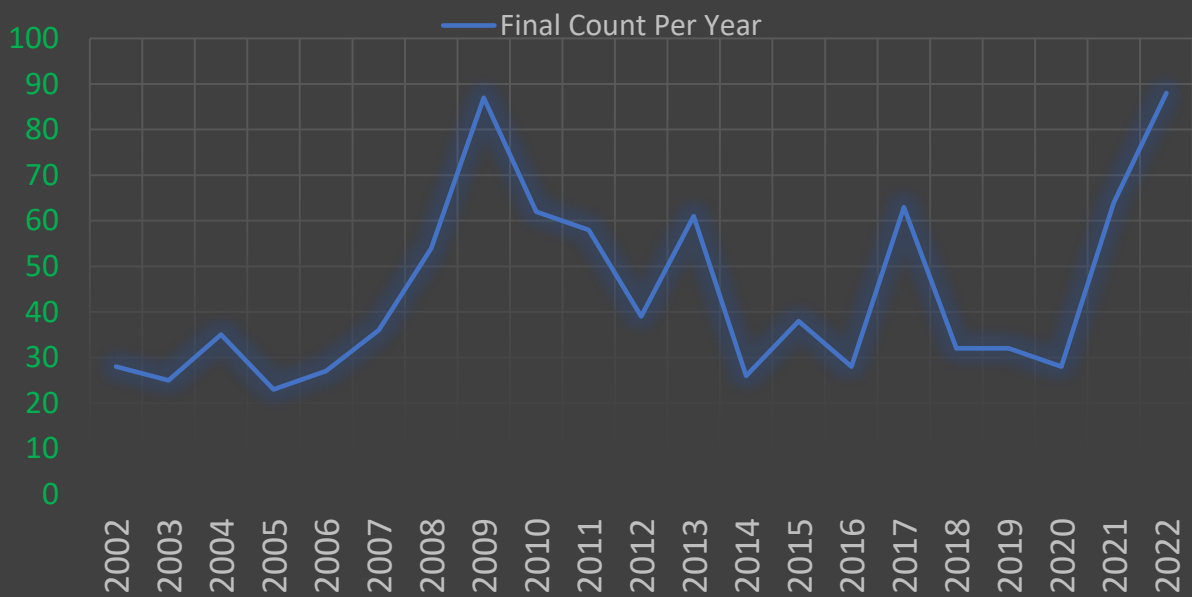
-Photo by Whitney Michaelis

**American Kestrel-** Season Total: 255, High count: 55 on 09/22, first detection/counted 09/01 and last detected/counted 11/27. Peak flight was the 3<sup>rd</sup> week of September. 86.3% of the AMKE were counted in September and pretty much dropped off after 10/16 with only 3 late birds sighted in November. The AK seemed to be the most responsive raptor to the owl decoy (Leroy) when used. Or perhaps noticeably the more ballsy of birds to try and skin its lid. A good showing of American kestrel this season and in hopes of a continued rebound. Made for 2.1% of the season total.

**Merlin-** Season Total: 88, High count: 7 on 09/22, first detection/counted: 09/03 last detected/counted 11/24. Peak flight was the 3<sup>rd</sup> week of September but numbers and detections were more consistent in October and for a few weeks in November. Whether high, low or in between, as it goes, the Merlin was slicing through on a mission this season with many birds breaking fairly close to the tower, eye-level. A solid count this season and always a fun falcon to chase during migration.



## MERLIN 2002-2022



-Photo by Whitney Michaelis

**Peregrine Falcon-** Season Total: 49, High count: 7 on 09/22 & 09/23, First detection/counted 09/11 and last detected/counted 10/13. Peak flight occurred the 3<sup>rd</sup> week of September, dropping clean off with no other sighting of a PEFA after 10/13. 83.7% of the PEFA were counted in September. The average count for the season is around 51. Several PEFA were observed taking the nearest west and east cuts/drainages, slicing right by the tower.

Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*)



**Prairie Falcon-** Season Total: 3, first detection/counted 09/10 (early bird), 2<sup>nd</sup> bird on 11/24 and last detected/counted 12/11. Slim numbers of PRFA are counted at this site but another great bird added to the hawkwatch and is reliably counted every fall. This site averages 3 birds a season.

Prairie Falcon (*Falco mexicanus*)



-Photo by Whitney Michaelis

**Gyr Falcon-** Season Total: 1 counted on 11/16. A superb raptor to see up-close and count this fall with only two other Gyr's counted at Hitchcock- 11/11/2014 & 10/31/2019. Adult gray-morph came through during some heavy back to back cold-fronts. Well worth braving the storms on that tower to catch a sweet glimpse of this wonderful Arctic Apex predator busting through our zone.

**Mississippi Kite-** Season Total: 13, High count: 5 on 09/02, first detection/counted 09/01 and last detected/counted 09/18. Peak flight was the first week of September. Likely more MIKI may have been migrating earlier in August. There has only been two years that MIKI was not counted at Hitchcock. This is definitely a special raptor added to the list of species seen migrating down the Loess hills. Hitchcock is one of very few northern hawkwatches that ever gets the chance to reliably count this bird in the fall migration.



Mississippi Kite (*Ictinia mississippiensis*)



-Photo by Mick Bressler

MIKI



**Non-diurnal Raptors, Other birds observed:**

-Alright, deep breath and go! Black-capped chickadee, White-breasted nuthatch, Red-breasted nuthatch, Northern cardinal, Tufted titmouse, Eastern bluebird, Gray catbird, Song sparrow, Lincoln sparrow, Harris's sparrow, Savannah sparrow, White-throated sparrow, White-crowned sparrow, American tree sparrow, Vesper sparrow, Dark-eyed junco, American robin, House finch, Purple finch, House sparrow, Bobolink, Dickcissel, American pipit, Horned lark, Snow bunting, Lapland longspur, Western & Eastern meadowlark, Baltimore oriole, Fox sparrow, Chipping sparrow, Field sparrow, Eastern towhee, Blue jay, American crow, European starling, Mourning dove, Rock pigeon, Eurasian collared dove, Red-eyed vireo, Blue-headed vireo, Yellow-throated vireo, Philadelphia vireo, Warbling vireo, Yellow-billed cuckoo, House wren, Carolina wren, Indigo bunting, Brown thrasher, Northern mockingbird, Rose-breasted



grosbeak, Summer tanager, Scarlet tanager, Ruby-throated hummingbird, Eastern phoebe, Alder flycatcher, Acadian flycatcher, Yellow-bellied flycatcher, Great-crested flycatcher, Eastern wood-pewee, Eastern kingbird, Western kingbird, Olive-sided flycatcher, Barn swallow, Cliff swallow, Bank swallow, Tree swallow, Northern rough-winged swallow, Chimney swift, Purple martin, Common nighthawk, Brown creeper, Red crossbill, American goldfinch, Pine siskin, Ruby crowned kinglet, Golden crowned kinglet, Cedar waxwing, Pileated woodpecker,

Hairy woodpecker, Downy woodpecker, Red-bellied woodpecker, Yellow-bellied sapsucker, Northern flicker, Red-headed woodpecker (counted 1064 RHWO migrating on 09/09), Magnolia warbler, Cape may warbler, Tennessee warbler, Orange crowned warbler, Black throated blue warbler, Northern parula, Chestnut sided warbler, Yellow warbler, Black and white warbler, Bay-breasted warbler, Yellow-rumped warbler, Common yellow-throat, Mourning warbler, Black-throated green warbler, Townsend's warbler, Nashville warbler, American redstart, Blue-gray gnatcatcher, Belted kingfisher, Common grackle, Great-tailed grackle, Brewers blackbird, Rusty blackbird, Brown-headed cowbird, Red-winged blackbird, Snow goose, Greater white-fronted goose,





Ross's goose, Canada goose, Cackling goose, Tundra swan, Trumpeter swan, Double-crested cormorant, Mallard, Wood duck, Northern pintail, Northern shoveler, Gadwall, Common goldeneye, Blue-winged teal, Green-winged teal, Bufflehead, Common merganser, Scaup spp., Sandhill crane, Plegadis spp. likely White-faced, Great-blue heron, Great egret, American white pelican, American golden plover, Killdeer,



Greater yellowlegs, Lesser yellowlegs, Franklins gull, Ring-billed gull, Wild turkey, Bonaparte's gull, Eastern screech owl, Barred owl, Great-horned owl, Northern saw-whet owl, Northern shrike = 155 non-diurnal raptor spp.

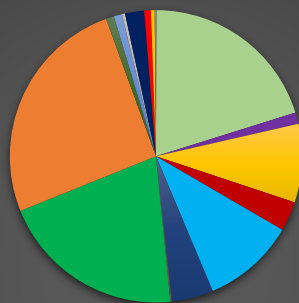


**Other wildlife observed:** Red fox, Coyote, Bobcat, White-tailed deer,

Eastern cottontail, Eastern fox squirrel, Eastern/Palmers chipmunk, Raccoon, Virginia Opossum, beautiful swaths of Monarch butterfly, Dragonflies, Plains cicada, Walker's cicada, Linne's cicada, Bush cicada, Green katydid, E. bumblebee, Green metallic sweat bee spp. Metric paper wasp, Mantids and many more interesting insects visited the tower.

- A special thanks to all the Birds of prey, Hitchcock Nature Center, the Padelfords, the banding crew and all the volunteers that supported such a fantastic season! Cheers to many more exciting seasons and to the strength & continued efforts for Raptor conservation on a Global scale. Thank You! -Eyes to the sky~

## RAPTORS FALL MIGRATION 2022



Black Vulture	Turkey Vulture	Osprey	Bald Eagle
Northern Harrier	Sharp-shinned hawk	Coopers Hawk	Northern Goshawk
Red-shouldered hawk	Broad-Winged hawk	Red-tailed hawk	Rough-Legged hawk
Swainsons hawk	Ferruginous hawk	Golden Eagle	American Kestrel
Merlin	Peregrine Falcon	Prairie Falcon	Gyr Falcon
Mississippi Kite			