Hawk Watch, Minnesota

by Stephen Marks

I was able to check a major item off my “bucket list” this fall, taking advantage of my year-long sabbatical from Pomona College. I went to Duluth, Minnesota to see hawks, Northern Goshawks in particular, at the Hawk Ridge Observatory there. I was not disappointed, seeing eight Goshawks, or “Gos,” for short, over four full or partial days, along with scores of Bald Eagles, hundreds of Red-Tails, a couple dozen Rough-Legs, a few Golden Eagles, and various other great stuff. Oh, and the fall colors were spectacular. Lake Superior was gorgeous but frequently changed its mood—from sparkling to mysterious to ominous—depending on the light and weather.

Raptors funnel down the north shore of the lake, attracted by the thermals over land versus the downdrafts over the cold waters. Northern Goshawks, fierce residents of mature boreal forests, are even more inclined to funnel through northern Minnesota because the Great Plains to the west are not their preferred habitat. I had seen a few in the east years ago, but wanted to see more.

One of the advantages of being at the official lookout point on the ridge is not only that one has distant vistas to the east, west, and south over the lake, but that the official counters are also present. Typically, they see birds well before anyone, partly due to their superior skills and competitive nature, but also because they use telescopes as well as binoculars. One older local counter, who had lost one eye and wore a patch, but made great use of his other eye, was typical. Imagine a voice sort of like an airline pilot, but a little raspier, and please note that this is a bird I could not see.

(Continued page 3)
Welcome New Members!

We extend a warm welcome to all new members. Subscribers to Audubon Magazine from our area are automatically enrolled in our chapter and receive the Chaparral Naturalist at no additional charge. You are welcome to all our events.

TELL US YOUR MAILING PREFERENCE ................
.............................................(AGAIN)

My computer crashed, loosing my list of members who wish to receive print copies of our newsletter. We will continue to send e-mail copies to all members for whom we have e-mail addresses. We also will continue to send paper copies in September and January to everyone. However, if you would also like a paper copy of our other newsletters (Nov., March, and May) give me your address (email me at dguthrie@jsd.claremont.edu or phone 909 239 5124)

Chino: Maureen Burney
Chino Hills: Sherry Schmidt
Claremont: Angela Bakzadian, Patti Espana,
Dave & Julie Lannom,
Michelle Mitchell,
Gesine Robinson, Susan Seymour
Corona: Tasy Bensiek, Richard Fleming
Covina: Roberta Huskey
Diamond Bar: Cheri Owings
Glendora: Katherine Barnett
Norco: Ritchey family
Ontario: Ellen Law
Pomona: Max Carman Jr., Janet Nameth,
Ron Sasse, Tuan Tran, Lorna Vaccari,
Pat Woeste
Cucamonga: Birozky, Pei Chang,
Victoria & Frank Glavan,
Hilde Jameson,
Ruth Kniesley, Diana Tosha
Riverside: Margaret Laney
Upland: Jenny Gibson, Linda Hix, Alan MacKey,
Janet Watson,
Walnut: Hester Taliaferro

Snow Geese
South End of the Salton Sea

Ten white geese still here.

Thought they’d have flown.

They should have migrated by now.

I sneak out of the car,
muffle the sound of the camera opening,
creep up behind a salt bush
so as not to spook them,
focus, breathe, move out from
around the bush, press the shutter,
capture the moment of ten wooden decoys.

Answers to Raptor Flight I.D. quiz page 1
a) Im. Golden Eagle, b) Red-tailed Hawk,
c) Rough-legged Hawk, d) Red Shouldered Hawk, e) Goshawk, f) Cooper’s Hawk, g) American Kestral, h) Red-tailed Hawk.
Hawk Watch: Continued from page 1) either with the naked eye or 10x binoculars: “Ahhhh, I have a Rough-Leg over the pagoda [a house that was one of their landmarks on the northeast horizon]. . . . adult. . . . female. . . . dark morph” (I still could not see it!). Fortunately, many of those birds eventually drifted overhead or in front of us nearer the lake.

The book Hawks at a Distance, by Jerry Liguori, is quite useful for hawk watches, which I have also done at Raccoon Ridge, New Jersey, and Hawk Mountain, Pennsylvania. Perhaps he will write a sequel: Hawks at an Extreme Distance in Clouds or Backlit by the Sun. Actually, some of our views of the birds were excellent. I was listening to a nature program on the Northern Goshawk when a shadow passed over my face—yup, the very same, circling over the Great Horned Owl decoy they have put at the top of a nearby fir tree. I did find that judging distance, and bird size, can be quite a challenge, especially in a cloudless sky. What I really learned is to keep my mouth shut, especially in the presence of all those experts, like when I said, “I guess there’s a Sharp-Shinned Hawk above that Red-Tail overhead.” OMG. I was quickly corrected: it was a Red-Tail above an immature Bald Eagle. Oh well, easy come, easy go!

One day I took a morning off from hawk watching and drove out to the Sax-Zim Bog northwest of Duluth. This had been spectacular for my family and me back after Thanksgiving in 2005, when we had seen two Northern Hawk Owls, calmly posing on utility poles near the road. This time I saw nine Ruffed Grouse, a life bird, along with several Black-Billed Magpies, some Canada Jays, and a male adult Merlin perched on a fence post, about a hundred feet away. (First time I had ever seen a motionless Merlin!) They also have Great Gray Owls in there, but autumn seems to be the down season for them, according to the Bog’s bird list (which, along with a really useful map, is available online from “Friends of Sax-Zim Bog”).

For trip planning, you can go to “http://www.hawkridge.org/” and check out their count data. In the case of Goshawks, and probably other raptor species, it tends to be the young birds that head south first. Of the Goshawks I saw over October 16-19, only one was an adult. Next time I go to Hawk Ridge (it does get addictive), I might aim for later in October. It can be a little spottier for the hawks, but Northern Shrikes, Pine Grosbeaks, Black-backed Woodpeckers, Bohemian Waxwings, and White-winged Crossbills become better possibilities (just to name a few birds on my wish list, though I have seen a few of those species previously).

The hawk flights tend to be best on a north or northwest wind, but there can also be great flights on an east or northeast wind at Hawk Ridge. A south or southwest wind typically is not as good, though sometimes the birds can be lower in the sky.

Finally, also for trip planning, it turns out that the Goshawk population is on a ten-year cycle, which reflects the ten-year cycle of the Snowshoe Hare. There were huge years for Goshawks in 1972, 1982, and even 1992, but recent peak activity has been less. I can only wonder if the decline is at all related to the difficulty the hares face in being in 1972, 1982, and even 1992, but recent peak activity has been less. I can only wonder if the decline is at all related to the difficulty the hares face in being

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Bird mortality from the Deepwater Horizon oil spill.

II. Carcass sampling and exposure probability in the coastal Gulf of Mexico

ABSTRACT: Two separate approaches, a carcass sampling model and an exposure probability model, provided estimates of bird mortalities of 600,000 and 800,000, respectively, from the 2010 Deepwater Horizon MC 252 oil spill in coastal waters of the Gulf of Mexico. Monte Carlo simulation of parameter uncertainty led to respective 95% uncertainty intervals of 320,000 to 1,200,000 and 160,000 to 1,900,000. Carcass sampling relied on expansion factors multiplied by counts of bird carcasses retrieved in shoreline surveys, whereas exposure probability estimated bird deaths as a product of estimated coastal bird density, average oil slick size, slick duration, and proportionate mortality due to oiling. The low proportion of small-sized carcasses recovered, compared with considerably higher proportions of small live birds in coastal Gulf habitats, indicate an especially low probability of recovery for small birds after oil spills at sea.

Declines in laughing gulls were confirmed by ~60% reductions in National Audubon Society Christmas Bird Count data for 2010-2013 along the Gulf coast. Population-level effects in apex predators of this magnitude likely had effects on prey populations that warrant careful assessment.

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2St. Hubert Research Group, 222 Seward, Suite 205, Juneau, Alaska 99801
3JWS Consulting LLC, 19315 Glacier Highway, Juneau, Alaska 99801
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Most mortality affected 4 species: laughing gull Leucophaeus atricilla (32% of the northern Gulf of Mexico population killed), royal tern Thalasseus maximus (15%), northern gannet Morus bassanus (8%) and brown pelican Pelecanus occidentalis (12%).
PVAS Field Trips --- Winter & Spring 2015

Pomona Valley Audubon field trips are open to all individuals. **Remember to call the trip leader if you plan to attend and to confirm starting time & meeting location.** Sunday Monthly Bird Walks meet at Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden. Bonelli Park trips meet at park headquarters on Via Verde, just off the 57 freeway. Most other trips meet at Memorial Park in Claremont. It is recommended to bring a snack (lunch if recommended), plenty of water, sun protection, and bug spray to all trips. Car pooling is usually possible. Check the PVAS website for last minute trip additions and changes.

**Day & weekend PVAS trips---- Check webpage for any additions or changes.**

**Thursday, January 8, 2015**  
**Whittier Narrows**  
Meets 7:00 a.m. at Memorial Park for a half day trip for wintering Geese, Sparrows, Flycatchers and perhaps the Chestnut-sided Warbler and Tropical Kingbird? Bring water, snacks, and lunch. **Leader: Dan Gregory (909) 944-2259.**

**Saturday, January 10, 2015**  
**Orange County Area**  
A tour of coastal migrant traps and hot spots for wintering specialties and a New Year start with a big list. Meets 7:00 a.m. at Memorial Park for carpooling. Bring water, snacks, and lunch. **Leader: Eric Smith (909) 477-7976 or bird4life28@yahoo.com.**

**Thursday, February 12, 2015**  
**Prado Regional Park**  
A visit to this popular park in Chino for Vermillion Flycatchers, Hawks and wintering vagrants. Meets 7:00 a.m. at Memorial Park for carpooling. Bring water, snacks, and lunch. **Leader: Dan Gregory (909) 944-2259.**

**Saturday/Sunday, February 14 & 15, 2015**  
**Salton Sea Weekend**  
Our annual jaunt to the Salton Sea. Meet at 5:00 a.m. at Memorial Park or at 8:00 a.m. at Unit 1 (Vendel Road and Bannister off Hwy 86). We’ll visit Cattle Call Park in Brawley and spots along the south end of the Salton Sea for winter rarities including Mountain Plover, Mountain Bluebird and Burrowing Owl – plan to finish by 4 p.m. We’ll overnight in Brawley (Brawley Inn) and bird our way north Sunday along Hwy. 111 with stops at the Wister Unit and the northern end. **Leader: Dan Guthrie (909) 239-5124 or dguthrie@jsd.claremont.edu**

**Thursday, March 12, 2015**  
**Peck Road Water Conservation Park**  
This hidden gem in Arcadia boasts Orange Bishop and Red Whiskered Bulbul. **Leader: Dan Gregory (909) 944-2259.**

**Saturday, March 14, 2015**  
**Antelope Valley & Piute Ponds**  
A trip for returning shorebirds desert species and remaining wintering ducks. We will visit Apollo Park, Piute Ponds on Edward’s Air Base, and possibly the Lancaster Sewage Ponds. Our return to Claremont will be through the Antelope Valley looking for Sage and Lecomte’s Thrashers and wintering hawks. Meets 7:00 a.m. at Memorial Park for carpooling - Bring water, snacks, and lunch. **Leader: Dan Guthrie (909) 239-5124 or dguthrie@jsd.claremont.edu**

**Thursday, April 9, 2015**  
**North Etiwanda Preserve**  
This canyon area is home to Rufous-crowned and Sage Sparrows as well as chaparral and coastal sage species. Chance for great birds including Golden Eagle. Meets 7:00 a.m. at Memorial Park for carpooling. Bring water, snacks, and lunch. **Leader: Dan Gregory (909) 944-2259.**

**Saturday, April 18, 2014**  
**San Dimas Canyon**  
Join Eric for a walk in the canyon to look for local species and migrants. Meets 7:00 a.m. at Memorial Park. Bring water, snacks, and lunch. **Leader: Eric Smith (909) 477-7976 or bird4life28@yahoo.com**

**Saturday, May 2, 2015**  
**Big Morongo Canyon**  
A trip at the height of western migration for transient and returning species, including Summer Tanager, Brown-crested Flycatcher, Yellow-breasted Chat and lots of orioles. Meets 7:00 a.m. at Memorial Park for carpooling. Bring water, snacks, and lunch. **Leader: Dan Gregory (909) 944-2259.**
General Meetings are held in the Padua Room in the Alexander Hughes Center, 1700 Danbury Drive, Claremont. From Foothill Blvd., head north on Mountain or Towne Ave. and turn onto Scripps Drive. Turn south on Danbury, the Alexander Hughes Center will be on the east side. Our meetings begin with a bird identification session at 7 p.m. followed by refreshments, a short business meeting, and our evening program.

Bring a friend?
Non-members are welcome!

PVAS General Membership Meetings

Thursday, January 8, 2015 (NOTE DELAY OF ONE WEEK)
eBird; What is it? ...and What can it do for you?
by Tom Benson
Join us to explore the new computer world of citizen science documentation and compilation of bird sightings world wide. You too can not only list sightings of your common neighborhood birds but offers you access to a wealth of information amassed from millions of observations by users around the world. Launched in 2002, eBird is an online checklist program hosted by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. For most users it functions as a free listing software used to keep track of the various life, county, patch, and year lists. But it can provide so much more if you just know how to look for the information. From Range Maps to Bar Charts to the Hot Spot Explorer, eBird offers data visualization tools to sort thru the data constantly accruing.

Thursday, February 5, 2015
Babblers, Barbets and Bristleheads: Birding in Borneo,
by Cathy McFadden and Paul Clarke
The world’s third largest island is home to its tallest rainforests, abundant wildlife, 50 species of birds found nowhere else on earth, and excellent tourism infrastructure. PVAS members Cathy McFadden and Paul Clarke will present a multimedia show of their recent birding trip to Malaysian Borneo.

Thursday, March 5, 2015
Research with Local SoCal Birds by College Students

Thursday, April 2, 2015
Hawks by Pete Bloom

Thursday, May 7, 2015
Local Cavity Nester Conservation by Gillian Martin

Friday, June 5, 2015 ---- Annual Pot Luck & Meeting