



Bird Notes

From Northeast Kingdom Audubon
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For Immediate Release

Up, Up and Away.....!

“Sharpie over the Donut!” came the cry one fall day at Hawk Mountain Sanctuary in Pennsylvania. Such expressions are inevitable as hawk watchers strive to share their observations with everyone at some viewing platform or overlook each autumn. The Donat (sounds like donut) was a peak in a long distance view that day, but an important reference point as I followed the speck along a ridge until it faded from view. One Sharp Shin, check. Here in the Northeast we may not expect the concentrations of Hawk Mountain. Nonetheless, there are places to go for a look at our splendid vistas with the possibility of seeing some hawks on their way south for the winter.

Before a hawk watch is planned, consider the weather. Northwest winds for 2-3 days, as well as balmy, windless days can offer the birds advantages for their long distance flights. Tailwinds, updrafts and thermals, bubbles of heat rising from the land, help the flyers conserve energy as they travel as far as they can each day. Don't lose patience if few birds are seen, enjoy the slow-paced moments on your perch with quiet anticipation. There are many days ahead to catch a glimpse.

In August, the first birds of prey to be seen moving south are the turkey vultures, large black birds with open v-shaped wing profiles circling overhead. Most hawk watchers wait for the big Broad-winged migration during mid September. Coming soon in October and early November, we should be looking for the red-tailed hawks, sharp-shinned hawks and others such as red-shouldered hawk, marsh hawk and goshawk. Thanks to technology, it is possible to visit the Hawk Mountain Sanctuary website and see the 2006 migration season totals so far, amazing, isn't it?
<http://www.hawkmountain.org/cgi-bin/count/viewdate.cgi> The broad wings have been there and gone, over 10,000 of them!

Right here in the northern Connecticut River valley, four hawk watching spots can be found thanks to the work of the many volunteers who helped Bill Shepard compile the Connecticut River Birding Trail maps. Burke Mountain is one obvious choice. In Burke, this peak is accessible by road and footpath. The tower offers commanding views. Another peak comes to mind in Lancaster, New Hampshire, Mount Prospect at Weeks State Park. Here 360-degree views of the White Mountains and Connecticut River valley are spectacular. Many raptors follow the north-south ridge of Wright's Mountain in Bradford, Vermont. Two other mountaintops may provide raptor glimpses, but require a bit of hiking: Sugarloaf Mountain in Stratford (a 2.1 mile hike to the summit) and Barnet Mountain in Barnet, Vermont. The map provides directions to all of these spots.

To find out more about the Connecticut River Birding Trail maps, visit www.birdtrail.org.
Happy hawk-watching!

Carolyn E. Boardman is a member of NEK Audubon living in Brownington, Vermont. NEK Audubon is one of 8 chapters of Audubon Vermont and part of the National Audubon Society. NEK Audubon is a non-profit organization that encourages people's enjoyment of birds, wildlife and natural habitats through field trips, programs and publications. For more information about meetings, field trips and special events visit www.nekaudubon.org. Art work by Robin Rothman.