

Search for Eagles, Dr. S. Marie Kuhnen - Memorial Field Trip Series, Sunday, 6 December 2015

The first 2015-16 Dr. S. Marie Kuhnen Memorial Field Trip, Search for Eagles took place in the Delaware Valley Sunday, 6 December 2015 from 8:00 a.m. to 3:30 PM The temperature at the start was 24 degrees and at the finish 48 degrees. It was a cold foggy morning and an overcast to sunny day. We began watching feeder birds at the Pocono Environmental Education Center (PEEC) including Dark-eyed Junco, Black-capped Chickadee, and Tufted Titmouse among others. We logged 140 miles in the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area and Upper Delaware Scenic River from PEEC to the Bushkill Access and the trip's conclusion at the headwaters of the Lackawaxen River.

Jack Padalino, president emeritus of PEEC and the Brandwein Institute, a partner with the National Park Service, led the search with eight participants that recorded 30 species of birds including 15 Bald Eagles (BE), 1 Peregrine Falcon and 6 Red-tailed Hawks. The Delaware River, which is subject to freezing temperatures during much of winter, was totally open water. Eleven of the fifteen Bald Eagles we observed were adults and near open water. Eagles we saw were both perched, and in flight.

Leaving PEEC we traveled south on Route 209 passed Tom's Creek where we saw a Red-bellied Woodpecker and a pair of American Crows then continued to search for birds along the way to the Bushkill Access. At the Access was a Fox Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, a flock of 20 Dark-eyed Juncos, a lone Eastern Bluebird, and a group of a dozen Cedar Waxwings.

As we traveled north on Route 209 the escarpment of the Pocono Plateau was shrouded in fog and ice crystals coated the weeds in the fields. In route to the Dingmans Ferry Bridge and access we saw some Mourning Doves. During the past few weeks I had been seeing perched adult BEs upriver from the Dingmans Bridge on the Jersey side near open water. At the Dingmans Ferry Access we drew a blank, no BE.

Returning to Route 209 north. The BE nest that was near mile marker 17 on Route 209 is no longer there. It probably fell due to its instability and activity of last year's juvenile BEs. The former nest site has had birds around it for the past few weeks but there were none there today. This nest site had been active for the past few years.

Our first raptor sighted was an adult Red-tailed Hawk south of the National Recreation Area entrance kiosk. We continue to Milford Beach. Along the way we spotted a huge nest in a White Pine tree, probably a BE nest. We will continue observing it on subsequent searches for eagles. There was not much activity at Milford Beach.

At the Callahan House, satellite office of the Brandwein Institute, we filled the feeders and watched birds, Dark-eyed Juncos, White-breasted Nuthatch, and White-throated Sparrow.

Next was the Mott Street nest that was in the top of a White Pine proximal to the Sawkill Creek. We continued on Mott Street to the former nest site and much to my surprise this nest was also gone. The first nest crashed to the ground two years ago and the BEs immediately constructed a new nest on the north side of the creek next to a house. Now this nest is gone. We lingered and watched Brown Creeper, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, and Hairy Woodpecker at feeders. While we were birding there we heard the chatter of a Bald Eagle and began to search the trees for the bird. It took a while; however, we were successful in finding our first BE of the day high above in a White Pine tree. With all of us searching the treetops we soon discovered a second BE above the one we first noticed. We continued to enjoy watching the adult BEs chattering.

On Ann Street at the park that overlooks the Delaware we watched a Carolina Wren, Brown Creeper, and additional songbirds.

We continued to the rear of the Best Western, no eagles; however, a tree near the parking lot was loaded with 50 Cedar Waxwings. A murmuration of a thousand or more European Starlings perched on the utility lines at the entrance to the motel.

At the River View Restaurant near where PA, NJ, and NY converge no luck or BE.

We made a brief visit to the PA Welcome Center and viewed the Roebling bridge diorama. When leaving the center we watched a murder of American Crows mobbing a Red-tailed Hawk that was perched in a tree in the parking lot. The hawk made a quick exit with the crows pursuing.

As we crossed the bridge to Port Jervis and looked downriver we saw 200 Ring-billed Gulls.

Eddy Farm Resort overlook presented another Red-tailed Hawk, Eastern Bluebirds, and a Common Merganser.

By Noon we were at the Hawks Nest historical marker with a great vista where we saw the "bird of the day," a Peregrine Falcon above the Hawks Nest. The falcon was perched against the cliff above the pullout at the historical marker. We watched the Peregrine for about 15 minutes before it decided to fly closer to us - right above our heads.

As we crossed the Mongaup River a sub-adult BE flew high above us at Logtown. We watched it for a few

minutes until it flew out of sight.

At the Pond Eddy nest, in a White Pine on the PA side of the river we located the nest and a perched immature BE nearby. We also scanned the face of the cliff above us but saw no BE in the White Pine where we've seen them in the past. As we were leaving an immature BE flew above us and two more juvenile BEs took to the air then perched on the NY side of the river. We continued to the Mongaup Falls Observation Blind.

As we crossed the bridge approaching the Observation Blind we searched upstream for BEs, there were none. No BE from the blind as well. Plank Road also lacked BEs. We crossed the Rio Reservoir Dam, looked downstream and located an adult BE perched in a tree above the stream. We returned to the Delaware and traveled upriver.

In Barryville along the road that parallels the river an adult BE was spotted on the PA side of the river. We saw three adult BEs along this stretch of the river on our January field trip earlier this year. A number of songbirds at a feeder along the road included, Northern Cardinal, Eastern Bluebird, Downy Woodpecker, and Dark-eyed Juncos. No BE at Minisink Ford Observation Blind.

We traveled north to the Roebling bridge and beyond in NY and saw an additional 3 BE on the Delaware River. WE crossed to the Pennsylvania side of the Delaware where proximal to the Roebling Bridge is The Eagle Institute which provides a video of area eagles, brochures, newsletters, and other information about eagles is made available to visitors. There is a gift shop and the Institute is open weekends December through March.

A number of people were at the confluence of the Lackawaxen and Delaware rivers in the parking area looking for eagles; however, none were present.

Above us on the north side of the Lackawaxen river near the confluence with the Delaware is an active relocated BE nest just over the ridge. We've seen BEs here many times on past searches.

By the time we reached the Lackawaxen we had seen twelve Bald Eagles and a Peregrine Falcon. We traveled upstream along the Lackawaxen to the PPL Dam site and saw three additional BEs. An immature BE perched in a tree near Appert Road an adult BE upriver from Engvaldesen Road, and another adult BE upriver from Swinging Bridge.

We concluded our field trip at 3:30 PM.

Next Searches for Eagles: January 3, 2016, February 7, 2016, and March 6, 2016.

TO PARTICIPATE IN THE SEARCH FOR EAGLES FIELD TRIP

PHONE: 570.296.6752 AND INDICATE YOU WILL BE ATTENDING.

Or, eMail: [jack@brandwein.org](mailto:jack@brandwein.org) to leave a message.

Meet 8:00 a.m. at the PEEC parking lot OR Meet 10:00 a.m. at the Historic Callahan House, 101 Route 209 South @ mile marker 21, Milford, PA –

WEATHER PERMITTING. - Dress warmly, bring binoculars, field guides, and a lunch.

THERE IS NO CHARGE

An Eagle identification field guide and a "Search for Eagles" hand-out will be provided for participants by the Paul F-Brandwein Institute. Join us to Search For Eagles.

In addition to the 15 Bald Eagles, 6 Red-tailed Hawks, and 1 Peregrine Falcon we saw:

Canada Goose	Black-capped Chickadee
Common Merganser	Tufted Titmouse
Bald Eagle	White-breasted Nuthatch
Red-tailed Hawk	Carolina Wren
Peregrine Falcon	Eastern Bluebird
Ring-billed Gull	American Robin
Rock Pigeon	Cedar Waxwing
Mourning Dove	European Starling
Red-bellied Woodpecker	Fox Sparrow
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	Song Sparrow
Downy Woodpecker	White-throated Sparrow
Hairy Woodpecker	Dark-eyed Junco
Northern Flicker	Northern Cardinal
Blue Jay	American Goldfinch
American Crow	House Sparrow