

Lackawanna Audubon Society (LAS) Eagle Watch Field Trip, Saturday, 28 January 2017

The Lackawanna Audubon Society Field Trip, Eagle Watch took place in the Delaware Valley Saturday, January 28, 2017 from 9:00 a.m. to 2:30 PM The temperature at the start was 30 degrees and at the finish 31 degrees. It was a cold overcast day. I started the day watching feeder birds that included Pileated, Hairy, Downy, and Red-bellied Woodpeckers, Dark-eyed Junco, American Goldfinch, and Tufted Titmouse among others. The six of us logged 120 miles in the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area and Upper Delaware Scenic River from Milford Beach to 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 trip with six participants that recorded 27 species of birds including 40 Bald Eagles (BE) and 1 Red-tailed Hawk. The Delaware River, which was at a high level from previous rains was mostly open water and free from ice. Most of the forty eagles we observed were adults and near open water in the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area and Scenic Delaware. Most of the BEs we saw were perched.

On my way to joining the Eagle Watch participants at Milford Beach my first BE was an adult perched below the cliff just north of the Dingmans Cemetery. I've recently been seeing adult BEs at the Dingmans Ferry access and flying above Route 209 in Dingmans. Continuing north on 209 at Zimmerman Flats and over the Delaware were two BEs an adult and juvenile being mobbed by a murder of 50 American Crows.

The BE nest near mile marker 17 on Route 209 had two BEs one in the nest and the other perched on the edge of the nest. This nest site has been active for the past seven years and I hoped that the BEs would remain for the LAS friends when we visit the site.

I connected with the LAS members at Milford Beach and we searched the area from the canoe launch and parking lot, no BEs. Exiting the beach we stopped at Metz Road to check the BE nest in a White Pine next to a house, no BEs. We drove north along the river to a spot where we could see two adult BEs perched in a Sycamore near a condominium complex. We scoped the BEs as well as enjoyed the Common Mergansers on the river. Next stop was the mile marker 17 nest site where earlier I saw the BEs on the nest. No luck, the birds were gone.

At the River View Restaurant near where PA, NJ, and NY converge some Mallards and Canada Geese, no BE.

We made a brief visit to the PA Welcome Center Rest Stop.

Crossing the Matamoras - Port Jervis Bridge we looked down river for Ring-billed Gulls, none were there; however, we did find a dozen of them at West End Beach.

At Eddy Farm Resort overlook we drew a blank.

By 11:00 am we were at the Hawks Nest historical marker with a great vista but no birds. A Peregrine Falcon had been seen here recently.

At Pond Eddy we found the BE nest in a White Pine on the PA side of the river. An adult BE was soaring above the river and adult BE was high on the ridge in a White Pine, its favorite perch. We scanned the face of the cliff and found a perched juvenile BE. Above the horizon at the Pond Eddy bridge were two BEs an adult and a juvenile. We continued to the Mongaup Falls Observation Blind.

As we crossed the bridge approaching the Observation Blind we searched upstream for BEs. There were 14 of them, 7 adults and 7 juveniles. We joined the group of birders and scoped the area to enjoy some great looks at the perched BEs as well as those that took flight. We added a Belted Kingfisher. From the blind we spotted 3 additional juvenile BEs. A total of 17 BEs at this site is the most I've ever seen here at one time. on Plank Road we added 5 BEs 3 perched adults,

1 juvenile in flight and a juvenile standing on the ice. We added Ruffed Grouse to the list

No BEs were at the Rio Reservoir Dam. We returned to the Delaware and traveled upriver. At Pond Eddy we spotted 2 perched adult BEs and a juvenile. Earlier we had seen only 1 adult here.

In Barryville along the road that parallels the river were 2 BEs. No BE from the Minisink Ford Observation Blind. We traveled north of the Roebling bridge in NY without success.

On the Pennsylvania side of the Delaware proximal to the Roebling Bridge is The Eagle Institute where a video of area eagles is screened and where brochures, newsletters, and information about eagles is made available to visitors. There is a gift shop and the Institute is open weekends.

At the confluence of the Lackawaxen and Delaware rivers were a number viewers in the parking area looking at a mature BE perched up river. We had lunch and saw three juvenile BEs flying about.

By the time we reached the Lackawaxen 39 Bald Eagles were on the list.

We traveled along the Lackawaxen to the PPL Dam site and saw no additional BEs.

We concluded our field trip at 2:30 PM.

An Epilogue: On my way home above Johnny B Mountain Road I spotted a juvenile BE - number 40 for the day.

In addition to the 40 Bald Eagles we saw:

Canada Goose

Mallard

Hooded Merganser

Common Merganser

Ruffed Grouse

Red-tailed Hawk

Ring-billed Gull

Rock Pigeon

Mourning Dove

Belted Kingfisher

Downy Woodpecker

Hairy Woodpecker

Red-bellied Woodpecker

Pileated Woodpecker

Blue Jay

American Crow

Tufted Titmouse

Black-capped Chickadee

White-breasted Nuthatch

Eastern Bluebird

European Starling

Song Sparrow

Dark-eyed Junco

Northern Cardinal

American Goldfinch

House Sparrow