

Search for Eagles, Dr. S. Marie Kuhnen

Memorial Field Trip Series, 1 January 2017

The second Dr. S. Marie Kuhnen Memorial Field Trip, Search for Eagles took place in the Delaware Valley Sunday, January 1, 2017 from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. The temperature at the start was 31 degrees, during the search rose to 40 degrees and at the conclusion dropped back to 31. It was a clear sunny day beginning with watching feeder birds at home and at the Pocono Environmental Education Center (PEEC) that included a pair of Pileated Woodpeckers, Dark-eyed Junco, Black-capped Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, American Goldfinch, and Tree Sparrow among others. We logged 144 miles in the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area and Upper Delaware Scenic River from PEEC. The trip concluded 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 that included seeing 27 Bald Eagles (BE), 20 adults, 7 juveniles, 12 Red-tailed Hawks and 30 species of birds.

The first raptor of the day was a Red-tailed(RT) Hawk on the ground along Thurner Road. A second RT was perched on a utility wire west of Route 209 at the Eshback Access. I spotted the first Bald Eagle (BE) through the moon roof of my car. The BE was perched in a tree high above on the ridge near the north end of the shale bank where BEs formerly nested. RT number three was perched atop a Cedar at the intersection of Little Egypt Road and Route 209. No BE at the Bushkill access; however, 8 Mallards and a Mallard decoy were there. Heading north from the access on Route 209 I saw an additional RT perched over the road at Eshbacks. The 5th RT was on a utility pole cross member near Hornbeck's Trail.

An adult BE at the Dingmans Ferry Access was circling low over the bridge. Downy Woodpecker and Northern Cardinal were at the feeders near Dingmans Bridge toll booth. The third BE was in flight along Route 209 at mile marker #16 over Zimmerman Flats. The BE nest near mile marker 17 on Route 209 is no longer there. This former nest site had been active for at least the past five years. An adult BE was perched in the tree just above where the nest once was.

At the historic Callahan House feeders, headquarters of the Brandwein Institute, we added White-throated and Song Sparrows.

There is an active nest on the road to Milford Beach. The nest is located in the tallest White Pine to the right of the first house on the right after passing Metz Road. The nest is about a quarter of the way down the tree trunk from the top of the Pine. No BEs were at or near the nest.

No BE at the former Milford Mott Street nest site that had been reconstructed. After the nest crashed to the ground the BEs immediately started constructing a new nest further up the creek.

A juvenile BE #5 flying above Route 209 was added north of Kittatinny Camp Ground where a RT was also soaring. The next RT seen was perched proximal to Delaware Valley High School.

On the way to the Riverview RV Park we spotted House Sparrows, House Finches, and Rock Pigeons but no eagles. At 11:30 a.m. leaving the Riverview RT #8 was spotted at the PA Welcome Center. The RT was a "lamp post" bird perched atop a lamp post at the entrance. The Pennsylvania Welcome Center is where an Eagle Institute exhibit and a diorama of the Roebling Bridge is located.

Ring-billed Gulls were loafing downriver from the bridge between Matamoras and Port Jervis. No eagles at Eddy Pond Resort overlook; however 100 plus Canada Geese were present.

At the Hawks Nest historical marker besides a vista we got a great look at a Peregrine Falcon. The falcon was below us coursing back and forth above a group of Canada Geese. We looked down on this powerful flyer as it rose to our eye level then sailed downward. We watch it for about 10 minutes. During one search last year the Peregrine was spotted perched above us near the Hawks Nest historical marker.

At Pond Eddy in a White Pine on the PA side of the river is a BE nest. We searched the area with diligence; however, no BEs were to be found.

We were successful on the loop to the Mongaup Reservoir Observation Blind. From the parking lot we spotted an adult BE flying back and forth above the horizon. Eventually the BE approached the blind and we were able to get a better look.

We spotted a BE perched high in a White Pine along Plank Road. We returned to the Delaware and traveled upriver. As we passed the Pond Eddy nest site again no BEs were at the nest; however high on the ridge above the cliff two adult BEs were basking in the sunlight. That tree is where the birds frequently perch. This location was among Dr. Kuhnen's favorites.

By 2:30 p.m we were at the intersection of Berm-Church Road and Route 97 where a dozen people were along the road looking across the river. Upriver was a solid ice jamb. Before us and down river was open water and 7 BE's. The BEs were loafing on the ice, perched in the trees, soaring high above and flying to and fro in front of us. There were 2 adults and 5 juveniles. We stayed and enjoyed the birds for about 20 minutes before we traveled to Barryville for another two BEs, an adult perched in a tall pine tree. The adult was displaced by a juvenile. The birds were cackling as they displaced each other from various perches. No eagles were at Minisink Ford observation blind.

An adult BE was seen flying upriver in the vicinity of Cedar Restaurant and another juvenile BE further upriver. Traveling along Rt 97 north of the Roebling Bridge we were accompanied by a RT flying above the car. Across the Roebling Bridge in Lackawaxen where the Eagle Institute is located visitors may find

brochures, newsletters, and information about eagles. There is a gift shop and the Institute is open weekends.

From the Zane Grey Museum parking area we saw two adult BEs perched at the confluence of the Lackawaxen and Delaware Rivers on the NY side of the river. A half mile further north on the Pennsylvania side of the Delaware one more adult BE perched. At 4:00 p.m. we began to travel along the Lackawaxen. We had already observed 24 BEs and 10 RTs. A mile from the confluence we added an adult BE that was perched and by 4:10 added two additional RTs. Upriver from near Appert Road we had an adult BE perched in a treetop on the roadside of the river. It is not that frequent that a BE will be on this side of the Lackawaxen near the road. Another adult BE across the river was about to launch into the air and fly upriver. We concluded our search at 4:30 p.m..

Eagle observation data collected is shared with members of the Sussex County Bird Club, Eagle Institute, and Hawk Migration Association of North America HMANA. An Eagle identification field guide and a "Search for Eagles" hand-out is provided for participants by the Paul F-Brandwein Institute. Join us in the future to Search For Eagles. Searches are scheduled for January 8, 2017, February 5, 2017, and March 5, 2017.

Call [570.296.6752](tel:570.296.6752) or eMail jackpeec@aol.com to register for eagle searches.

Birds seen in addition to the 27 Bald Eagles:

Canada Goose Pileated Woodpecker Northern Cardinal
Mallard Peregrine Falcon House Finch
Hooded Merganser American Crow American Goldfinch
Common Merganser Fish Crow House Sparrow
Bald Eagle Common Raven
Red-tailed Hawk Black-capped Chickadee
Ring-billed Gull Tufted Titmouse
Rock Pigeon White-breasted Nuthatch
Mourning Dove Eastern Bluebird
Belted Kingfisher European Starling
Red-bellied Woodpecker Song Sparrow
Downy Woodpecker White-throated Sparrow
Northern Flicker Dark-eyed Junco