

Search for Eagles, Dr. S. Marie Kuhnen - Memorial Field Trip Series, Sunday, 7 December 2014

The first 2014-15 Dr. S. Marie Kuhnen Memorial Field Trip, Search for Eagles took place in the Delaware Valley Sunday, December 7, 2014 from 8:00 a.m. to 2:30 PM The temperature at the start was 17 degrees and at the finish 34 degrees. It was a cold clear day that began with watching feeder birds at the Pocono Environmental Education Center (PEEC) that included Dark-eyed Junco, Black-capped Chickadee, and Tufted Titmouse among others. We logged 144 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 that recorded 29 species of birds including 10 Bald Eagles (BE) and 9 Red-tailed Hawks. The Delaware River, which was at a high level from previous day's rain was all open water and free from ice. Eight of the ten eagles we observed were adults and near open water in the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area and Scenic Delaware. Half the BEs we saw were perched.

The first raptors of the day were two adult Red-tailed Hawks one east of Route 209 proximal to the Briscoe Mountain Road turn to PEEC and the other near at Eshback Access. Our first BE was an adult perched high on the ridge above the Bushkill Access. It was in a dead White Pine against the trunk. We heard a Pileated Woodpecker call, two American Crows flew over and as we left the Access there were two Fox Sparrows east of the road. At mile marker 6 north of the Bushkill Access was another adult BE also high on the ridge. These two BEs are in the area where there was a huge nest that collapsed two years ago. On subsequent searches we will be looking for a possible new nest.

Traveling north as we approached the Hornbeck Trail sign we pulled off the road to watch two adult BEs that were soaring over to Delaware River for about 10 minutes.

At the Dingmans Ferry Access a Red-bellied Woodpecker presented itself. Returning to RT 209 north we saw another Red-tailed Hawk perched above on the cliff above the highway. The BE nest near mile marker 17 on Route 209 has had birds around it for the past few weeks but there were none at the nest today. This nest site has been active for at least the past seven years.

No eagles at Milford Beach; however, at a Sugar Maple next to a flock of 50 Dark-eyed Juncos was a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker. Two Northern Flickers were in the area as well.

At the Callahan House, satellite office of the Brandwein Institute, we watched feeder birds adding White-breasted Nuthatch and White Throated Sparrow.

No BE were on the Milford Mott Street nest. The former nest crashed to the ground and the BEs immediately began constructing a new nest on the north side of the Sawkill. We saw and heard a Fish Crow as we were leaving the nest site. From Mott Street we were able to watch 13 Black Vultures kettling above Milford.

On Ann Street at the park that overlooks the Delaware we drew a blank, no birds.

High on the ridge opposite the Kittatinny Camp Ground we spotted two adult BEs perched on the same branch. We were able to observe the two birds through a spotting scope and saw the difference in the length of the birds' beaks. One of the BEs had a beak that was longer. This BE was also larger and probably a female. These BEs are in the area where for a number of years there had been a nest less than 20 yards above the west bound lane of Interstate 84. Here too on subsequent searches we will be looking for a newly constructed nest. Further north a Common Raven was approaching the ridge.

We continued to the Best Western, no eagles; however, a lone Ring-billed Gull was atop a Walmart parking lot light fixture.

At the River View Restaurant near where PA, NJ, and NY converge, as we were looking up at a Hairy Woodpecker the most spectacular event of the day occurred. High above against a blue sky

was a skein of 100 Snow Geese flying south. The geese were stretched in a single line.

We traveled east on I 84 across the Delaware River to take a look at the Port Jervis cemetery where a BE nest has been reported. We did not find the nest; however, on our return in Port Jervis to the I 84 westbound lane an immature BE was soaring above the highway.

Eddy Farm Resort overlook presented Mallards, Canada Geese and Common Mergansers.

By 11:20 AM we were at the Hawks Nest historical marker with a great vista and two Red-tailed Hawks soaring above the ridges one over New Jersey and the other over us in New York.

At the Pond Eddy nest sight, a White Pine on the PA side of the river we found the nest but no BE. We also scanned the face of the cliff above us, again, no BE. 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. No BEs were at the Rio Reservoir Dam. We returned to the Delaware and traveled upriver.

In Barryville along the road that parallels the was a flock of six Eastern Bluebirds on the Staghorn Sumacs.

No BE at Minisink Ford Observation Blind.

On Route 97 we passed the Roebling bridge and saw a shadow of a large bird crossing from right to left on the road in front of us. I made a U turn, headed south and spotted a Red-tailed Hawk soaring above the Lackawaxen River. As we approached the Roebling Bridge a mature BE circled above and flew down river. A second Red-tailed Hawk accompanied by a Common Raven was also above us.

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 but no BE. There were Mallards, Common Mergansers, and Canada Geese present.

Above us on the north side of the Lackawaxen river near the confluence with the Delaware is an active BE nest.

By the time we reached the Lackawaxen we had seen 8 Bald Eagles.

We traveled upstream along the Lackawaxen to the PPL Dam site and saw two additional BEs. An immature BE flying low above the river and a mature perched bird whose image I captured. A first for me on the Lackawaxen was the presence of 4 Gadwall.

We concluded our field trip at 2:30 PM.

Next Search for Eagles: Sunday, January 4, 2015

TO PARTICIPATE IN THE SEARCH FOR EAGLES FIELD TRIP

PHONE: 570.296.6752 AND INDICATE YOU WILL BE ATTENDING.

Or, eMail: 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 10 Bald Eagles we saw:

Canada Goose

Snow Goose

Mallard

Gadwall

Common Merganser

Red-tailed Hawk

Rock Pigeon

Mourning Dove

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker

Red-bellied Woodpecker

Downy Woodpecker

Hairy Woodpecker

Northern Flicker

Pileated Woodpecker

Blue Jay

American Crow

Fish Crow

Common Raven

Tufted Titmouse

Black-capped Chickadee

White-breasted Nuthatch

Eastern Bluebird

American Robin

European Starling

Fox Sparrow

White-throated Sparrow

Dark-eyed Junco

American Goldfinch

House Sparrow