



MOU Savaloja Grant 2019 Final Report



This year's MOU Savaloja Grant for \$1410 provided support of public outreach and education about the spring raptor migration in Duluth, MN by continuing to build on the education and awareness of the HRBO spring migration count on West Skyline Parkway. Thanks to a previous MOU Savaloja grant, we were able to fund the Count Interpreter in 2018, which provided public education to general visitors. In 2019, we were able to add more formal educational opportunities by providing school education programs and additional weekend programs for the public. The funds from this grant helped cover part-time Naturalist staffing in April and May of 2019.

Some of the spring educational highlights shared by Margie Menzies, Education Program Director, were the following:

School groups and classes- 18 programs delivered to 308 students in a variety of classes from preschool through high school

Public visitation and education - Record number of visitors came out to view the migration, as we more than doubled from 2018 (650 to over 1400)! This included the birding community, as well as the general public.

Special events – 2 new spring events were held to showcase the spring migration research and education at the West Skyline Spring Count for the general public of all ages.

- A Duluth Community Day was held on May 5, 2019. We offered a full slate of programs, but due to weather, we were only able to offer a bird banding program in the morning to about 10 participants. Lots of informal education happened through conversations with visitors and discussion and demonstrations with wings and talons.





- The Spring Migration Celebration weekend was held at the end of April. With education staff on hand, we were able to offer a workshop, 3 fields trips, kid’s activities, and interpretation about the birds and migration. Carrol Henderson also delivered a wonderful presentation “The World of the Peregrine Falcon and its Return to the Skies of Minnesota”. The event weekend was well attended and received great reviews from the participants!

Workshops and Field Trips – A Spring Migration 2-day Workshop and 3 spring birding field trips were held with a total of 85 participating.

Curriculum development and enhancement- developed a number of new hands-on activities to build on to curriculum, piloted station-oriented classes, and created a spring/fall count compilation sheet of seasonal averages, maximum seasonal counts and maximum single day counts.

The full 2019 West Skyline Spring Count Report is included below with pictures courtesy of John Richardson and Frank Nicoletti.



West Skyline Spring Count 2019

FINAL REPORT

By Frank Nicoletti and John Richardson

Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory conducted the West Skyline Spring Count full-time in starting in the spring of 2018. It will now continue for the next 8 years, thanks to a generous donation, and is hoped to continue for a number of years to come. Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory is excited about gaining knowledge about the spring migration through Duluth and how it compares to the fall counts. This is also a great way for public outreach and



continuing the education of raptor and bird conservation in the Western Great Lakes Region.



Counts have been conducted and published in the past from 1997-2006 and in 2009 and 2010, when Karl Bardon conducted the count full-time. The years following were done with limited volunteer observation each year. The same protocol was used this season, as in past years, with the use of two count sites depending of wind direction. We now use a tablet and Dunkadoo platform to record all the weather and count data live, which can be viewed real-time online during the count

at hawkridge.org and at hawkcount.org. A daily summary and total count are also put into eBird to continue that important database.

The 2019 season was conducted from March 1 through May 31. A total of 30,904 raptors were counted of 16 species observed during of 79 days covered out of 91 possible. The twelve days not covered were due to inclement weather. A total of 516 hours were covered giving an average of just over 6.5 hours per day. The hawk per day and hourly rate was 391 and 60, respectfully.



This season's count of 30,904 was the third highest total in the history of the West Skyline Spring Count with 32,602 and 33,228 in 2018 and 2004, respectfully. Most species were recorded in higher than normal numbers with the exception of Northern Harrier, Cooper's Hawk, Northern Goshawk, and American Kestrel. It's unclear at this point why the numbers were well below the 2000-2005 averages which is currently the most useful set of data we can use.

Certainly species which have shown steady increases in fall counts such as Turkey Vulture, Bald Eagle, Golden Eagle and Peregrine were recorded in record numbers this spring. We had two daily records, Bald Eagle with 1,076 on 21 March and 53 Golden Eagle 17 March.



Some of the highlights this spring were the following: Record Bald Eagle season total of 7,727 which is the highest count of any site in the country. The record season count for Bald Eagles was in fall 2017 with 6,099. The migration was certainly late this spring, so likely continuing into June would have eclipsed 8,000. It's also always great to document the migration of some of the less common migrants. We had 5 Swainson's Hawks, 4 dark morph Broad-winged Hawks, an adult light morph Harlan's and an adult Krider's were all special for sure.



We only recorded 111 species this year (vs 172 species in 2018), but it was still an amazing spring migration. Many species were late this year, with only a few days of optimal weather. We were fortunate to see Red-headed Woodpecker and Black-backed Woodpecker, which are uncommon in the northland. We also documented Lesser Black-backed Gull, which are rare in the spring. A single Townsend's Solitaire from the western parts of the US also made a brief appearance (we see maybe 4-5 in the fall).

Waterfowl came in overnight, as they do, and settled in the bay and lake in good numbers. However, we never saw them leave, as they seemingly left after sun-down. Thus, we did not get the chance this year to record the numbers, as we did last year.



We had a record number of visitors who came out to view the spectacular migration. Our visitation more than doubled from 2018 (650 to over 1400)! This included the birding community as well as the general public. John Richardson was on hand many days teaching and talking about the spring migration and Margie Menzies teaching school and group programs. Thanks to a grant from the Minnesota Ornithologists' Union (MOU) Savaloja Fund, we were able to provide a

naturalist to have school groups come out to view and learn about the spring migration firsthand. A total of 18 school programs were delivered to over 300 students Pre-K through high school. We also held our first Spring Migration Celebration weekend which included field trips,

hawk watch, and workshop as well as an evening talk by Carrol Henderson on the Peregrine Falcon recovery in Minnesota.

I would like to thank Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory for their support and to the special anonymous donor for making this important and educational opportunity possible to continue this count. Thanks to the MOU Savaloja Fund for granting funds to help make our school programming possible, along with Margie Menzies and naturalist staff for education efforts. Thanks to John Richardson for helping with the count and educating visitors. Thanks to Steve Kolbe, Stephen Nelson, Ralph Larsen and Ed Longhway were also helpful volunteers with the count. Thanks to all the visitors and members who made it out and help in various ways. To Kate, my wife who continues to support me and my passion in life.

Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory truly appreciates the MOU Savaloja Grant funding support. Thank you!



Financial Report

Income	<u>Projected</u>	<u>Actual</u>
Minnesota Ornithologists' Union	\$ 1,410	\$ 1,410
Expenditures		
Naturalist	\$ 1,410	\$ 1,410