

## **RIPLEY HAWK WATCH 2011 SPRING RAPTORTHON**

April 21, 2011

The first choice of date for the Ripley Hawk Watch (RHW) 2011 Spring Raptorthon, April 19, turned out to be all too typical of the season's weather: too-strong northeast winds and cold with snow mixed with rain. The 2011 season at the RHW was the coldest and wettest on record. The "rain" (or in this case "rain and snow") date, April 21, brought only marginally better weather: moderate northwesterly winds, mixed precipitation early and cold temperatures, but the sun appeared at least briefly toward the end of the day.

Numbers were very low for the day, especially compared to our big day a week later (6,737 birds, including 12 species and 5,854 broad-winged hawks), but we saw a surprising diversity of eight species. Of the 41 migrating raptors on April 21, two were turkey vultures; two, bald eagles; eight, sharp-shinned hawks; two, cooper's hawks; 20, broad-winged hawks; five, red-tailed hawks; one, rough-legged hawk; one, golden eagle.

The day's golden eagle turned out to be the only golden eagle the site recorded in 2011 and was the highlight of an otherwise fairly slow day. The immature bird wheeled a few times about 100 meters west of the observers at a fairly low altitude, then passed by us just above tree level, only a few meters to the south. We also saw two non-migrating bald eagles, one carrying a fish, probably to the nest quite close to the hawkwatch on a creek gorge to the east.

Participants in the day's count were Tim Sullivan, Bill Dietz, Eileen Jowett, Bill Jowett, Terry Mahoney, Jann Randell and Gil Randell. The eight species seen during the April 21 raptorthon generated promised donations of \$645.