

# SPRING NON-PASSERINE MIGRATION AT BAER ROCKS, PENNSYLVANIA, 1983

KENNETH KRANICK

In March and April, normal weather cycles in southeastern Pennsylvania work against the northerly movement of hawks along the Blue Mountain Ridge. The weather usually goes from cold fronts to highs, then back to cold fronts or storms. In other words, when northerly or westerly winds are not blowing, it is raining. This pattern inhibits spring hawk flights at the Ridge. Only during interludes between fading highs and the next systems, when southerly winds are present, do we expect hawks to migrate along the Ridge. When fronts move eastward, flights are brief. But, if upper-air winds change and bring a dry air-mass from the Gulf of Mexico, we may have a few days of heavy hawk activity.

Such weather occurred in late April, 1983, and lingered through the first three days of May. Cold fronts stalled west of Pennsylvania, temperatures rose into the eighties, and southerly breezes lasted day after day. Thus, all the ingredients for a good raptor flight were in place. Fall-like numbers of birds resulted.

Our observations were made from Baer Rocks, a ridgetop site about 14 miles northeast of Hawk Mountain Sanctuary and 1.7 miles southwest of Bake Oven Knob. Baer Rocks has an elevation of 1,604 feet.

Our watch began March 5. Eric Wiener and I assisted Brian Hillegass with the count. On that day we observed a record number of Red-tailed Hawks (*Buteo jamaicensis*), early Tree Swallows (*Tachycineta bicolor*), two Common Ravens (*Corvus corax*), a Black Vulture (*Coragyps atratus*), and an ample number of waterfowl.

Unfavorable winds continued for the rest of March. Not until April 2 did we see another fine flight - 257 hawks and about 200 Ring-billed Gulls (*Larus delawarensis*). American Kestrels (*Falco sparverius*) and Northern Harriers (*Circus cyaneus*) highlighted the day. Weather this day was like that of the previous successful outing (March 5) when moderate southeast winds preceded a storm.

An abnormality occurred April 17. Despite high pressure and northerly winds, 217 hawks used the mountain. Had I arrived earlier than 8:30 a.m., the count, no doubt, would have been higher.

After seeing about 600 hawks and 231 Common Loons (*Gavia immer*) on April 23, I thought the raptor migration would begin winding down. But, Eric Wiener counted a record 81 Ospreys (*Pandion haliaetus*), the last three after 8:00 p.m., and 380 other hawks on the 27th. In the walk to the parking lot he saw five Eastern Screech-Owls (*Otus asio*) and heard many others.

The next day's tally of 526 hawks is impressive considering the watch did not begin until almost 5:00 p.m. Apparently, this was *the* flight of the season. The southwest winds kept many birds along the Ridge. In two evening hours another 37 Ospreys, a number that would be an excellent full-day fall count, passed the Ridge. Since the species migrates heavily in early May, I expected the next few days to add many more. They did.

There was no count on the 29th, but while walking toward the lookout early in the morning of April 30, I saw a few Ospreys. Three more sailed by minutes after my 8:25 a.m. arrival. In the first 1½ hours Common Loons moved abundantly; the day finished with 215. Hawks flew in good numbers all morning. Three Peregrine Falcons (*Falco peregrinus*) and three Bald Eagles (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) flew by between 9:40 and 11:40 a.m. A Red-throated Loon (*Gavia stellata*) and Double-crested Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax auritus*) also flew overhead.

The morning's gentle to moderate southerly breezes gradually increased, and afternoon winds occasionally gusted above 30 mph. At 1:43 p.m. Eric Wiener's recently set (April 27) spring Osprey record fell. Then, at 2:35 p.m. we passed the previous high *fall* count—102 at Bake Oven Knob on September 11, 1965. (*Cassinia* 51 [1968-1969]:17). The day's total of Osprey was 142.

Under mostly drab and calm conditions the next day, May 1, a mere 209 hawks, including 50 Ospreys passed. A Peregrine Falcon, Bald Eagle, Common Raven and two Red-throated Loons provided good variety. Ospreys continued on May 7 as another 52 soared high above the Rocks, bringing the season's total to 503. Having seen just four hawks—the next morning, we concluded the Baer Rocks spring count for 1983.

4494 Steuben Road, Bethlehem, PA 18017

## SPRING RAPTOR FLIGHT, BAER ROCKS, PENNSYLVANIA, 1983

Day	Hours	Sky	Wind	OS	BE	NH	SS	CO	GO	RS	BW	RT	GE	AK	ME	PF	UN	Total
Mar																		
5	9½	c-s	e-s 5-12			1	1	1	2	1		128		11				145
20	5½	c-s	nw 10-15			2	2	2	7			9		1			4	25
30	5	s	sw 0-5			1	2	1	2	1		19		2			4	32
Apr																		
1	5	s	nw 3-20	1		4	1	1	2	2		17		1			3	30
2	8½	vc	e-s 8-20	4		20	13	5	1	2		93		112	1		6	257
9	8	c-mc	e-se 5-17	4		3	10	6	3		2	60		3			3	94
13	5½	pc	se 2-5	41		14	34	8	3	3	21	44	1	33			1	203
16	3	c	nw 15-30			4					29	2						35
17	8	s-mc	nw 3-12	16		6	64	3	2	5	97	11		1			12	217
22	7	vc	nw 3-12	7		3	10				28	15		3			5	71
23	9	vc	s 0-10	60		5	35	4		1	449			26			8	588
27	10	vc	v 5-15	81		3	33	2	1		331			10				461
28	2½	s	sw 5-10	37		2	13		3		461			10				526
30	9½	vc	s 5-30	142	3	12	108	15			394	21		10	3		7	725
May																		
1	11	vc	s 0-5	50	1	9	43	7			93			3	1		2	209
6	3½	s	nw-n 3-15	8		4					9							21
7	10	vc	s 5-20	52	2	2	12	2			18						4	90
8	5	mc	v-s 0-3			4												4
TOTALS	18 days	126 hours		503	4	81	396	55	20	22	1,932	419	1	226	1	4	59	3,733

ABBREVIATIONS: OS = Osprey, BE = Bald Eagle, NH = Northern Harrier, SS = Sharp-shinned Hawk, CO = Cooper's Hawk, GO = Northern Goshawk, RS = Red-shouldered Hawk, BW = Broad-winged Hawk, RT = Red-tailed Hawk, GE = Golden Eagle, AK = American Kestrel, ME = Merlin, PF = Peregrine Falcon, UN = Unidentified.

TABLE 2

OTHER NON-PASSERINE MIGRANTS,  
BAER ROCKS, PENNSYLVANIA, 1983

3 Red-throated Loons 4/30-5/1	4 Northern Pintails ?
919 Common Loons 3/30-5/8	45 Common Mergansers 3/5-4/2
1 Double-crested Cormorant 4/30	427 Ring-billed Gulls 3/5-5/7
32 Great Blue Herons 4/2-5/1	16 Herring Gulls 3/5-5/1
1 Snow Goose 4/28	1 Red-headed Woodpecker ?
1,400 Canada Geese 3/5-5/7	4 Common Ravens 3/5-4/20 (passerine)