

**SPECIAL
BONUS!**
Contains guide
to hawks in
flight



Results of our survey Watching hawks

Rob Mackay

Your **25** favorite places to see hawks

- | | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|---|
| 1 Cape May Point Hawk Watch, NJ | 8 Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary, FL | 18 Whitefish Point Bird Observatory, MI |
| 2 Hawk Mountain Sanctuary, PA | 9 Golden Gate Raptor Observatory, CA | 19 Big Bend NP, TX |
| 3 Everglades NP, FL | 10 My backyard | 20 Chimney Rock Hawk Watch, NJ |
| 4 Hawk Ridge and West Skyline Hawk Count, MN | 11 Dauphin Island, AL | 21 Muskegon Hawkwatch, MI |
| 5 Yellowstone NP, WY | 12 Point Pelee NP, ON | 22 Sandy Hook Migration Watch, NJ |
| 6 Point Reyes National Seashore, CA | 13 Skagit River Delta, WA | 23 Bentsen-Rio Grande Valley SP, TX |
| 7 Grand Canyon NP, Lipan Point and Yaki Point, AZ | 14 Grand Teton NP, WY | 24 Sacramento NWR, CA |
| | 15 Klamath Basin, OR | 25 Myakka River SP, FL |
| | 16 Pocono Mountains, PA | |
| | 17 Boundary Bay, BC | |

More on our website!

See the 25 favorites plotted on a clickable map, find a profile of each site, and read articles from *Birder's World*.

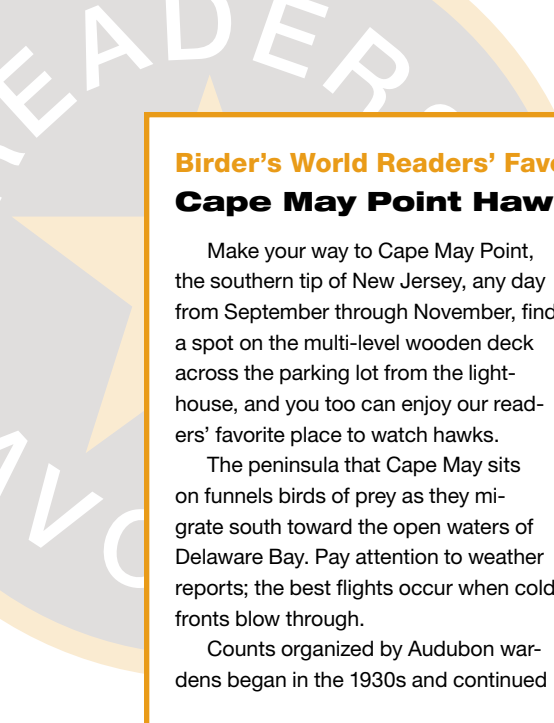
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Favorite hawk-migration hotspots are scattered from coast to coast, but Cape May tops the list

In our February 2006 issue, Contributing Editor Pete Dunne described his visit to the Rose Tree Park Hawk Watch in suburban Philadelphia, where he saw Broad-winged and Sharp-shinned Hawks, Osprey, kestrels, Merlins, a Northern Harrier, and other raptors — birds that he had seen an untold number of times throughout his life.

“I sometimes wonder why people will stand in the same place, day after day, hoping to see the same few species of birds over and over again,” he wrote in “Birder at Large” (page 16). “I’ve been doing it for more than 30 years, and I

BEAUTIFUL BUTEO: A Swainson's Hawk cuts across the blue sky. The species breeds in central and western North America and winters primarily in Argentina.



Birder's World Readers' Favorite Cape May Point Hawk Watch

Make your way to Cape May Point, the southern tip of New Jersey, any day from September through November, find a spot on the multi-level wooden deck across the parking lot from the light-house, and you too can enjoy our readers' favorite place to watch hawks.

The peninsula that Cape May sits on funnels birds of prey as they migrate south toward the open waters of Delaware Bay. Pay attention to weather reports; the best flights occur when cold fronts blow through.

Counts organized by Audubon wardens began in the 1930s and continued

sporadically for decades. Since 1976, the Cape May Bird Observatory's official hawk counter has tallied hawks at the point each fall. Sixteen raptor species regularly migrate through the area.

CMBO naturalists and interns are available on the deck from early September to early November to help visitors improve their hawk-ID skills.

In 2009, 36,929 raptors were counted. Sharp-shinned Hawk was the most common species (14,172 birds). And the peak flights occurred on September 25 (1,850 birds), October 5 (1,721 birds), and September 14 (1,680 birds).

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can't wait to do it again tomorrow, but I can hardly explain why. Except, perhaps, because it's fun."

Fun. What better reason could there be to watch hawks, falcons, and other birds of prey? Few birds are as beautiful — or powerful. The distances they migrate are often mind-boggling, and because they're so visible — soaring on daytime thermals, often in huge numbers — hawks have inspired generations of people to study and protect not only birds but all of nature.

For our fifth Readers' Favorites survey, we asked you to tell us your favorite places to watch hawks. Our online poll offered more than 200 locations in the United States and Canada, and included Veracruz, Mexico, where more than five million raptors — the highest total in the world — fly overhead every fall. (You can read about it in our October 2009 issue, page 28.) More than 2,100 readers responded, casting more than 5,900 votes. All of the sites received votes, including Rose Tree Park, and we tallied write-in votes for more than 500 additional sites.

Each participant was entered into a drawing for one Nikon Monarch 8x42 binocular provided by our generous partner, Nikon Sport Optics. Our happy winner was birdwatcher Debbie Christie of Louisville, Kentucky.

Clearly, North America has no shortage of great places to see hawks. Our readers' 25 favorite sites are listed on the

preceding page. Visit any one of them in the coming months, and you're sure to see plenty of raptors. The locations include many of the most celebrated hawk watches in the United States: Cape May, Hawk Mountain, Hawk Ridge, Golden Gate, and Whitefish Point.

The sites are scattered across the continent. They include six national parks and one national seashore. The two Florida sites in the top 10 — Everglades National Park and Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary — are places to look for the geographically isolated Short-tailed Hawk and Snail Kite. Also watch for Swallow-tailed Kite at both spots in spring and summer.

Of course, watching hawks doesn't always mean going to migration hotspots or iconic national parks in search of rare birds. It can also mean stepping out your back door. In fact, enough readers wrote in "my backyard" (or front porch, neighborhood, or farm) to take 10th place in our top-25 list. Many mentioned Red-shouldered and Harris's Hawks nesting nearby.

How fun! 🗣️

— Matt Mendenhall

In June and July, we conducted our sixth and final Readers' Favorites survey, about favorite places to see owls. We'll report the results in our December issue. To find the results of past surveys on favorite places to see eagles, warblers, hummingbirds, and shorebirds, visit www.BirdersWorld.com.

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