

Quaker Ridge Hawk Watch
Brian Bielfelt - Official Hawk Counter for 2006

Were you here the day we broke the highest single day record for Osprey with 140 birds? Did you see the Merlin with the bird in its talons the first, second, or third time or when one perched overhead and one in the cedars? Or the low peregrine calling as it flew overhead? Maybe you were here for the Anhinga or the Golden Eagle that dive-bombed a local Red-tailed Hawk? Well perhaps you were here for the "Texas size" kettle of 1,400 Broad-wings?

If you answered no to these questions, perhaps you need to check out the Quaker Ridge hawk watch next season. There are only a few other sites on the east coast that compare to Quaker Ridge. We may not compare to Cape May for sheer number; however, I find Quaker Ridge to have a very different appeal. It is a very relaxed setting, a few thousand less tourists, convenient hawk site, and a great group of dedicated volunteers. Many already know that Quaker Ridge is one of the best sites in the Northeast for Broad-winged Hawks. This year, no major hurricanes affected our Broad-wing flight; therefore, we had a normal year. However, when the Broad-wings leave, the real migration begins. October may lack in numbers but makes up for it in diversity. Merlin, Peregrine, GoldenEagle, and Red-shouldered Hawk numbers peak in mid-October. Sharp-shinned Hawks, Red-tailed Hawks and Turkey Vultures are all moving then too. This year Golden Eagles made a great showing. For a two week period we had at least one eagle a day. We set a day record for Goldens with 6.

Overall, this year was the best in a long time with over 18,116 hawks, the highest total since 2000. Osprey (817) and Northern Harriers (266) are the highest they've been since 1998. American Kestrel (719) are the highest since 1999. Finally Broad-winged Hawks (10,464) are the best they've been in 6 years.

One thing that you'll notice is that this is the 6th best year for Sharp-shinned Hawks (3429); 5th best for Red-tailed Hawks (397); 4th best year for Osprey, Harriers and Peregrine Falcons (30); 3rd best year for Red-shouldered Hawks (234) and Merlins (89); and 2nd best year for Bald Eagles (100); We had quite a showing for several species. This was the best year ever for Cooper's Hawks (491), Turkey Vulture, (804), BlackVulture (48), and Golden Eagle (24).