The Raptor Migration: Miller State Park

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The fall raptor migration is happening now! Visit Miller State Park and view one of the great wonders of the natural world at New Hampshire's premier Hawkwatching site. During the fall the summit is a great spot to watch the raptor migration. From the Pack Monadnock Raptor Observatory, visitors may have the chance to see up to 15 different species of bird migrating.

The Pack Monadnock Raptor Observatory is just a short walk from the fire tower and the summit parking lot. Follow the green signs that say “Raptor Observatory" to get to the site. Here you will find many bird enthusiasts, volunteers, and staff from the Harris Center viewing, photographing, counting, and identifying these birds. All are welcome and encouraged to ask questions and watch as these Raptors fly above.



Raptor Observatory Count - Photo Credit: Calyssa Holloman

Image below: Raptor Observatory View- Photo Credit: Calyssa Holloman



Some species you might be able to see:

- Broad winged Hawks
- Sharp shinned hawks
- American Kestrel
- Peregrine falcons
- Osprey
- Bald Eagle



People at the Raptor Observatory - Photo Credit : Calyssa Holloman

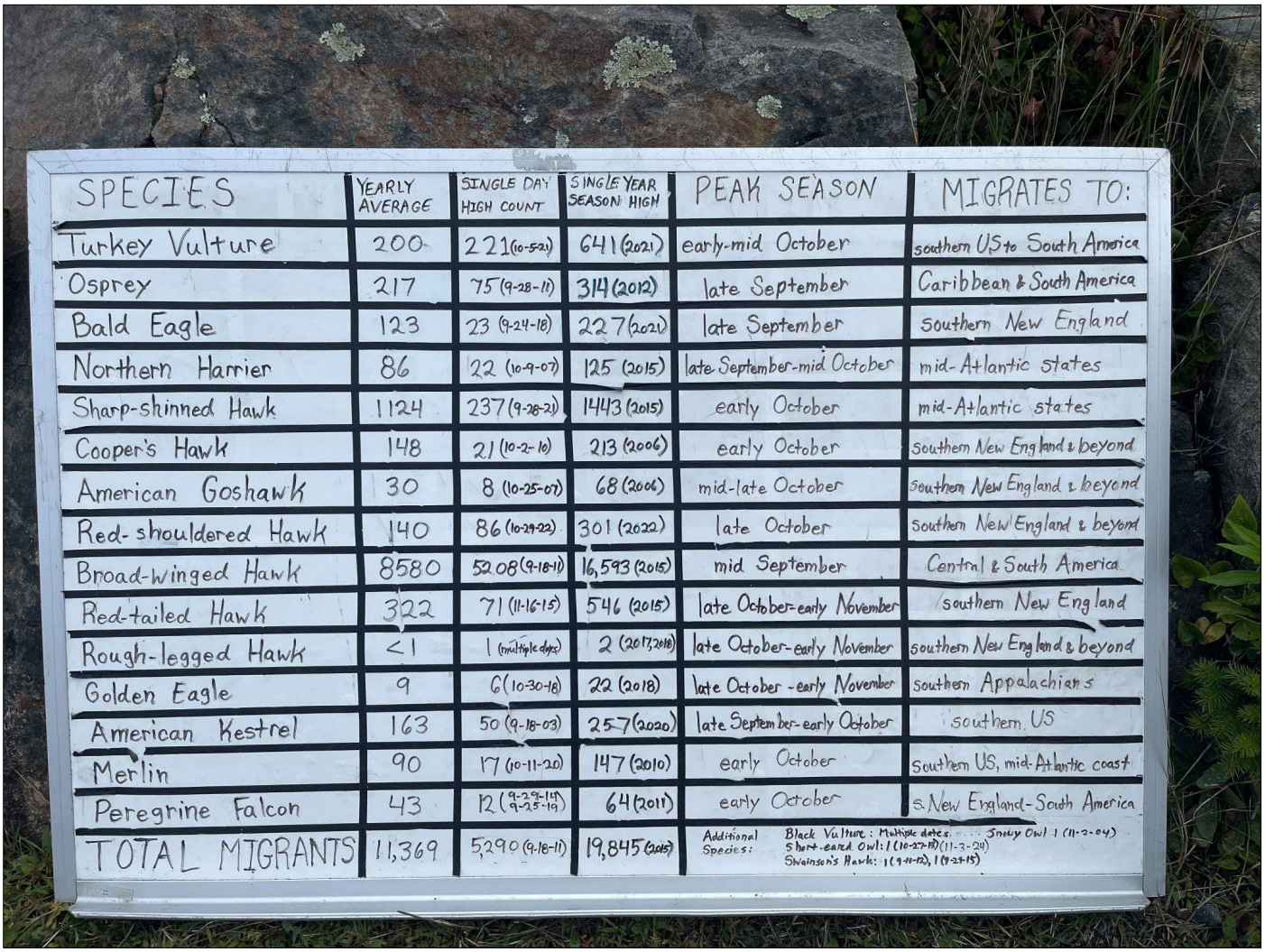
Why is Miller the best spot to view these?

These birds soar on updrafts or strong currents of warm air rapidly rising, allowing them travel distances of 250 - 300 miles in a single day! Pack Monadnock is known as an excellent site for observing raptor migration because of its elevation, location, and prominent views of the north and west. Of the 32 raptor species that occur in North America at least 20 are migratory. You can observe up to 15 of these species at Miller State Park.

Why is it so important to monitor the migration and count the birds?

Raptors are strong indicators of environmental health as they live in most ecosystem types, feed at the top of the food web, and are highly sensitive to environmental changes. By studying them we learn how ecosystems are changing and how to protect both wildlife and people.

The data we get from this event is vital not only for migratory raptors but for other bird species and even monarch butterflies and dragonflies. Over a decade of raptor migration data has been collected near the summit. In this data it shows an increase in bald eagle and peregrine falcon populations which were once in decline due to the use of DDT, a synthetic insecticide used to control disease carrying insects in the 1940s.



SPECIES	YEARLY AVERAGE	SINGLE DAY HIGH COUNT	SINGLE YEAR SEASON HIGH	PEAK SEASON	MIGRATES TO:
Turkey Vulture	200	221 (10-5-21)	641 (2021)	early-mid October	southern US to South America
Osprey	217	75 (9-28-11)	314 (2012)	late September	Caribbean & South America
Bald Eagle	123	23 (9-24-18)	227 (2021)	late September	Southern New England
Northern Harrier	86	22 (10-9-07)	125 (2015)	late September-mid October	mid-Atlantic states
Sharp-shinned Hawk	1124	237 (9-28-21)	1443 (2015)	early October	mid-Atlantic states
Cooper's Hawk	148	21 (10-2-16)	213 (2006)	early October	Southern New England & beyond
American Goshawk	30	8 (10-25-07)	68 (2006)	mid-late October	Southern New England & beyond
Red-shouldered Hawk	140	86 (10-29-22)	301 (2022)	late October	Southern New England & beyond
Broad-winged Hawk	8580	5208 (9-18-11)	16,593 (2015)	mid September	Central & South America
Red-tailed Hawk	322	71 (11-16-15)	546 (2015)	late October-early November	southern New England
Rough-legged Hawk	<1	1 (multiple days)	2 (2017, 2018)	late October-early November	southern New England & beyond
Golden Eagle	9	6 (10-30-18)	22 (2018)	late October - early November	southern Appalachians
American Kestrel	163	50 (9-18-03)	257 (2020)	late September-early October	southern US
Merlin	90	17 (10-11-20)	147 (2010)	early October	Southern US, mid-Atlantic coast
Peregrine Falcon	43	12 (9-29-14, 9-25-19)	64 (2011)	early October	S. New England-South America
TOTAL MIGRANTS	11,369	5,290 (9-18-11)	19,845 (2015)	Additional Species:	Black Vulture: Multiple dates. Snowy Owl: 1 (11-3-04) Short-eared Owl: 1 (10-27-18) (11-3-24) Swainson's Hawk: 1 (9-11-12), 1 (9-24-15)

Raptor Information - Photo Credit: Calyssa Holloman

The Raptor Observatory is staffed every day through September 1st to November 20th with peak migration happening though September to mid October. Whether you visit Miller State Park quite often, have been here once before, or have never been, now would be the perfect time to visit and witness the Raptor Migration. See how these creatures soar and fly above us and enjoy your day hanging out with others who are curious and in awe of nature.

The Discover the Power of Parks Program is a collaboration between the New Hampshire Department of Natural and Cultural Resources – Division of Parks and Recreation, Student Conservation Association's New Hampshire Conservation Corps, AmeriCorps, and Volunteer NH.