

The [Birding Club of Delaware County \(BCDC\)](#) established the **Rose Tree Park Hawkwatch (RTPHW)**, the county’s first and only hawkwatch, in 1999. Located along the Atlantic flyway, Rose Tree Park, in Media PA, features an expansive open landscape and raptors soaring on steady winds.

Each autumn, volunteer counters spend hundreds of person-hours at Rose Tree Park, scanning skies daily for nearly 3 months, tallying migrating hawks, falcons, eagles, and vultures. Myriad information is collected and contributed to the [Hawk Migration Association of North America \(HMANA\)](#), a global database committed to avian conservation and science.

BCDC extends deep gratitude and appreciation to all the dedicated RTPHW hawkwatchers: Tom Bush, Dave Eberly, Sheryl Johnson, Bob Kelly, John Mercer, Chris Pugliese, Chuck Root, and Alan Simon. Special thanks to Chris Pugliese for organizing the counters, and to Dave Eberly and John Mercer for submitting data to HMANA.

Chris Pugliese shared interesting insights and stats in the 2021 season summary below. We invite all to enjoy hawkwatching with BCDC next year. There is always something interesting when winds are right!

* * * * *

Rose Tree Park Hawkwatch 2021 Summary

By Chris Pugliese, November 2021

The Rose Tree Park Hawkwatch (RTPHW) wrapped up its 23rd season on Friday, November 19, 2021. As always, reflecting back on a hawk watch season is always a bittersweet experience. Personally, I am not one that monitors our count numbers daily, except perhaps in September when the Broad-winged Hawks show up and create the spectacle that everyone waits for each fall, so analyzing the post-season totals always reveals something interesting.



September, the month of high hopes

The afore-mentioned Broad-winged Hawk spectacle was underwhelming this September, as we only totaled 590 broad wings this month; the remaining 164 came through in October. That total was our second lowest in RTPHW history.

Looking back over the last five seasons, we have not topped 1,000 broad wings in three of those (2019, 2020, 2021). It really boils down to weather patterns, and once again this September, we had no significant, extended cold front bringing westerly or northerly winds, which is critical for good flights on our “flatland” location. That’s pretty much it.

The good news is that Bald Eagles, Osprey and American Kestrels showed up in decent numbers, easing the disappointment with the broad wings’ poor performance.

The month ended on a high note which came as quite a surprise - we tallied 141 Sharp-shinned Hawks on September 30, one of the highest daily totals of sharp shins in our history!

On to October

October is always a mixed bag, and we typically get the most diverse daily species counts, particularly in the first half of the month. Falcons and Bald Eagles continued to impress, the latter in particular. We had a season high of 16 BE's on October 27.

We had 4 days in which we totaled over 100 hawks during this month (and one day of 99). Interestingly, we had identical monthly counts of 1,209 hawks in both October and September - possibly the first time this has happened. What makes this more impressive is that we counted for nearly 30 less hours in October- not bad!

November- bring on the buteos and vultures

Actually, just the Turkey Vultures, as we have yet to see a migrating Black Vulture over Rose Tree Park.

The TV's start migrating in October, but continue throughout November, and we always have steady numbers on this species. Buteos, on the other hand, made a disappointing showing this month, with the exception of November 5, when we logged 14 Red-shouldered Hawks.

Of the 426 hawks we counted this month, 264 were Turkey Vultures, which sums it up.

We typically spot at least one Golden Eagle at Rose Tree Park, and on a chilly, blustery afternoon on November 14, Sheryl Johnson scoped out a lone sub-adult GE.

The "Up-Down" report- by the numbers

Here is the count breakdown on each species:

- 162 Bald Eagle - this was our best count since 2014
- 113 Osprey - we hit our 5-year average.
- 38 Northern Harrier - we hit our 5-year average - good news given their threatened status.
- 719 Sharp-shinned Hawk - a high note this year; we nearly doubled our numbers from 2020, and tallied our highest total in 7 years.
- 97 Cooper's Hawk - we hit the 5-year average.
- 112 Red-shouldered Hawk - below the 5-year average, and down from 2020.
- 654 Broad-winged Hawk - second lowest total in our history.
- 95 Red-tailed Hawk - this was our second lowest count in our history.
- 201 American Kestrel - another highlight of 2021; this was our best count since 2011, which is particularly gratifying, as this hawk is in decline in our region.
- 17 Merlin - we hit our 5-year average.
- 14 Peregrine Falcon - we hit our 5-year average.



Many thanks to my fellow hawk counters Tom Bush, Dave Eberly, Sheryl Johnson, Bob Kelly, John Mercer, Chuck Root, and Alan Simon.

Dave and John deserve special thanks for continuing the role of data-reporting to the [Hawk Migration Association of North America \(HMANA\)](#).

I'm looking forward to September 2022.