

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge
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News Release



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Detroit River Hawk Watch Completes its 35th Year of Monitoring Fall Raptor Migration

GROSSE ILE, MICHIGAN – The 2017 Detroit River Hawk Watch (DRHW) ended its 35th year of monitoring the Fall migration of raptors on November 31st. In all, 72,263 Turkey Vultures and fifteen species of raptor were counted during the months of September, October and November. DRHW welcomed new counter Kevin Georg, who, with the help of dedicated volunteers, logged 637 hours of data collection during the 89-day period. Unfortunately, totals for the 2017 season were 43% below the Long-Term Average (LTA) of almost 127,000 raptors per year since 1998.

Several factors may have contributed to the drop in numbers. For the third year in a row the count experienced an unusually warm September with strong southern winds that pushed southbound raptors well to the north of the count site at Lake Erie Metropark. With only 10,392 Broad-winged Hawks migrating past the count site this year (84% below the LTA) this year marked the lowest Broad-winged count in DRHW history. Cooper's Hawks also produced their lowest count in DRHW history with only 120 birds counted (75% below the LTA). Osprey (-73%), Northern Harrier (-30%), Sharp-shinned Hawk (-33%), Red-shouldered Hawks (-44%), Red-tailed Hawk (-46%), and American Kestrel (-40%) also showed significantly low counts for the season.

But, not all news was bad. An impressive 96 Golden Eagles migrated past the count site this fall. 238 Bald Eagles were counted which was 34% above the LTA, 59 Merlin were counted (26% above LTA) and 67 Peregrine Falcons (58% above LTA) were nice consolations.

The Detroit River Hawk Watch 2017 Season Summary is available for viewing on the DRHW website at <http://drhawkwatch.org>. Results for individual species are presented, as well as non-raptor and monthly highlights. Check out the outstanding photography of Andrew Sturgess and Mark Hainen in the report, as well as on the Detroit River Hawk Watch Facebook page.

DRHW is the premier citizen science initiative of the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge. It is a partnership among the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Refuge's Friends Organization called the International Wildlife Refuge Alliance, Huron Clinton Metroparks, and the Detroit River Hawk Watch Advisory Committee. Raptor count data are entered into a North American database managed by the Hawk Migration Association of North America. More information on DRHW is available online at: <http://www.drhawkwatch.org/>.

For additional information, contact Deputy Refuge Manager Steve Dushane at 734-692-7604 or Visitor Services Manager Jody DeMeyere at 734-692-7649.

For more information about the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge, please visit the refuge website: www.fws.gov/refuge/Detroit_River.

The Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge is proud to be the only international refuge in North America and one of only 14 priority urban refuges in the nation charged with bringing conservation to cities. The refuge includes more than 6,200 acres along 48 miles of the lower Detroit River and western Lake Erie. The Refuge focuses on conserving, protecting, and restoring habitat for 29 species of waterfowl, 23 species of raptors, 31 species of shorebirds, over 100 species of fish, and over 300 species of birds. Unique habitats being managed within the Refuge include islands, coastal wetlands, marshes, shoals and waterfront lands. More information can be found at: www.fws.gov/refuge/detroit_river/.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is, working with others, to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service is both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation. Visit www.fws.gov to learn more.

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