



DFO DINOSAUR RIDGE HAWK WATCH

2025 Spring Migration Report

INTRODUCTION

The 2025 spring migration season at Denver Field Ornithologists (DFO) Dinosaur Ridge Hawk Watch marked a milestone of **3144 raptors counted, the most since 2002**, with a season running from March 1 to May 10.

This year marked the fourth consecutive year that DFO employed full-time seasonal Hawk Counters. Emma Riley served as Lead Counter and Project Lead, while Audrey Anderson returned for her second season as a full-time Counter. Having two professional counters allows us to continue to follow protocol of at least one Counter and one Observer per count day and count with full coverage during peak migration periods. Our dedicated Dinosaur Ridge Hawk Watch Counters enhanced count coverage by overlapping their shifts on many days of the count.

An additional goal of Dinosaur Ridge Hawk Watch is to provide meaningful opportunities for aspiring professionals to gain real-world experience in the field of biology. Two college-level part-time Observers supported our weekend coverage: Laura Campbell from Colorado State University and Laura Farnsworth from University of Colorado in Denver. High School Intern Haley Caron joined us from Bear Creek High School to aid as an observer.

Scheduled volunteers also contributed significant amounts of their time to assist in raptor observations over the season. Their commitment and passion were vital to the success of the monitoring effort to help observe and provide consistency to the count.

Total observation time reached **495 hours in 2025**. This was the fourth highest observational recorded time since the count at Dinosaur Ridge began, and exceeded both the 2023 and 2024 hourly count times by more than 17 hours.

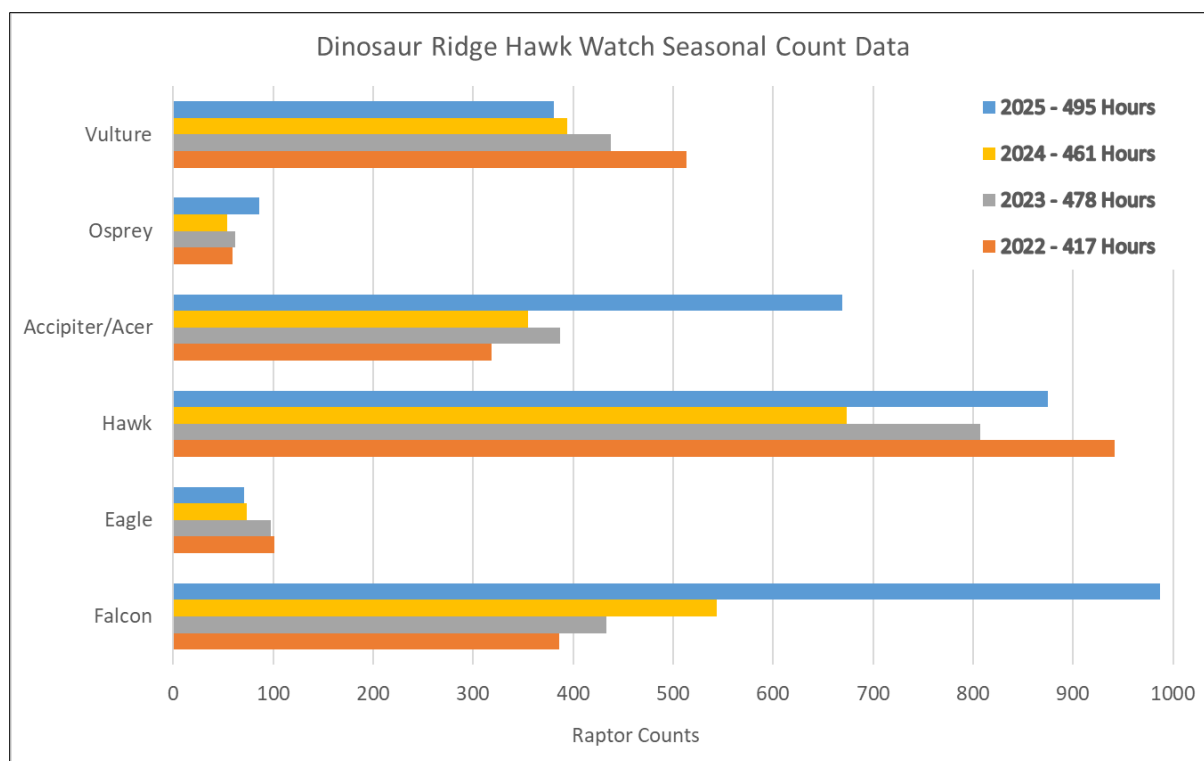
Daily site management responsibilities—including staff management, volunteer scheduling, group event coordination, organizing educational outreach, leading scheduled Dinosaur Ridge Hawk Watch and other educational field trips, social media,

communications, etc. — were carried out by volunteers from the Dinosaur Ridge Hawk Watch Committee.

COUNT SUMMARY

The table below shows total raptor counts for the 2025 season alongside comparative data from the last three seasons (2022 – 2024) where both professional counters and volunteer observers contributed to the count.

SPECIES	2025	2024	2023	2022
AMERICAN KESTREL	952	501	386	337
RED-TAILED HAWK	524	463	504	768
TURKEY VULTURE	381	394	445	513
COOPER'S HAWK	309	231	284	213
BROAD-WINGED HAWK	274	140	170	54
SHARP-SHINNED HAWK	358	115	107	96
OSPREY	86	54	65	59
BALD EAGLE	47	49	58	61
SWAINSON'S HAWK	46	48	77	54
NORTHERN HARRIER	61	27	32	39
GOLDEN EAGLE	24	25	41	40
FERRUGINOUS HAWK	29	23	65	63
MERLIN	17	21	24	17
PEREGRINE FALCON	15	16	20	21
AMERICAN GOSHAWK	2	9	9	9
PRAIRIE FALCON	3	6	5	11
ROUGH-LEGGED HAWK	2	0	0	3
UNIDENTIFIED RAPTOR	14	28	29	48
TOTAL	3144	2,150	2,321	2,406



OBSERVATIONS

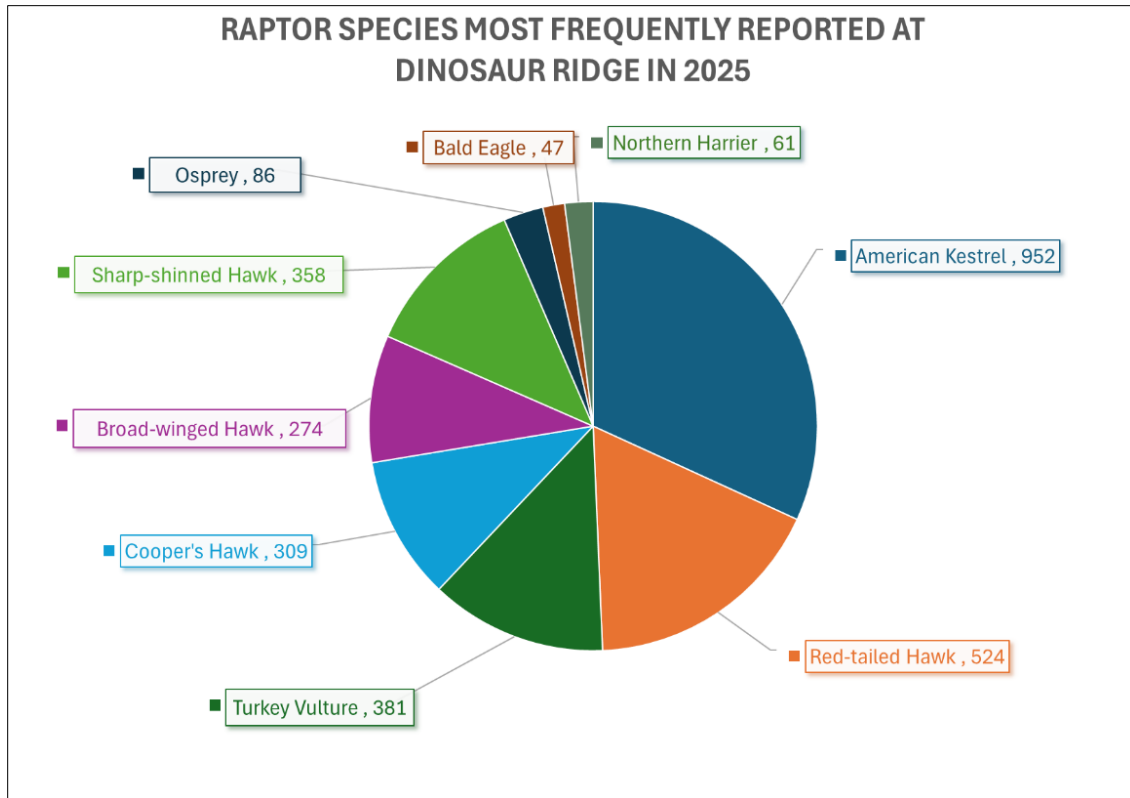
The graph below displays the distribution of the most frequently observed raptor species during the 2025 spring migration.

The American Kestrel was the most observed species this season at 952 individuals — **for the fourth time in Dinosaur Ridge Hawk Watch history**. Our Counters and Observers witnessed significant numbers of American Kestrels flying past the ridge for consecutive days in late April 2025, with a whopping one-day peak totaling 177 American Kestrels.

(For reference, the all-time high American Kestrel count at Dinosaur Ridge Hawk Watch occurred in 1997 with 1298 American Kestrels.)

Other top species included Red-tailed Hawk, Turkey Vulture, and Cooper's Hawk similar to years' past. Species observed in lower numbers and in order of sightings (not shown in the chart) include: Swainson's Hawk, Golden Eagle, Ferruginous Hawk, Merlin, Peregrine Falcon, Northern Goshawk, and Prairie Falcon.

This year's count also included the observation of two Rough-legged Hawks, bringing the Dinosaur Ridge Hawk Watch **total recorded raptor species number to seventeen** this season.



SEASONAL COUNT HIGHLIGHTS

- **Red-tailed Hawk** numbers increased from the 2024 low of 463 to a 2025 count total of **524**. This number still falls below the historical average since 1990 of 570. (no count data exists in 2007, 2003, 1999).
- **Broad-winged Hawk** numbers increased yet again to **274**, making **2025 the highest count ever for Broad-winged Hawks at Dinosaur Ridge**. Only in 1997 did Broad-winged Hawk numbers come close, with 207 individuals recorded.
- **Osprey** observations made a marked increase in 2025 to a total of 86 individuals. 2025 becomes the **third highest count of this species at Dinosaur Ridge**.
- **Ferruginous Hawk** counts increased only slightly to 29 individuals and remain below the historical average of **35**.
- **American Kestrel** numbers continue to rise, with 2025 being the **third highest season in over two decades**.
- The **Golden Eagle to Bald Eagle ratio** stayed consistent at **1:2**, down from **7:10** in previous seasons.

- **Over 11,000 raptors** have been observed at Dinosaur Ridge Hawk Watch **since 2021**.
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VISITORS

Hawk Watch staff and volunteers interacted with over **1,300 visitors** in the 2025 season, including local residents, educators, fellow hawk watchers, and international guests.

Dinosaur Ridge Hawk Watch continues to be an eBird hotspot, with an all-time count of 132 species recorded and over 945 checklists from more than 300 eBirders. In addition to all the majestic raptors seen flying by this year, the observation of over 100 Gray-crowned Rosy Finches was a very exciting event for our hawk watch team.

EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

Field Trips

This season, Dinosaur Ridge Hawk Watch led 3 successful field trips to the observation platform. Dinosaur Ridge Hawk Watch partnered with Denver Audubon to lead two exciting youth field trips to Dinosaur Ridge, entitled Hikes for Homeschoolers. A total of 22 children (ages 7-12) and their guardians engaged with our team to learn how to identify raptors, and use binoculars to observe birds in flight. Our staff and volunteers had a great time sharing their knowledge and enthusiasm with these new birders.

Dinosaur Ridge Hawk Watch also partnered with the Feminist Bird Club for an adult education field trip to the ridge. Energetic participants learned about the research goals and conservation importance of the count as well as to learn new skills to identify raptors on the wing.

While we had two additional DFO sponsored field trips planned, unfortunately the weather prevented them from taking place. We hope to schedule similar field trips next season to offer more hands-on experiences in raptor watching and identification.

Youth Education and Outreach

For the second year, Dinosaur Ridge Hawk Watch coordinated and partnered with Nature's Educators to present a raptor education program (focused on Rocky Mountain species) to three local elementary schools in Jefferson County: Bear Creek, Welchester, and Westgate Elementary. K-5 students had the exciting opportunity to meet raptor ambassadors and

learn about their vital roles in the ecosystem, as well as the importance of wildlife and habitat conservation.

Community Engagement

Even before the official season began, the Hawk Watch Committee had the opportunity to interact with Girl Scouts in fall 2024 to help them learn about raptors and birding at the annual Girl Scout Days at Dinosaur Ridge.

Finally, beyond their work on the ridge, our Counters stepped into outreach roles this year, collaborating with partner organizations to inform and inspire others to learn about raptors and the importance of conservation efforts. Audrey Anderson gave a presentation about the importance of community science projects and hawk migration monitoring during Evergreen Audubon's April meeting. Emma Riley was invited to be a guest on Denver Audubon's The Curious Bird podcast where she discussed her relationship with raptors and conservation efforts.

RAPTOR POPULATION INDEX (RPI) SITE DATA

Dinosaur Ridge Hawk Watch is one of only 80 sites that are analyzed for the **Raptor Population Index (RPI)**, a collaborative initiative that monitors and shares trends in migratory raptor populations across North America.

PROJECT DIRECTION

Dinosaur Ridge Hawk Watch continues to make vital contributions as a part of the RPI (Raptor Population Index) network of North American raptor migration monitoring sites. It remains the only such site in Colorado and its inclusion as a data gathering site among only 80 participants is a testament to the consistency and value of the raptor data collected.

Goals for the 2026 Season:

- Hire **two experienced seasonal Hawk Counters** and continue to engage **two weekend Observers from local colleges**.to ensure high-quality, consistent data.
- Continue the **spring migration count from March 1 – May 10**.
- Analyze 2025 data to **inform daily count hours** based on peak migration activity.

- **Expand field trip offerings** and educational outreach at the observation site and beyond.
- **Improve volunteer training** and create new opportunities for volunteers to assist with **visitor outreach at the site.**
- **Provide input** in the development of new CDOT signage at the trailhead, specifically highlighting raptor migration.
- Promote Dinosaur Ridge Hawk Watch's visibility online and through our partner organizations.

Develop ways to enhance public access to, and understanding of, the unique opportunity to observe raptor migration at Colorado's only long-term raptor monitoring site.

PARTNER AND DONOR RECOGNITION

A sincere thanks goes out to all our partners whose collaboration, generous support of time and resources, and commitment have been essential to the success of Dinosaur Ridge Hawk Watch this year. Our partners include: Aiken Audubon, Colorado Field Ornithologists, Denver Audubon, Evergreen Audubon, Hawk Migration Association (HMA), Jefferson County Open Space, Jefferson County Open Space Foundation, and Nature's Educators.

We are also deeply grateful to Aiken Audubon, Colorado Field Ornithologists, Denver Audubon, Jefferson County Open Space Foundation, and the Three Birds Foundation for their generous grant and financial support and commitment to our ongoing mission.

Finally, a heartfelt thank you to all our individual donors. Your generosity played a crucial role in helping us reach our 2025 goals and we could not have had such a successful season without you. – Natalie Uschner-Arroyo, Dinosaur Ridge Hawk Watch Chair