

ABOUT THE COVER

by Shawn P. Carey
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Hawk Mountain Sanctuary's North Lookout was once a place for gunners to shoot and kill raptors by the hundreds. The thought of that horrifies me—and no doubt most hawk watchers and people who care for the natural world. From 1929 until 1951, the Pennsylvania Game Commission had a bounty of \$5 on Northern Goshawks. So it's not all that long ago that raptors were considered pests or vermin that should be shot on sight.

That started to change, however, with the purchase of Hawk Mountain and the protection of all the birds of prey migrating past this historic site. Hawk Mountain is iconic for birders. It is the first location to have conducted organized hawk counts—dating back to the late 1930s.

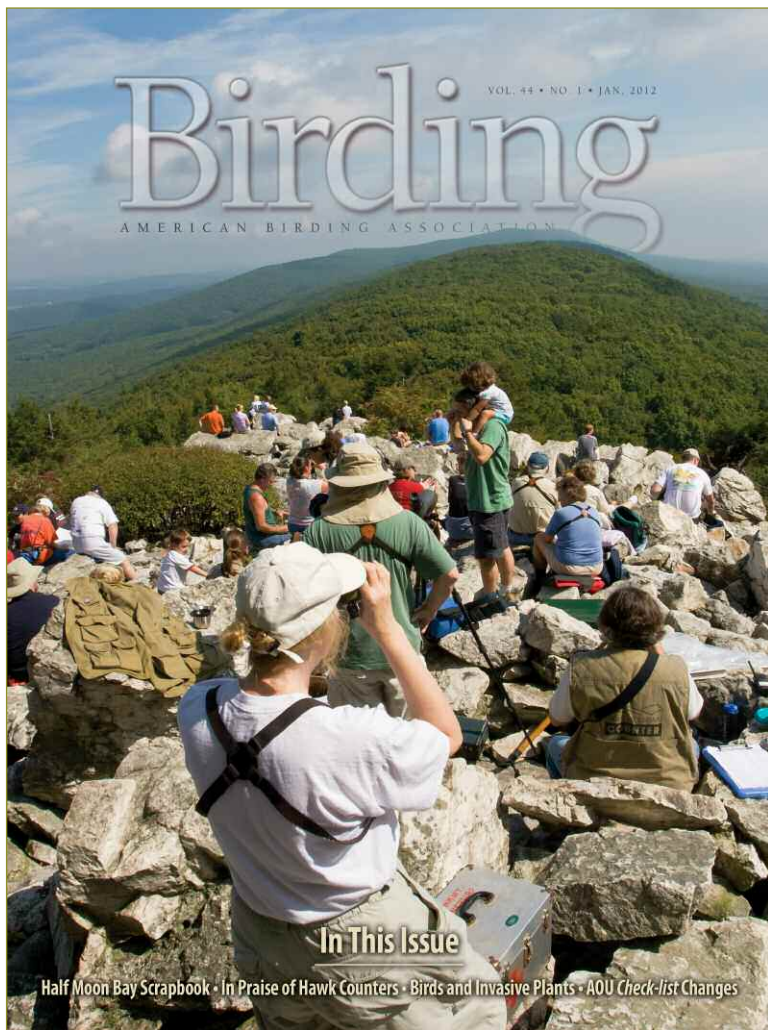
My own fascination with birds of prey led me to Hawk Mountain for the first time in September 1993. Since that visit, I have returned almost every autumn, some years twice, typically in October, so that I might have a better chance of seeing a

Golden Eagle flying past the North Lookout.

I first visited the North Lookout during a solo two-day hawk-watching trip from my home in Cambridge, Massachusetts, en route to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, to see my then-very-pregnant sister. Due to have twin boys, she was confined to the hospital for the last two months of her pregnancy. Ten years later, those twin boys would spend the day on the mountain with their Uncle Shawn! Those long first two days spent at Hawk Mountain—and especially at the North Lookout—were absolutely delightful. I was hooked on hawk watching.

Both days the weather was pleasant, with blue skies and a few patchy clouds. Many people were scattered about the large rocks of the fabled North Lookout. Each hawk watcher claimed his or her own piece of the ridge and scanned the skies for the next wave of migrating hawks. Everyone hoped a hawk would fly close to the lookout and maybe take a swipe at the owl decoy, providing us with an even better view.

That first day I was determined to be the last person on the lookout, even if it meant hiking back down the mountain in the dark. As the day



progressed and many hawks were tallied, I wondered which raptor would be the last of the day. But, first, a digression.

At one point, I noticed a large falcon moving fast and low toward the east side of the ridge. With my seat on “soft” rock (it’s all relative) on that side of the ridge, I was the only person to pick up on the bird. I announced to all within earshot just in time for the official counters to see (and count) the bird hurrying past: “Peregrine Falcon!” It seemed to be moving now at light speed, but luckily for everyone on the North Lookout the bird was very near. The Peregrine provided great looks as it blazed past and continued its journey south. It was the only one seen that day, and everyone on the mountain was thrilled to have seen a Peregrine Falcon.

Now back to my story. What was the last raptor of the day? As the sun began to sink toward the horizon, the hawk watchers departed one by one. Finally, only one other person was left standing with me at the ridge top. Light was slipping away, and we were rewarded with the last raptor of the day. It was an Osprey. The bird looked larger than life as it dropped into the forest below for the night; it would roost there before resuming its migration the next morning, just as these birds of prey have done for thousands of years. With the help and protection they deserve from the good people at Hawk Mountain and

hawk watchers around the world, I hope these migrating raptors will enthrall visitors for generations to come.

A few years before my initial visit to Hawk Mountain, I had joined my local hawk watch group, Eastern Mass Hawk Watch (EMHW). Later I signed on for a term with EMHW’s board of directors; in due course, I was elected President, and I currently serve as Vice President. Since that first time at Hawk Mountain, I have led many trips there with hawk watchers—and even family members—from Massachusetts. For a small group of us, the trip to Hawk Mountain has become an annual pilgrimage. I have been a guest speaker at Hawk Mountain on four occasions, most recently in October 2010 with Drew Wheelan to talk about the BP Gulf Coast oil spill disaster, which I helped to document.

As a wildlife photographer, I visit Hawk Mountain hoping to get images of raptors as they migrate past the lookout. I am equally interested in photographing the hawk *watchers*, the surrounding landscapes, and the hiking trails. For my cover photo, I wanted to show the North Lookout with many hawk watchers. My goal was to convey what a special place the North Lookout is and how lucky we are that it was saved, and now serves to protect raptors and to educate the public.

I hope to see you there in October!

In October of 1986, Shawn Carey moved from his home in Erie, Pennsylvania, to Cambridge, Massachusetts. Soon thereafter, he started birding. He had a prior interest in photography, and he had combined birding and photography by 1991. In 1994 Carey and his good friend Jim Grady started Migration Productions as a way to present their multi-image slide presentations to live audiences. During the past 18 years, Migration Productions has presented programs for birding organizations, camera clubs, and various natural history events. Migration Productions is proud of its stunning photographs, videos, sound tracks, and interviews with many leaders in the birding world. Carey’s photographs have been published in *The New York Times*, *The Boston Globe*, *Science* magazine, *Mass Audubon Sanctuary* magazine, Hawk Mountain Sanctuary brochures, and other publications. Since 1997 he has been teaching a bird photography workshop (Fundamentals of Bird Photography) for the Massachusetts Audubon Society.

To view more photos and videos, or for the dates of upcoming lectures, visit the Migration Productions website <MigrationProductions.com>.