



KELLY'S CORNER by Jan Kelly



Hawk Watch

You are invited.... Of course, in Provincetown you are invited daily to any number of wonderful experiences — to lunch or dinner, even breakfast, to play music, to go for a walk, to go up Cape, to watch a video, to visit a friend of a

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be alone, because there always are other volunteers, at least one leader, and many visitors checking in and out. Dress warmly in layers. You can have T-shirt weather one day and down jacket, hat and gloves weather the next. Be comfortable; bring coffee or snacks if you wish, but you must "pack in - pack out" because there are no trashcans. You must be diligent about ticks and brown moths but that is a simple procedure. Carry binoculars if you have them, and bring a hat, sunglasses and sun block if you wish. You also will have the opportunity to use and experience top quality optics generously loaned by Swarovski Optik of Rhode Island. Swarovski Optik also makes fine crystal. Each year the company loans binoculars for superior viewing from the Heights. You also most likely will be trying out the various types of binoculars belonging to the other volunteers and visitors. This practice is a great help in choosing your first or next pair of binoculars.

Melissa Lowe has been host of the Hawk Watch since its inception, and she loves to share her knowledge with hawk watch



friend with whom you might have something in common, to act in a play, to recite your poetry, to talk politics, to go to a yard sale, to shop at Ruthie's, to watch whales or birds from the beach, to take care of a neighbor's children, or even to attend a party.

Now add this to your list. You are being invited to a hawk watch. Audubon's Wellfleet Bay Wildlife Sanctuary and Melissa Lowe, Educational Coordinator at the Sanctuary, are inviting you to join them for the 45th Annual Outer Cape Hawk Watch.

You don't have to go to Wellfleet to participate in the Hawk Watch. The watches take place at Pilgrim Heights on the Provincetown-North Truro line on Saturdays and Sundays from April 14 to May 27, 9 am to 3 pm. You need not register, just show up. There is no fee and the public is invited. If you are a veteran birder or have no birding experience, you are welcome just the same. Hawk watching is a great way to begin your birding career or to increase your birding knowledge.

There are more species of hawk on the Cape in spring than anywhere else in Massachusetts. And luckily for us, Pilgrim Heights, so nearby, is one of the best viewing spots. If you want to be a volunteer for the watch, you must commit to one three-hour shift a week and go through a training program. You will not

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novices. Meeting Melissa will be a key part of your Pilgrim Heights experience. She is full of energy and expertise in her field and has an easygoing teaching style. She knows her material and shares the information with enthusiasm as she draws you into another level of eco-understanding. I always am impressed with her poise and her relaxed manner in working with people of all ages and personalities. You know that she really is with you when she speaks.

Melissa Lowe was born in Paxton, Massachusetts and always has been involved with the natural world. She specializes in birds of prey. She has taught at the Blue Hills Sanctuary in Milton and at the Utah Hawk Watch Educational Lookout. Because she loves the Cape so much, she returned to North Eastham five years ago and has been busy since then in her role as educational coordinator at Audubon's Wellfleet Bay Sanctuary. With her background and her passion for birds of prey, she offers a splendid opportunity for you to gain another skill.



The Audubon Hawk Watch program is part of a study to edu-

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our birds of prey. Observation of hawks provides basic information for important research. The information recorded includes bird numbers, meteorological conditions, and wind direction, all of which help researchers understand how weather influences the hawk migrations. While viewing harriers, turkey vultures and red tailed hawks you will be counting and asking yourself the question: migrant or resident? The standard rule is that if you see a harrier zipping to the north and not soaring, it's most likely a migrant.

The data that you help collect is sent to the Hawk Migration Association of North America, which is a clearinghouse for all eastern Massachusetts hawk watches. Located in Medford, HMANA processes and double-checks all reported hawk watch information. Graduate students also use HMANA informational records in their research. The effect of weather, especially coastal conditions, on hawk migrations is studied. Changes in hawk populations and how they fit into the ecosystem are charted. Knowledge of rodent populations, pesticide use, and severe climate conditions can be gleaned from studying the hawks because they are big bio-indicators who alert us to upcoming problems in the larger environment.

We already have seen some trends. For example, when fields and farmlands are paved over there are fewer kestrel birds in Massachusetts. It is thought that if there is less farmland and if that land is allowed to reforest, we will have more coopers and sharp shinned hawks. These trends are indicators of future ecological problems.

People love birds of prey without necessarily knowing that much about them. For instance, the United States Air Force has a jet named "The Harrier". Football players put black under their eyes to reduce glare, and inhabitants of India, the Middle East, and North Africa use a cosmetic "kohl" to darken the skin of the eye area to protect the eyes. The peregrine falcon and kestrel bear these markings, and some people think that the practice may have evolved from falconers observing their trained birds. How many military uniforms, crests, coats of arms and monies

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bear the symbols of birds of prey? They play a large role in our culture and much of the time the connections are not recognized.

Locally, thirteen species have been spotted at Pilgrim Heights in the past four years. Two rarities were sighted, a black vulture and a Mississippi kite. That's high excitement! But it is always fun to spot a bird at Pilgrim Heights. The birds are so close that you can look down on them for identification instead of squinting at a speck high in the sky. There is a valley between you and the ocean so there is proximity.

One person whom you will meet is Don Manchester of

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Sandwich. Don is in his third year of collecting data, five days a week. Don is an incredible observer with excellent abilities. He is a retired surveyor who has adapted his former job skills to birding. An outdoorsman all his life, he is a natural "percher" at Pilgrim Heights. You also will have the company of such great birders as Art King, Aurele Thomas, Jackie Jones and Michael Brokenshire. All of them are Hawk Watch leaders. Of more than forty volunteers from the first year, twenty-five are still active one day a week. Newcomers are welcome every year.

Melissa Lowe has watched the growth of the volunteers' hawk identification skills throughout the years. When you join the Hawk Watch, your skills will improve beginning with your first sighting and ever on. You will meet many new people and will make lots of friends, since there is a lot of time to talk. It is a social date with a purpose. It is not necessary to be an Audubon member. If you have never birded before, this will be your introduction and opportunity to become part of an interesting group. It is always a learning experience. During the volunteers' three or six hour shifts, observers view whales spouting, coyotes trotting, muskrats swimming, warblers passing, and the mysteries of the changing season. There is always something to watch. So as Melissa Lowe says, "Take a deep breath, sit and observe a 'snapshot of the day'. Watch what is around you. Focus. Whether it is thirty degrees with the wind out of the north or T-shirt weather, watch, focus, observe and enjoy." Most of all, enjoy.

We hope to see you at the second landing lookout at Pilgrim Heights, Saturday and Sunday from April 14 through May 27 between 9 am and 3 pm. For more information call Melissa Lowe at 508.349.2615.