

2024 Winter Raptor Survey — Linda Moore, *Compiler*

Routes are registered with the Hawk Migration Association of North America (HMANA). If GPS information is provided, routes are entered into the database on their website. The data is then available for researchers or anyone to use. Access to the data can be found at www.hmana.org by clicking on research -> winter raptor survey-> view recent surveys. Any of the surveys in New Mexico are the ones run here, covering a large area from the Arizona border into Otero County. A typical route takes most of a day to complete, and runs anywhere between 100 to 200 miles or even more.

On January 9, 2024, teams of raptor enthusiasts surveyed pre-determined routes for wintering raptors. A total of 12 species were seen, with 261 birds counted. These volunteers drove well over 1000 miles and spent 52 hours in the field, and that was only after they had arrived at the beginning of their often distant route. This total number of birds is consistent with the past five years, except for 2021 when only 135 birds were counted.

As usual, some routes produced a great number of raptors, while others were slim in number. This seems to vary from year to year, depending on the amount of rainfall and vegetation growth. This year the more southern routes produced a low number of birds. Jim Blurton overlaid the map of the current extreme drought area over the raptor routes, and found a correlation with the routes producing the fewest number of birds. In fact, the route from Silver City down to the Redrock area only produced 6 birds, while the Mangas Springs to Mule Creek route produced 68.

Red-tailed Hawks were the most numerous, with 138 counted, including an unusual Harlan's Hawk observed at the Gila River. American Kestrels were next with 75 seen. More Golden Eagles were seen than in the past 5 years, with 15 counted. A White-tailed Kite was the most unusual species observed. Greater Roadrunners and Loggerhead Shrikes are also counted because they have been historically, with a corresponding 7 and 57 observed.

A heartfelt thank you to all who participated in this year's survey, especially those who drove those long southern routes with few birds to be seen.