

THE FALL HAWK WATCH

This fall, the Eastern Massachusetts Hawk Watch will conduct coordinated watches on the following weekend dates:

September 13 & 14
September 20 & 21
October 4 & 5
October 25 & 26

We will also conduct our fourth annual consecutive-day watch on Mt. Wachusett, in Princeton, from September 6 through October 13.

Each year the Eastern Massachusetts Hawk Watch attempts to place in the field as many hawk watchers as possible to observe the migration through the eastern half of the Commonwealth. The success of the watch depends on its site leaders, people who volunteer to work at a specific site on a set date and who are responsible for completing the report form and returning it to the coordinator.

This year our need for additional site leaders and other volunteer observers is greater than ever. In 1979, significant new fall observation sites were discovered in Fitchburg and West Newbury. And we need better, longer coverage at Mt. Wachusett. Four people provided much of the coverage at Wachusett in recent years, but they will not be able to assume as much responsibility this year.

The most important responsibility of a site leader is to be at the site on the date scheduled, weather permitting. Site leaders don't need to be hawk experts, although there is no better way to become an expert than to spend time on site. Even if you are unable to identify many of the hawks you see, merely reporting the numbers of unidentifieds provides valuable data. And site leaders are usually not alone, especially at Wachusett. Many hawk watchers come up to visit for part of a day. In 1979, Wachusett averaged 5 observers a day until the last week of September. But we need at least one observer to assume responsibility for each site: for Mt. Wachusett on every day from September 6 through October 13, and for the other sites on the four coordinated weekend watches.

Some prospective site leaders may be discouraged by the thought of committing themselves far in advance to watch on a specific day, especially a weekday at Mt. Wachusett. They worry that the weather and hawk flight might be poor. Actually, the consecutive-day watch on Mt. Wachusett needs coverage on days when the winds and weather may not be the best. In order to understand hawk migration, we need to know the days on which relatively few hawks are flying. Furthermore, at Mt. Wachusett some of our best views of hawks are on days when the weather does not seem to favor massive migration. In 1979, two of our most exciting flights, yielding eyeball views of Sharpshins, Broadwings, and Marsh Hawks, and a spectacular view of a Golden Eagle, occurred on strong southwest winds, when many people wouldn't anticipate an interesting hawk flight.

With regard to inclement weather, this year we have a phone number all Wachusett site leaders can call to receive an accurate weather report from

the mountain. Site leaders are not expected to cover on days of persistent rain.

This year we will also have a special workshop for interested site leaders. The workshop, scheduled for September 4, from 7:30 to 9:30 p.m., will be held in the Cambridge-Somerville area. Discussion will focus on what we have learned about hawk migration through eastern Massachusetts and about hawk watching at Mt. Wachusett. We will also have a refresher discussion on hawk identification, using numerous slides. Due to limited space, the workshop must be confined to site leaders already committed by September 3.

Of course, we also need more volunteer observers this fall. If you haven't participated before, don't hesitate to volunteer because you don't feel confident about your ability to identify hawks. We attempt to station two or more observers at each site. And, if you wish, you can be stationed with more experienced observers who will be able to teach you some of the techniques of field identification while you help spot the birds. Studying hawks during migration is the best way to become familiar with them! The New England Hawk Watch also sells a handy six-page silhouette guide to hawk identification. The guide is obtainable from Paul Roberts at the address below for \$1.00 + \$.25 postage.

Some of the sites we intend to cover this fall are West Newbury, Andover, North Andover, Haverhill, Chelmsford, Groton, Sudbury, Ashburnham, Fitchburg, Mt. Wachusett, Harvard, Littleton, and parts of the Outer Cape.

We need your help this fall. If you've not hawk watched before, devote one day, or even a half-day, to it this fall. Write to:

Paul M. Roberts
24 Pearson Road
Somerville, MA 02144
(617) 776-8566

indicating the date(s) on which you'd like to observe. Please note if you have specific site preferences and if you want to be stationed with more experienced observers. Paul will provide you with a report form, instructions sheet, and directions to the site. If you've not hawk watched before, he can also provide you with a brief introduction to hawk watching and a 1979 New England Hawk Watch Report. Mt. Wachusett site leaders will also receive a Mt. Wachusett horizon map.

Zoomscope for sale: Swift Mark II Telemaster, Model 841 (15X-60X), top of the line, NEW in August 1976. List price now \$385; will sell at 40% off current discount price of \$308. \$185 or best offer (without tripod). Has shown birds clearly round the world: Rockport-Norway-Spain-Kenya-Australia-Pt.Reyes-S.A.-Everglades. Owner must reduce expenses from impulsive bidding at BBC auction. References required. 734-1862.