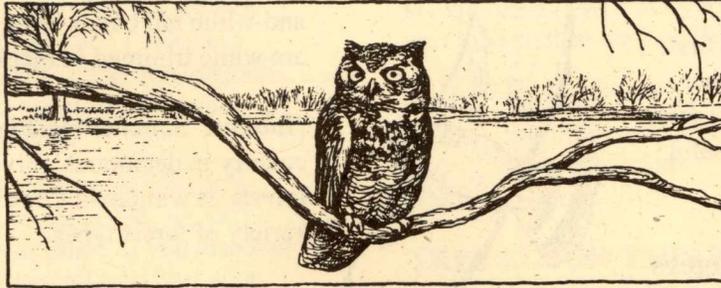


STILLMAN NEWSLETTER



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A KETTLE OF HAWKS

-- Mark Spreyer

We've all heard of a pride of lions, a school of fish, and maybe, a gaggle of geese. But have you ever heard of a *kettle* of hawks? If not, please read on. If so, read it anyway!

Background

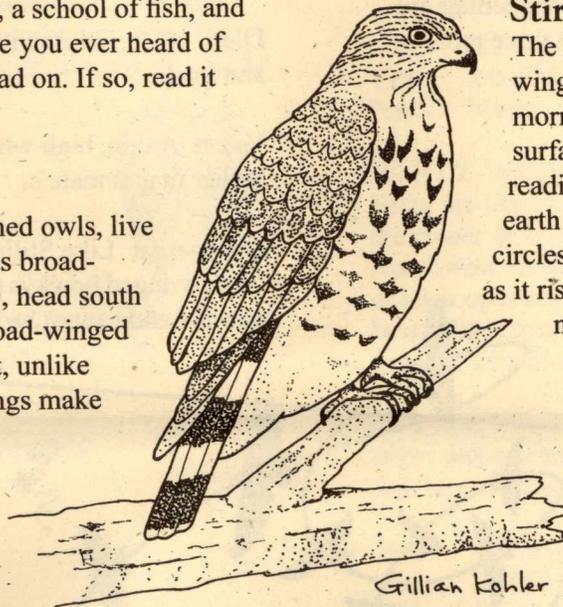
Some birds of prey, like great horned owls, live here all year. Other raptors, such as broad-winged hawks (*Buteo platypterus*), head south for the winter. What makes the broad-winged fall migration so interesting is that, unlike other migrating raptors, broad-wings make it a group activity.

A flock of migrating broad-wings, seen spiraling upwards, is called a *kettle* of hawks.

Apparently, the circling raptors reminded folks of the whirlpool effect created when a liquid is vigorously boiled in a kettle. This phenomena begs the question, why are they doing the vertical twist?

Before answering that question, we need to distinguish soaring from gliding. Gliding is the simplest form of flight. A gliding bird is neither flapping its wings nor gaining height, it is simply coasting "downhill."

A soaring bird is also not flapping but it does increase its altitude. In our hawk's case, it accomplishes this by gliding in a rising current of air which puts us back in the kettle.



The live broad-winged hawk that was the basis for this illustration can be seen at Stillman. Get a close look at this and other raptors on Raptor Sunday. See page 4 for details.

Stirring Up the Kettle

The spiral pattern of the soaring broad-winged hawks is driven by the sun. As the morning sun shines on the ground, some surfaces, such as a recently plowed field, readily absorb solar energy. The warmed earth generates a column of heated air that circles and expands, like an inverted cone, as it rises. So, a thermal updraft gives the migrating broad-wings a helpful lift.

Thermal migration paths can be caused by rows of easily heated objects such as buildings or rocks. Following such thermal "streets" can dramatically improve the broad-wings' miles per mouse, so to speak. This is a good thing since most broad-winged hawks spend the winter in Central and South America.

Hawk Mountain

Winds deflected by mountains also provide beneficial updrafts for migrating hawks and great viewing for humans. One such location is Pennsylvania's Hawk Mountain.

Unfortunately, a century ago, such mountainsides became gathering spots for shooters in the fall. Their goal, blast as many hawks as possible. Earl Poole, Director of the Reading Museum in the 1930s, described the shooting this way, "During September hundreds of the distinctly beneficial broad-wings are butchered in the same manner, and in October many ospreys, red-tailed

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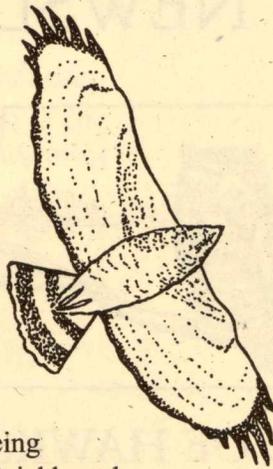
and red-shouldered hawks and eagles receive the same treatment.”

The good news is that Hawk Mountain became the world's first sanctuary for birds of prey. Other shooting traditions (see below) were soon transformed into more useful activities.

A Diligence of Messengers

The bad news is that in Mexico and further south, migrant hawks are still being shot. People continue to view the beneficial broad-winged hawk as a pest and are killing it in its winter range. Laws designed to keep this from happening are rarely enforced which brings me back to three more of those collective nouns:

A Blast of Hunters
A Siege of Herons
A Murder of Crows



Broad-winged Hawk Basics

Identifying Marks: Wingspan 34 inches; length 15 inches. It is a short, stocky hawk with distinctive black-and-white tail bands. When seen from below, the wings are white trimmed in black.

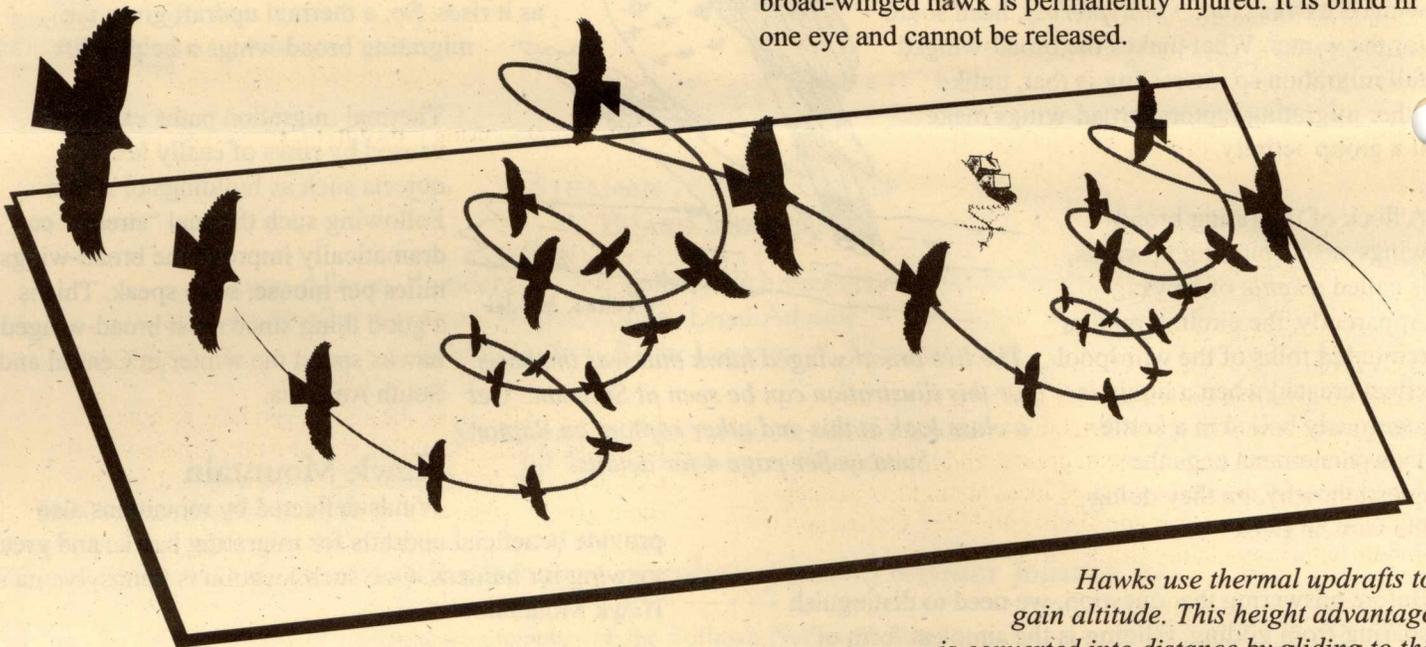
Habitat: Summer resident across the eastern half of the country in deciduous, mixed, or occasionally coniferous forests. It winters in Central and South America in a variety of forest types.

Nests: Usually located in the first main crotch of a deciduous tree or on a platform of horizontal branches against the trunk of an evergreen. Both sexes help build the stick nest although the female does most of the work.

Diet: Mice, chipmunks, shrews, insects, snakes, frogs and toads.

Voice: A thin, high whistle *teeteeteeeee*. Male's call higher than female's.

Comments: Like Stillman's other raptors, our resident broad-winged hawk is permanently injured. It is blind in one eye and cannot be released.



Hawks use thermal updrafts to gain altitude. This height advantage is converted into distance by gliding to the base of another thermal and repeating the process.

Yuleside Shootings

Prior to the 20th century, people engaged in a holiday tradition known as the Christmas 'Side Hunt.' They would choose sides and go afield with their guns-- whoever brought in the biggest pile of feathered quarry won.

Conservation was in its early stages around the turn of the 20th century, and many observers and scientists were becoming concerned about declining bird populations.

Beginning on Christmas Day 1900, ornithologist Frank Chapman, an early officer in the then-budding Audubon Society, proposed a new holiday tradition-- a 'Christmas Bird Census--' that would count birds in the holidays rather than hunt them.

So began the Christmas Bird Count.

--from Peoria Audubon Society's newsletter

PROGRAMS

Program Basics: PLEASE CALL OR FAX US AT 428-OWLS(6957), OR EMAIL STILLMAN AT: stillnc@wildblue.net TO MAKE RESERVATIONS for programs. Remember to include your name, phone number, and the number of people that will be attending.

If less than five people have called two days prior to a program, the activity could well be cancelled. So, don't forget to call the nature center in advance. If you discover that you are unable to attend, please call to cancel your reservations. This courtesy will be greatly appreciated.

BIRD BANDING OPEN HOUSE

Watch Mark Spreyer (a licensed bird bander) measure, weigh and record data about our resident and migratory birds. Catching birds is not always predictable, so come prepared to hike the trails. If it's raining, the activity will be cancelled.

Date: Sundays, Sept. 7
Time: 9:00AM to Noon
Fee: None



SUNDAY MORNING BIRD WALK

Mark Spreyer will lead a morning bird walk. Binoculars and field guides are a must. If you don't have any, don't worry, Stillman does.

If it's raining, we will try again on Sept. 21.

Date: Sunday, Sept. 14
Time: 8:00AM
Fee: None
Age: 10 years and up

RETIRED TEACHERS' DAY

While your former colleagues are teaching to the test, come learn how Stillman is teaching to the rest. We'll show you around to our marsh, prairie, and raptor display. Along the way, we can exchange ideas about how to keep our outdoor classroom in top-flight condition. Coffee and donuts will be available. Bring a friend!

Date: Tuesday, Sept. 16
Time: 10:00 - Noon

POND LIFE: From the Bottom Up

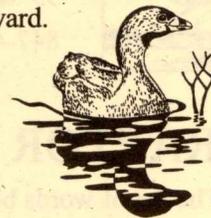
Our pond study went so well in August, we thought we'd do it again. This afternoon, with the help of long-handled dip nets, visitors will scoop into our pond in hopes of catching crayfish, dragonfly larvae, tadpoles and other rarely seen pond inhabitants. Dress in clothes and shoes you don't mind getting muddy.

Date: Sunday, Sept 21
Time: 2:00PM

THE BIG SIT IS BACK!

With the help of Prairie Woods Audubon, we're happy to once again host the "Lazy Birder's" field trip. No walking is required. We will sit by the lake and let the birds come to us. Good chance we'll go for food afterward.

Date: Saturday, Oct. 11
Time: 3:00PM until sunset
Age: 10 years and up
Fee: None



TREE I.D. OR THIS BUD'S FOR YOU!

As the leaves turn color, join Stillman's naturalist as he shows you how to identify some of our Midwestern trees. Easy to remember tips and simple hand-outs will inspire you to open your own "branch office." Come prepared to be out in the weather.

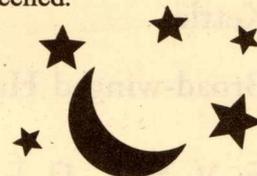
Date: Sunday, Oct. 12
Time: 2:00PM
Fee: None

PARTY WITH THE STARS!

Bring the family and come check out lunar landscapes, the moons of Jupiter and other celestial wonders. The Northwest Suburban Astronomers will have a variety of telescopes set up for your viewing pleasure and will be available to answer your questions about telescopes, viewing with binoculars, or taking photos of the night sky.

Don't forget to bring a flashlight. If overcast or raining, event will be cancelled. Call (847) 428-OWLS and there will be a message if the event is cancelled.

Date: Saturday, Oct. 18
Time: 5:30PM until 9:00PM
Fee: None



YULE LOG OPEN HOUSE

Join Susan Allman as she shows you how to make this festive seasonal decoration out of natural materials. It makes a great centerpiece. Kids are welcome but no scout groups, please. Stop by anytime between 2:00 and 4:00PM. Also, please call in advance to let us know if you are coming. We don't want to run out of supplies!

Date: Sunday, Nov. 30
Time: 2:00 - 4:00PM
Member's Fee: None
Non-Member's Fee: \$2/log

NEW YEAR'S DAY WALK

Join us for the annual New Year's Day walk along Stillman's trails. Over the years, we've seen everything from bluebirds and shrikes to the remains of multiple coyote kills. If you like winter, don't like football, or need to sober up; this is the walk for you.

Date: Thursday, Jan. 1
Time: 10:00AM
Age: 10 years and up



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RAPTOR WORD SEARCH

The list of words below all have something to do with birds of prey, particularly the ones on display at Stillman. Your job is to find the words in this grid of letters. Remember, they could be forwards or backwards, vertical or horizontal, or even diagonal. See answers key on page 5.

- | | |
|-------------------|------------------|
| Great Horned Owl | Screech Owl |
| Bands | Turkey Vulture |
| Barn Owl | Peregrine Falcon |
| Stillman | Raptor |
| Birds of Prey | Talon |
| Predator | Urohidrosis |
| Migration | Nocturnal |
| Kettle | Pellets |
| Broad-winged Hawk | Egg |

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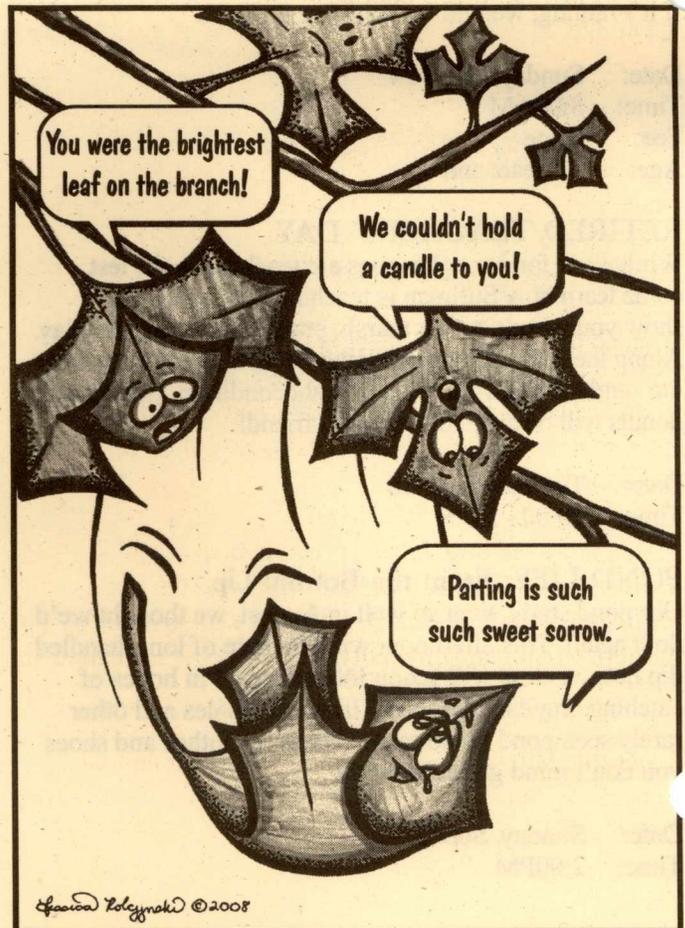
DON'T MISS RAPTOR SUNDAY!

Now's your chance to meet the great horned and screech owls plus a peregrine falcon and broad-winged hawk. We will bring the birds out so you can see them up close. Kids will have a chance to dissect owl pellets. Bring a camera and a friend! Drop by anytime between 1:00 and 3:00 in the afternoon.

Date: Sunday, Oct. 5
Time: 1:00 - 3:00 PM
Fee: \$5/car



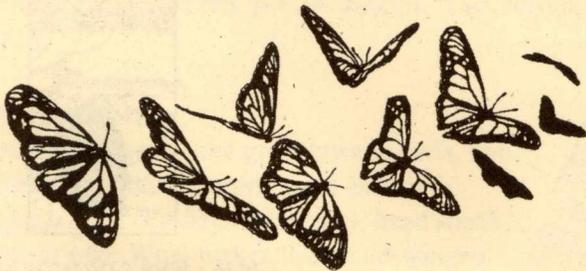
END TRAILS by Mark Spreyer



SPECIAL VOLUNTEERS AND MEMBERS EVENT

On Sunday, we'll provide the main course and beverages. We'd like you to bring along a side dish. ALL of Stillman's members, friends, volunteers and their families are invited. Feel free to come any time between 3:00 and 6:00 PM but please do call or email to let us know if you plan to attend and what kind of dish you'll be bringing.

Date: Sunday, Sept. 28
Time: 3:00 - 6:00PM



Interns Return

Two of last summer's interns, **Jessica Kopala** and **Helen Reinold**, came back for another summer of clearing trails and cleaning owl poop. I know, it's hard to believe.

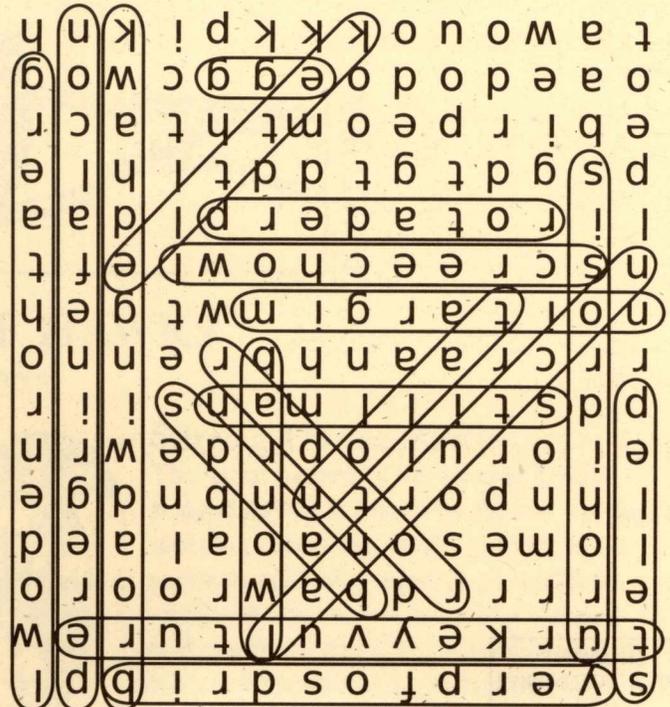
Their work is not easy. Nothing puts the HOT in a summer day quite like feeding a burning pile of buckthorn. In the process of burning one pile, all three of us got poison ivy. It was the first time for Helen and Jessica. Talk about a hands-on education!

Thanks to their efforts checking on the fences and the trails, I was able to work on five new museum-quality signs for our raptor displays. Both Jessica and Helen gave the early drafts of the signs' copy a thorough and valuable proofreading,

Helen left us in mid-July to take a course at the University of Berlin before returning to Augustana College for the fall semester. Jessica will soon be back at Eastern Michigan University. Optometry is the career she is focusing on.

Later this fall, many of you will receive our annual appeal for donations. Some groups, like the **Countryside Garden Class** and **Little Garden Club**, have made generous contributions to our intern fund. If helping students like Helen and Jessica appeals to you, just put intern fund on your check's memo line. Thank you.

RAPTOR WORD SEARCH ANSWER KEY



Please note that the Stillman Nature Center is also available, by reservation, during the week to school classes. For more information just call or email us at stillnc@wildblue.net.

Night is a dead monotonous period under a roof; but in the open world it passes lightly, with its stars and dews and perfumes, and the hours are marked by changes in the face of Nature.

– Robert Louis Stevenson

VOLUNTEERS WANTED

Daria Sapp and her indefatigable landscape volunteers need help. Duties include buckthorn clearing, prairie burning and seed collecting.

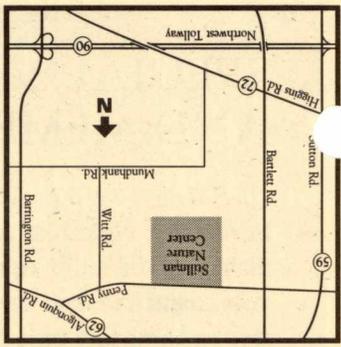
Mark Spreyer needs help with our birds of prey.

Stillman has the tools. We need healthy, outdoor-loving bodies to wield them. Thursday mornings are our usual work times with Daria. Mark needs help on Fridays.

We start at 9:00 AM and wrap up around noon. Questions? Call 428-OWLS(6957) or email us at stillnc@wildblue.net.

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If you aren't already a member, please consider joining us.

- Yes, I'd like to become or continue as a member of the Stillman Nature Center.
I enclose my tax deductible contribution of \$_____.
- I'd like to help as a volunteer with programs or land management at the Stillman Nature Center, please call me.
- Please send a gift membership from _____ to the name and address listed below.

Name _____
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Student/Senior.....	\$10.00
Screech Owl.....	25.00
Broad-winged Hawk.....	50.00
Great Horned Owl.....	100.00
Barn Owl.....	250.00
Peregrine Falcon.....	500.00
Screech Owl.....	1000.00

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