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Get hooked on raptor at Hawk Ridge

It's Hawk Weekend at Hawk Ridge Bird observatory.

By: [Jana Peterson](#), Duluth Budgeteer News

On an average fall day, depending on the weather and the wind, anywhere from 500 to 20,000 raptors fly over Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory.

"We like northwest winds," said Debbie Waters, education director at Hawk Ridge. "Northwest winds, on a large scale, blow birds toward Lake Superior."

Surprisingly, for the uninitiated, hawks actually do migrate in groups (called "kettles") on occasion.

"It looks just like a hawk tornado," Waters said. "They find a thermal and you'll see them going up. ... If they gain one mile by riding a thermal, they can glide for seven miles, so it's all about energy efficiency."

Starting Friday, the observatory is celebrating Hawk Weekend.

For the average family fascinated by hawks and other raptors, that means lots of hawkwatching, as well as interpretive programs, banded hawk and passerine demonstrations, optics displays, merchandise and refreshments at the Hawk Ridge main overlook during the day Saturday. Sunday there will also be a variety of field trips and activities at the Hawk Ridge main overlook. All activities at the overlook are open to the public.

Don't come empty-handed.

In her short list of items to bring to Hawk Weekend, Waters mentioned binoculars, a chair (so you won't fall over from all that looking up), a camera and sunscreen or an umbrella.

"I don't know what the weather will be like," she said, noting that the raptors will still fly in a light rain, but the banding station does shut down.

Should the weather not cooperate, Waters said families shouldn't give up, just come a different weekend. Hawk Ridge is open through the end of October.

"Essentially what's going on at the overlook [this Saturday and Sunday] is what goes on every day," she said. "There are just a few more programs, and it's busier."

For those who are familiar with Hawk Ridge, Waters suggested going up the Seven Bridges Road and parking on the north side of the overlook this weekend, because parking is usually congested this weekend on the Skyline Parkway access.

For directions to Hawk Ridge or more information about Hawk Weekend, go online to www.hawkridge.org or call 428-6209.

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