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# Golden Eagle Survey 2025

## *Final Report*

On January 18th, 2025, over 226 citizen scientist volunteers from the National Eagle Center spread out across the blufflands and forested areas of southeast Minnesota, western Wisconsin, eastern Iowa, northwestern Illinois, and one route in Northern Kentucky for the 21st Annual Wintering Golden Eagle Survey. They were seeking Golden Eagles that winter in the region.

Over the last couple of years with continued interest in the survey, we have been able to continue to add new routes to the survey area. New counties in Minnesota that were surveyed were Chippewa, Lac qui Parle, and Yellow Medicine. Many of these new survey areas are where potential habitat exists for wintering Golden Eagles and we have wanted to survey for some time. It will take some time for the new surveyors to learn these new routes, but all information gleaned will be very valuable for the survey. Because of the increased interest, we were also able to add 6 new specially focused routes in Minnesota as well. The data from these survey areas will be released sometime in the future.

This Survey began twenty-one years ago focusing on trying to better understand the wintering Golden Eagle population in this area, and it has done that, and will continue to do so. Since day one of the survey, we have also been documenting other raptors that are observed in the survey areas. Because of this effort, this survey is the largest one-day raptor survey in the country! The Center greatly appreciates all the time and energy and data that our citizen scientists dedicate to this survey.

Many observers thought that the numbers of Golden Eagles and other raptors may have been lower this year due to this year's survey cold start with most areas with temperatures around 10 degrees Fahrenheit for most of the day. Adding to the cold was a steady wind throughout the day that made it brutal to be outside of your car for very long. This wind did help to get raptors up in the air, helping surveyors to find more than 139 Golden Eagles and 1,800 Bald Eagles among others. Coming in at 139 Golden Eagles make this year's survey the fourth highest count. Even with increased survey areas added over the years and surveyors finding some wintering Golden Eagles being found in those areas, the highest density of

wintering Golden Eagles is located in the Driftless area.

Although the number of Bald Eagles was down from last year, there are reports that above average numbers of Bald eagles are being seen downriver of locks and dams 17 and 18, which is an area where we do not have any survey areas. Compared to the Golden Eagles that stay pretty tight within their winter territories, Bald Eagles are known to roam far and wide depending on food availability.

Even with such high numbers of Bald Eagles recorded in our area, It is still very important to conduct surveys such as this one to monitor the population and observe trends over time. It is also very important for us to continue to educate about the hazards that eagles are facing such as lead poisoning, avian flu, vehicle collisions, among others.

Please read the survey overview below, and if you have any questions, please email [\*\*golden@nationaleaglecenter.org\*\*](mailto:golden@nationaleaglecenter.org).

Also, over the next few months be sure to check out the Golden Eagle section on the National Eagle Center's website as more data and information will be added to the trends over the years for each survey area. Do us a favor and let your birding friends know that we are still expanding our survey areas and that if they are interested in helping, have them send an email expressing interest to the same email address above.

**-Scott Mehus**

*Golden Eagle Survey Coordinator*

## Overview

**Citizen Scientist Observers:** 226

**Survey Routes:** 94

**States Covered:** 5 (MN, WI, IA, IL, KY)

**Counties:** 59      **Total Survey Area:** ~24,000 sq. miles

**Total Surveying Hours:** 1,200      **Total Miles Driven:** 10,318

Total Golden Eagles Observed	
2025	139
2024	115
2023	83
2022	99
2021	126

Golden Eagles (Adult : Juvenile)	
2025	60% / 40%
2024	67% / 33%
2023	66% / 34%
2022	67% / 33%
2021	75% / 25%

Total Bald Eagles Observed	
2025	1,800
2024	2,607
2023	1,737
2022	1,643
2021	1,433

2025 Most Active Routes (Bald Eagles)		
MN 22	Anoka County	185
WI 31	Grant County	98
WI 10	Buffalo/Trempealeau County	80
WI 16	Buffalo County	65
WI 06	Buffalo County	48

Unidentified Eagles	
2025	67
2024	150
2023	49
2022	86

2025 Most Active Routes (Golden Eagles)		
WI 05	Buffalo County	9
WI 02 (W)	Buffalo County	8
WI 20	Pierce County	8
MN 11	Houston County	6
IA 03	Allamakee/Clayton County	6
WI 04	Buffalo County	5

Routes Reporting 4 Golden Eagles		
WI 02(E) Buffalo County, WI 03 Buffalo County, WI 21 Trempealeau County, IA 04 Clayton County, WI 13 Buffalo County, WI 33 Sauk/Richland County, WI 10 Buffalo/Trempealeau County, WI 60 Monroe/Vernon County		

Bald Eagles (Adult : Juvenile)	
2025	74% / 26%
2024	74% / 26%
2023	78% / 22%
2022	74% / 26%
2021	72% / 28%

2024 Most Active Routes (Bald Eagles)		
IL 03	Carroll County	310
MN 06	Winona County	231
WI 12	Buffalo County	203
MN 22	Anoka County	200
IA 08	Dubuque/Jackson County	180

% Routes Reporting 1 or More:	
Golden Eagles	53%
Bald Eagles	95%
Red-Tailed Hawks	88%
Rough-Legged Hawks	53%

# Hawks

Total Red-Tailed Hawks Observed	
2025	714
2024	582
2023	609
2022	866
2021	480

2025 Most Active Routes (Red-Tailed Hawks)		
WI 24	LaCrosse/Vernon County	36
WI 25	Vernon County	28
WI 50	Sauk County	23
WI 60	Monroe/Vernon County	21
WI 28	Crawford/Richland County	20

2024 Most Active Routes (Red-Tailed Hawks)		
WI 25	Vernon County	26
WI 24	LaCrosse/Vernon County	24
WI 33	Richland/Sauk County	19
IA 03	Allamakee/Clayton County	16
WI 12	Buffalo County	15

Total Red-Shouldered Hawks Observed	
2025	6 (5 in Kentucky)
2024	0
2023	2
2022	1
2021	0

Total Rough-Legged Hawks Observed	
2025	117
2024	100
2023	213
2022	199
2021	154

2024 Most Active Routes (Rough-Legged)		
WI 48	Burnett County	30
MN 22	Anoka County	6
IA 01	Allamakee County	6
WI 34W	Iowa County	5
WI 34E	Iowa County	4

2025 Most Active Routes (Rough-Legged)		
MN 11	Houston County	8
WI 48	Burnett County	7
IA 01	Allamakee County	6
IA 07 (N)	Winneshiek County	5
IA 50	Sauk County	5

Total Sharp-Shinned Hawks Observed	
2025	11
2024	4
2023	7
2022	8
2021	5

Total Cooper's Hawks Observed	
2025	10
2024	11
2023	21
2022	16
2021	10

# Falcons

Total American Kestrels Observed	
2025	192
2024	65
2023	140
2022	111
2021	154

Total Merlins Observed	
2025	0
2024	4
2023	3
2022	5
2021	1

2025 Most Active Routes (American Kestrels)		
WI 25	Vernon County	15
IL 03	Jo Daviess/Carroll/Whiteside Co.	13
WI 30	Grant County	11
WI 28	Crawford/Richland County	8
WI 29	Vernon/Crawford/Richland Co.	8

Total Northern Harriers Observed	
2025	35
2024	10
2023	15
2022	6
2021	8

2024 Most Active Routes (American Kestrels)		
WI 30	Grant County	5
WI 16	Trempealeau County	3
WI 28	Crawford/Richland Co.	3
WI 34W	Iowa County	3
WI 47	Sauk County	3

## Shrikes

Total Northern Shrikes Observed	
2025	4
2024	17
2023	10
2022	6
2021	13

## Other Raptors

Other Raptor Species Observed
Great-Horned Owl
Barred Owl
Short-eared Owl
Eastern Screech Owl
Turkey Vulture* (IL and KY)

# Other Noted Species

American Crow	House Finch
American Goldfinch	House Sparrow
American Robin	Killdeer
American Tree Sparrow	Lapland Longspur
American Wigeon	Mallard
Belted Kingfisher	Mourning Dove
Black-Capped Chickadee	Northern Cardinal
Blue Jay	Northern Flicker
Brown Creeper	Pileated Woodpecker
Bufflehead	Purple Finch
Canada Goose	Red-Bellied Woodpecker
Cedar Waxwing	Red Crossbill <b>(new to survey)</b>
Common Goldeneye	Red-Headed Woodpecker
Common Grackle	Ring-Necked Pheasant
Common Merganser	Rock Pigeon
Common Raven	Ruffed Grouse
Common Redpoll	Sharp-Tailed Grouse
Dark-Eyed Junco	Snow Bunting
Downy Woodpecker	Song Sparrow
Eastern Bluebird	Trumpeter Swan
Eurasian Collared Dove	Tufted Titmouse
European Starling	Tundra Swan
Gadwall	White-Breasted Nuthatch
Hairy Woodpecker	White-winged Crossbill <b>(new to survey)</b>
Horned Lark	

# Non-Bird Species

Beaver	River Otter
Coyote	Squirrel (Fox, Gray, Red)
Eastern Cottontail	Virginia Opossum
Raccoon	White-tailed Deer
Red Fox	