

Borrego Valley Hawkwatch

Borrego Valley Hawkwatch is a group of dedicated volunteers who are engaged in a study of migrating spring raptors through southern California. The majority of raptors observed are Swainson's Hawks and Turkey Vultures. Nine other species of raptors have also been recorded. The Borrego Valley Hawkwatch is significant in that it has the largest spring concentration of migrating Swainson's Hawks in North America.

Why Borrego Valley?

Borrego Valley is a unique staging area for Swainson's Hawks each spring. In the evening Swainson's Hawks migrate into the valley and roost. In the morning if food is available, (flying ants, caterpillars, and/or grasshoppers) the hawks often feed before departing the valley.



Sphinx moth caterpillar - a favorite Swainson's meal.



Morning viewing site.

History of Borrego Valley Hawkwatch

In 2003, Hal Cohen began watching Turkey Vulture migration in late February. To his surprise, kettles of Swainson's Hawks began to appear on a daily basis. The final count for Swainson's Hawks for 2003 was 2,031. In 2004, Hal and Paul Jorgensen put together a training program for volunteers. Today, with the support of Anza-Borrego Foundation, Roadrunner Tree Farm and Sea and Sage Audubon, several volunteers monitor migration on a daily basis from February 15 through April 15.



Swainson's hawk feeding on flying ants. Photo courtesy of Eric Kallen.

Swainson's Hawk ID

Wingspan: 47-54 inches.
Long, pointed narrow wings.
Trailing edge is "black in back."



Evening viewing site.

Where Can I See the Hawks?

The hawkwatch has two viewing areas. The evening watch site is located on Borrego Valley Road on a small dune. Incoming hawks are monitored an hour before sundown until dark.

The morning site (official count site) is located on DiGiorgio Road on a raised sand mound. Every day from February 15 through April 15 a leader is stationed at the morning site from 8 am until 11 am. On windy days the hawks often fly early. (See map and detailed directions on reverse side.)

Data Collection & Publication

Each day we collect data that is sent to the Hawk Migration Association of North America. Each Spring our data, along with data collected from several hawkwatches across America and Mexico, is published in a periodical. Daily counts for most hawkwatches can be found at www.HawkCount.org.

Stay Informed with Regular Blog Updates

Stay Informed With Our Hawk Blog. The blog address is: BorregoHawkwatch.blogspot.com <<http://BorregoHawkwatch.blogspot.com>> Add this address to your Favorites Bar and check it out almost daily. You can contact Hal Cohen at Raptorhal3@gmail.com with questions.



Left to right: Intermediate, dark, and light Swainson's Hawk morphs.