

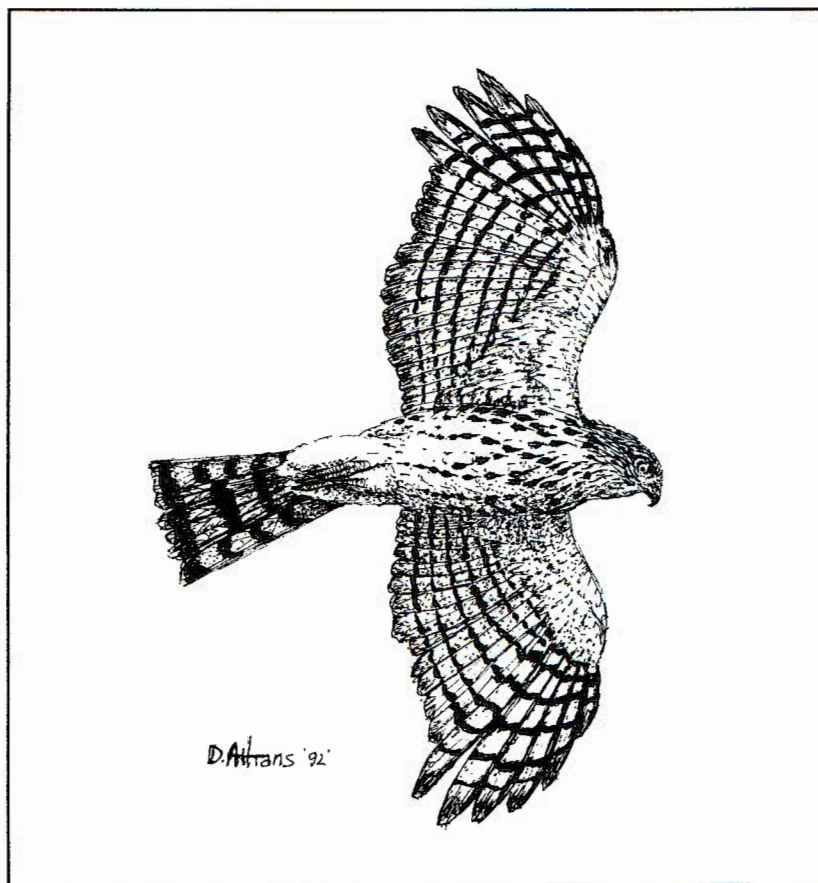
can, with good weather, see virtually all the large birds flying by within several miles.

Cohen recalls birding Mt. Hoy with companion Dick Young one late September day. The area hills were shrouded in fog, but they waited. As the fog lifted, a Cooper's Hawk came out of the trees, recalled Cohen. Then a Peregrine Falcon sped by. Soon they had counted 100 migrating raptors. At the right time of year they could easily count that many in one day.

"We did have to watch out for the methane gas," vented out of the landfill, added Cohen. Mt. Hoy hawk watchers avoid it by remaining upwind of the gas release.

Cohen and an array of volunteers have slowly been increasing the coverage of hawk migration at Mt. Hoy. This year, 30 observers will rotate shifts from mid-September to early October in an effort to provide full coverage during the peak period. "We get doctors, lawyers, butchers, teachers, truckers," said Cohen. "They range from expert birders to beginners. Occasionally we hook people who just happen to be hiking by, and they get infected by the sight of all the birds. It's very exciting to see someone newly interested in hawk watching."

As at many watching sites, the greatest numbers of birds migrate in the morning. Typically between 2,000 and 6,000 hawks of 14 species are logged at each lookout every fall -- including Northern Goshawks and Golden Eagles. Reports from lookouts are sent to the Hawk Migration Association of North America (HMANA) which



*Sharp-shinned Hawks occur annually at various Illinois hawk watch sites.
Drawing by David Athans.*

tallies migration reports from across the continent in an effort to monitor raptor populations.

Cohen says the largest broadwing flights he's seen at Mt. Hoy - about 1,000 birds - might only be fragments of huge groups - up to 100,000 birds - that are broken up by unstable weather conditions. Many pairs of eyes are needed to census in particular broadwings because they often fly high enough to be missed by all but the most careful observers.

Regular Mt. Hoy volunteer Muriel Smith lives near the hill in West Chicago. "I've got a picture window in my kitchen

that shows a lot of sky," she said. "I can often tell whether it's going to be a good day at the site by what I see in my yard." One day in September 1987, observers counted many broadwings descending into the forest preserve late in the afternoon.

The next day was windy, rainy, and cold. Smith wouldn't have gone to the lookout, except that by 7:30 a.m., she saw hawks re-emerging from the forest from her window. "On my way to the hill they were coming up out of the trees," she recalled. "They were blowing by in the strong wind. It was unbelievable."