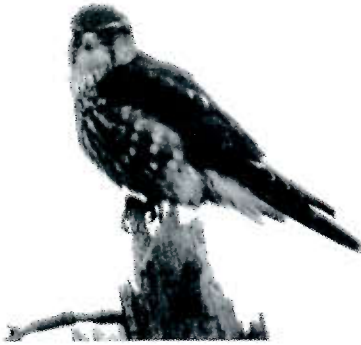


## The Illinois Beach State Park Hawkwatch

by Vic Berardi



Illinois Beach State Park is rapidly becoming known nationwide as a significant fall migration route for Merlin and Peregrine Falcon.

*Geoffrey Williamson photographed this Merlin at a Christmas Bird Count in northern Illinois, during the 2003/2004 CBC period. It was only one of six Merlins documented on the 2003/2004 CBCs.*

The fall of 2003 marked the fourth consecutive year of the hawkwatch at Illinois Beach State Park. In addition to becoming a continuous and hopefully, permanent hawkwatch, it has also become an established monitoring site for the Hawk Migration Association of North America (HMANA) which records data from hundreds of sites all over the continent. Daily information is logged into their website at [www.hawkcount.org](http://www.hawkcount.org).

The hawkwatch has faced new challenges every year of its existence, and 2003 was no different than previous years. Most significantly was the temporary change of location to the parking lot across from the marina headquarters at Northpoint Marina in Winthrop Harbor. This move was a result of park improvements in the North Unit of Illinois Beach State Park, and the resurfacing of the existing roads, all of which are completed. Technically, the temporary watch site was still part of the state park but the new site had new surroundings to get used to. Nevertheless, this "change of scenery" so to speak, had little effect on the actual results of the count. Last fall's count actually exceeded previous years' numbers drastically. But, without being able to compare sightings simultaneously from the permanent site at Camp Logan in the North Unit of the park, we will never know what we may have missed or, for that matter, seen more of. Plans for 2004 include returning to the pavilion site in the North Unit of the state park.

The 2003 count total of 14,908 was a new site record as well as the 641.25 hours logged in far surpassing 2002's totals of 4,113 birds and 503 hours. New site records were established for Osprey (255), Bald Eagle (22), Sharp-shinned Hawk (1,454), Cooper's Hawk (155), Red-shouldered Hawk (75), Broad-winged Hawk (9,553), Red-tailed Hawk (1,987), Rough-legged Hawk (58), American Kestrel (88), Merlin (508), and Peregrine Falcon (148). The site's big Broad-winged day came on 24 September 2003 with 3,193 Broad-wingeds counted. See table on page 84:

The second week of September typically starts off the season with the majority of this site's Osprey flight. But 2003 had a bit of a delayed flight and the majority of the Ospreys came through with the Broad-wingeds. The season's single day high count of Osprey came 24 September when 51 were seen. This is also the time when the site's Broad-wingeds come through and 2003 was not a disappointing year as previous years were. Not known