

SOAR Recap

NOVEMBER 1ST 2025

Nice fall weather greeted the SOAR birders as we gathered at the Conococheague Institute for our first November bird walk. This was to be a raptor centric walk, but more about that in a moment. I was joined by Jean, Lisa, Jeff, Becky and Lee, and MJ and Ed.

Matthew of the Institute usually greets us, but he had informed me he was giving a presentation in Baltimore and would be unable to attend. He did stop by to unlock the restrooms, which was thoughtful. He also sent a picture of a new permeant sign which will soon be installed showcasing various bird species that he and SOAR have seen on the property.

While assembling in the parking area, we saw a red-bellied woodpecker, the resident mockingbird, pigeons atop a nearby silo and, thanks to a light breeze, both vulture species. Suddenly Lee spotted a Cooper's hawk flying overhead with breakfast in the form of a starling. It landed in a distant tree but was still in binocular range.

As we started toward the garden area, we spotted a sapsucker and a flock of cedar waxwings feasting on a variety of fruit in the trees. As we neared the sheep and goat enclosures, they all came running to greet us, or so we thought. As soon as they realized we were not the ones to feed them, they went back to foraging on the short grass and ignoring us completely.

While we looked over the wetland area, we added in rapid succession the following species: red-winged blackbird white-throated, chipping and song sparrows, Carolina wren, white-breasted nuthatch, brown creeper and what we thought at first was a brown-headed cowbird. Upon further reflection we determined that it was a rusty blackbird. In fact there were several. While maybe not rare, the rusty is at the very least uncommon, so that was a treat. We also saw a sharp-shinned hawk and a yellow-rumped warbler. As we made our way around the pond we saw a hairy woodpecker, a couple of crows, and a raven.

The wooded path was eerily quiet but after popping out into the field, we added our first chickadee of the day, our first junco, and Lee spotted a purple finch. Back at the parking area we saw multiple red-tailed hawks in the distance. We also saw a hawk in the same tree where we had seen the feasting Cooper's hawk. Apparently, we were not the only one to spot the hawk. An American kestrel made a beeline for the hawk, passing within inches of the perched bird. The kestrel then proceeded to gain altitude, put itself into a steep dive, narrowly missing the hawk. It repeated this spectacle numerous times while we watched. We were not sure what prompted these attacks, but clearly the kestrel did not want its larger "cousin" to be there.

Next SOAR Walk: November 15 2025
at the Conococheague Institute

SPECIES LIST

American Goldfinch
American Kestrel
American Robin
Black Vulture
Blue Jay
Brown Creeper
Brown-headed Cowbird
C/BC Chickadee
Canada Goose
Carolina Wren
Cedar Waxwing
Chipping Sparrow
Common Raven
Cooper's Hawk
Crow (sp)
Dark-eyed Junco
Downy Woodpecker
European Starling
Hairy Woodpecker
House Finch
House Sparrow
Mourning Dove
Northern Cardinal
Northern Flicker
Northern Mockingbird
Purple Finch
Red-bellied Woodpecker
Red-tailed Hawk
Red-winged Blackbird
Rock Pigeon
Ruby-crowned Kinglet
Rusty Blackbird
Sharp-shinned Hawk
Song Sparrow
Tufted Titmouse
Turkey Vulture
White-breasted Nuthatch
White-throated Sparrow
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker
Yellow-rumped Warbler



Rusty Blackbird



American Kestrel



Purple Finch