

# The Whirlwind Fall Raptor Tour

by Lisa Takats and Tyler Flockhart



LISA TAKATS

This poem is dedicated to  
*Freebe - the Peregrine Falcon*  
(JUNE 1996 - OCTOBER 1999)  
who recently perished during  
a fall hunting expedition.  
  
*You will be missed.*

As the sun above Tim Horton's rose,  
A French Vanilla Cappuccino is what we chose,  
And we ventured out to meet the troupe,  
It was Gord Court's raptor touring group.

It was the last fall of the millenium year,  
And lots of people were meeting up here.  
The goal you see was a simple one,  
To see a raptor or two and have some fun.

With Binos in one hand, coffee in the other,  
We did after all, have lots of land to cover.  
The red osier dogwood stood out as plain as day,  
As the leaves twirled 'round in frolicsome play.

The Trefry's place was the first stop of the day,  
Two rare species in hand, made most knees sway.  
Some Peregrine Falcons and a Burrowing Owl,  
And some birds flying over, simply identified as waterfowl  
"Ranger" and "Freebe" were the hosts of the show,  
The camera shutters clapped approval as the wind  
began to blow.

So the Peregrine was turned loose to chase some ducks,  
However, for a stooping bird, this wind kinda' sucks.  
So she flapped and flapped, but in the end just soared,  
"This wind is diabolical!" said a frustrated Gord.

Stop number two was on Beaverhill Lake,  
So little time, good time we'd have to make.  
We came upon a Long-eared Owl that had lost its way,  
It's banding, release, and information recorded by Ray.

## THE WHIRLWIND FALL RAPTOR TOUR...CONTINUED

We walked out to Francis Point, but no raptors here,  
Over 100 swans, more beautiful than raptors, I fear  
Standing there within the bird blind,  
Huddled up in the only shelter we could find.  
The wind whistled and howled, a great mighty gale,  
We would have been laughing if we only had a sail.

Two Rough-legged Hawks near Tofield appeared,  
Aged and sexed as young ones, and we all cheered.  
On highway sixteen we observed our first Northern Harrier,  
And an adult Bald Eagle that looked like a B-52 carrier.

So we pushed on again to see what was at Hastings Lake,  
We found more Bald Eagles, and more pictures we did take.  
Sitting in the trees on shore, we watched them a while,  
A couple full adults, and now and then a juvenile.  
Buffleheads, Gadwall, and Common Goldeneye,  
And invertebrates including a Clouded Sulphur butterfly.

The largest raptors were the best to watch because of their  
size,  
Swooping in after ducks, which fled from certain demise.  
The symbolic bird of the USA, it's actually quite a spoof,  
But here we were, watching them, and it was us who knew  
the truth.

The wind blew like we were on the ocean coast,  
Tyler held on for his life to the nearest fence post.  
But the wind was too strong and carried him away,  
And no one has seen him, since that fabled day.

No doubt he's soaring up with the eagles high,  
Diving for food, and drinking in the fields of rye.  
We look forward to next years fall raptor weeks,  
We have come to accept we are truly raptor geeks.



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Gordon Court talking about  
the Peregrine Falcon reintroduction



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Tyler being carried away by the wind



List of wildlife species observed during fall raptor trip.

| SPECIES                          |        |
|----------------------------------|--------|
| SPECIES                          | NUMBER |
| <b>Birds</b>                     |        |
| Western Grebe .....              | 2      |
| Tundra Swans .....               | 100+   |
| Canada Goose .....               | 150    |
| Mallard .....                    | 200    |
| Gadwall .....                    | 5      |
| American Wigeon .....            | 14     |
| Bufflehead .....                 | 2      |
| Common Goldeneye .....           | 25+    |
| Peregrine Falcon (captive) ..... | 2      |
| Northern Harrier .....           | 2      |
| Red-tailed Hawk .....            | 2      |
| Rough-legged Hawk .....          | 6      |
| Bald Eagle .....                 | 7      |
| Great Horned Owl .....           | 1      |
| Long-eared Owl .....             | 1      |
| Burrowing Owl (captive) .....    | 1      |
| Hairy Woodpecker .....           | 1      |
| Downy Woodpecker .....           | 2      |
| Black-capped Chickadee .....     | 12     |
| Black-billed Magpie .....        | 7      |
| Common Raven .....               | 5      |
| White-breasted Nuthatch .....    | 2      |
| Common Redpoll .....             | 150+   |

| SPECIES               |        |
|-----------------------|--------|
| SPECIES               | NUMBER |
| Snow Bunting .....    | 15     |
| <b>Mammals</b>        |        |
| Coyote .....          | 1      |
| Bison .....           | 14     |
| <b>Invertebrates</b>  |        |
| Clouded Sulphur ..... | 1      |

**acknowledgements**

Thanks to Gordon Court and Ray Cromie for continuing to inspire our passion for the natural environment, particularly birds of prey. ✨

**N·O·T·I·C·E**

**TO ALL ENHC MEMBERS**

If any ENHC members have seen or heard of Tyler Flockhart's whereabouts, please contact Lisa Takats or Gordon Court **immediately!**