

Hello everyone,

Your next event is Make a Difference Day Shoe Recycling.

Volunteer Project: Collect Shoes
Location: DCRC
Date: **October 25, 2008**
Time: 10:00am to 2:00pm

Because we'd like for you to focus on shoe collection and because of the busy time of year, there will not be an educational session. We don't want to add too much to your schedule.

My name is Matt Dunbar and I work with the Parks Department. Some of you may know me. Anyway, I am giving Mime a little break this month by writing to you. I hope this fall is finding you all well and that you have been able to get outside a lot! When I was outside the other day I saw something I hadn't seen before. I saw a kettle, and I don't mean anything that has to do with pots and pans. I saw a kettle of hawks with probably 300 - 400 hawks within it. Hawks form kettles in thermal updrafts during migration. When they find a column of warm rising air the hawks stay within and rise with it. Other hawks see them and join in.

As each hawk reaches the top of the thermal he glides away towards his destination. And as birds leave the kettle from the top, others join it from below. During the glide they lose altitude until they find another thermal and start the process over again.

Kettling saves energy because the birds rarely have to flap their wings. They also save energy by flying along mountain ridges with the wind to their backs, taking advantage of updrafts all along the way. (An updraft is a result of wind hitting a land form and a thermal is the result of warm air rising on its own) When a large number of hawks pass a fixed point, such as on a mountain ridge, this is called a "flight". A thermal has to be involved for the gathering to be called a kettle. This is why hawk watches are located on ridge tops. The most famous of these is on Hawk Mountain in Schuylkill County, Pennsylvania. I have been lucky enough to visit Hawk Mountain during the fall migration and I recommend it to anyone who gets the chance to go.

I'm not sure what kind of hawks were in the kettle I saw - they were pretty far away. From what I understand, most hawks in a kettle are Buteos, which are basically hawks with wider wings and short fat tails. But other types of hawks have been known to join in as well.

So, as you are out and about this fall, keep your eyes to the sky, and maybe you'll be lucky enough to see the awesome spectacle known as a kettle. Take care and have a great autumn!

Best regards,
Matt