Eagle Day

The weather has been kind to us this fall with many clear sunny days to count migratory raptors from the ridge. This year's raptor migration at the Bridger Ridge HawkWatch site has brought plenty of excitement, and on October 15th, we witnessed our most thrilling day yet. As the crisp fall air settled over the Bridger Mountains, our team recorded a record-breaking number of Golden Eagles migrating in a single day for the 2024 season. From mid-morning to late afternoon, 113 Golden Eagles soared overhead, marking a stunning milestone and adding to a great season.

Due to the low wind speed and fair thermal lift, most of the migrating eagles came in at eye-level from the north, floated right over the heli-pad, and gained altitude above us until heading south. This gave us the closest views of eagles we had seen for the season so far!

As many of you know, the Bridger HawkWatch is one of the longest standing raptor migration datasets in the country, and it is an especially important flyway for Golden Eagles. HawkWatch stations including our own have noticed a steep decline in Golden Eagle population within the U.S. in recent years. Though we don't have the full picture of what caused this population decline, some known threats are agricultural development, lead poisoning from ammunition, illegal hunting, electrocution from powerlines, and change in fire regimes.

Despite these challenges, witnessing such a strong migration day was a reminder of the resilience of these incredible birds. Days like these are why we do what we do, and why we invite anyone who loves nature and wildlife to join us up on the ridge. We expect that there will be more big eagle days before the season is over!