



Raptors of the Rockies
 P.O. BOX 250, FLORENCE, MT 59833

Educational Programs since 1988

Raptor Round-Up

www.raptorsoftherockies.org
 See a color version of the newsletter

NUMBER 35, AUGUST 2010

Off to Chicago and the Brookfield Zoo

In May I flew to Chicago (via Seattle!) to present a program at the Brookfield Zoo for the fourth installment in their Spring Lecture Series. The zoo had just opened the new Great Bear Wilderness exhibit, and I was there to discuss the "pinnacle of perfection of the natural world, the raptors." My words and opinion but the program went over very well with a capacity crowd in the Discovery Center. It was a brand new audience, one that had never before heard my *raptor versus rapture* comparison, and thankfully my PowerPoint played, mostly. With several hundred images I paid tribute to raptors of all kinds, and zoos for getting me started as a kid. Brookfield was the first zoo I ever visited when we lived in Chicago, and my dad had to drag me out of the reptile house, I am told. As a grande finale to the program, the whole audience hooted like a Great Horned Owl with Zoo Director Stuart Strahl leading the pack. We nearly sold out all of the *Falcons of North America* books they had on hand, we had a book signing, and I met some great folks and aspiring raptor educators.



Kate Davis photos ©

The next morning, I arrived bright and early for a tour and got this photo of a Grizzly Bear about to plunge into the waters at the new exhibit. Shrieking children (and me) were amazed by this sight and glimpse of a behavior impossible to see, possible now; plus a Polar Bear relaxing. If you want a Raptors of the Rockies presentation at your zoo, give me a call. Will work for a tour!



Raptors of the West Book Completed

The new book is at Mountain Press Publishing Company, out of my hands and with the editors as we speak. That's why this newsletter is a month late - I've been writing captions! It has taken a year longer than planned, but in that time our photographers Rob Palmer and Nick Dunlop got unbelievable images that wouldn't have made the book had we been on time. Guests also appearing are BT Lubinski, Gerald Romanchuk, Miguel Lasa, Erick Greene, Jeff Wohl, and David Palmer.

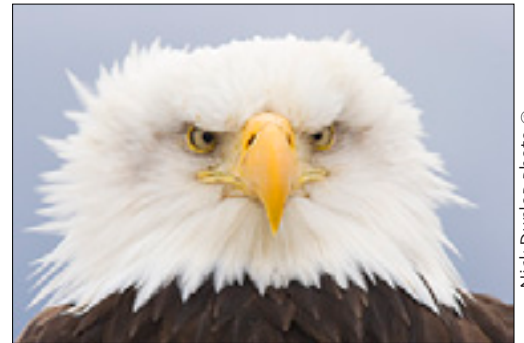
So the breakdown: 224 pages, 7 chapters, 43 species, and 430 photographs! That many captions, and since the shoulder surgery last month, that's about all I've been doing. Truly fun and a challenge at times to keep it brief.

We are hoping that we can have it back from the printers in time for the holidays, but certainly by the spring of 2011.



Burrowing Owl fledglings, a brand new image from Rob Palmer

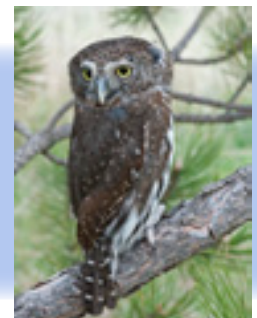
Rob Palmer photo ©



Bald Eagle by Nick Dunlop

Nick Dunlop photo ©

Meet iPod
 our new
 Northern
 Pygmy-Owl
 page 2



MISSION STATEMENT

Raptors of the Rockies is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) raptor education project located in Western Montana. Active since 1988, our mission is:

- * To educate schools and the public through the use of live birds - the eagles, hawks, falcons and owls used in raptor education and wildlife art programs;
- * To provide a lifetime of quality care to permanently disabled birds of prey and falconry birds;
- * To instill a sense of respect and admiration for these skilled hunters and to promote wildlife conservation and habitat preservation for our wild bird populations.



Kate Davis photo ©

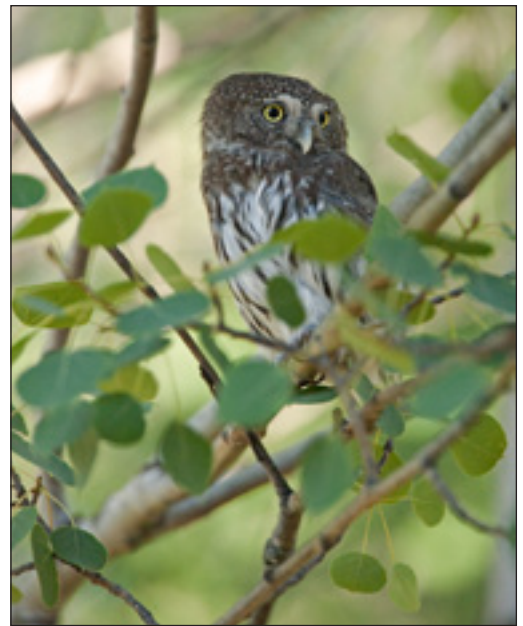
On a day of Peregrine watching with Mac Donofrio, he motioned to a rock ledge thirty feet away and told me that one time a wild falcon landed that close. Minutes later, this fledgling Peregrine did just that! A photo for the book, and I told him I also needed a California Condor shot. HA! You can see how the young birds blend into their surroundings.

The Smallest Resident Raptor For Us Ever. (*period*)



Steve Palmer photo ©

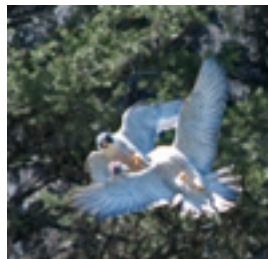
The new kid on the block joined us in April, and has settled in nicely. Our Northern Pygmy-owl DotCom was a program staple for over 9 years, and he passed away last summer. This new one came from Bitterroot rehabilitator Judy Hoy, and I swear, he's even smaller than DotCom. He got his name from our friend, Jurgen Knoller that owns Bayern Brewing in Missoula. We had our Raptor Backer Appreciation Party at Bayern and Jurgen asked about the birds. "How's that little one, iPod?" he queried, mistakenly referring to DotCom. And that's how we got the name! iPod was struck by a car over the winter, and Judy kept him indoors as the feathers grew back. He lost that wing tip that was broken, so a keeper bird. And his first program - Pea Green Boat on Montana public radio. A star!



Kate Davis photo ©

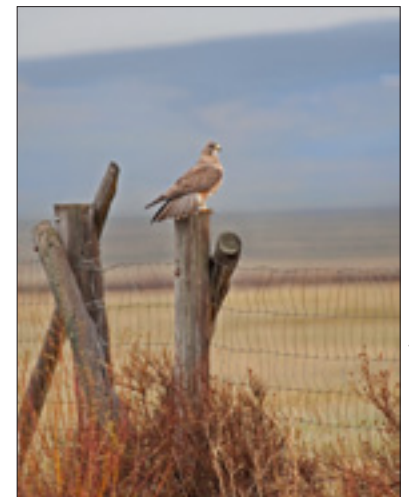


Montana Peregrine Institute 2010



Director Jay Sumner claims another triumph in monitoring Peregrine numbers in the state and the first year for his volunteer program Peregrine Watch. He reports 88 eyries, up from 84 last year, and 10 new territories in 2010. Above is a food transfer in the Blackfoot. Sign up as volunteer for next year.

Kate Davis photos ©



Kate Davis photo ©

Swainson's Hawk in the Big Hole Valley, birding expedition with Jack Kirkley.

Even a Hesperornis

We say this every year, but these were the best kids yet! Our four day Birds And Art Camp with the Missoula Art Museum starts with sketching live birds, then the real fun - life-size raptor sculptures in paper mache. Instructor Bev Glueckert and I tell the kids we have been holding this class for nearly 45 years, and let them do the math. Hopefully they'll realize we are exaggerating (it's more like 15 years.) We are always thrilled to see what creations they come up with.



Students created a variety of birds to decorate bedrooms, and one that was be a surprise Father's Day gift. The paper mache sculptures were decorated with paint and feathers, pipe cleaner feet and beaks, and googly-eyes installed. My new friend Allan (age 8) made our first ever extinct flightless diving bird, a Hesperornis, "swimming the seas of the late Cretaceous," he explained. We also had a family of Saw-whet Owls and lots of Sibley the Peregrines and Miles the Great Horned Owls. A perfect group of youngsters that promised to keep in touch and have a great summer. And get jobs to support their parents.

Our Birds And Art Workshops are the topic for this year's paper at the Raptor Research Foundation Conference in Fort Collins next month. I've organized a whole day "Raptors in Education Symposium," 16 speakers in all! My paper title, "Raptors In the Creative Process."



Kate Davis photos ©



Sibley the seven year old Peregrine laid a clutch of eggs, her first and no male so infertile. Looking at their beautiful markings you can see why they were so coveted by egg collectors of old. Fortunately she didn't try to incubate them, and some time off from programs while in this delicate state, clever girl.

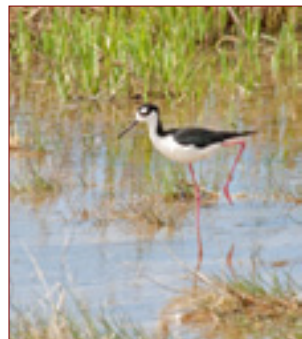


Sibley Workshop on the Rocky Mountain Front

For our fourth year running, we were featured in the David Sibley Birding Workshop, a week-long event at the Nature Conservancy's Pine Butte Guest Ranch. In this gorgeous setting on the Rocky Mountain Front, we presented a program before dinner and showed the Powerpoint from the Brookfield Zoo program that evening. At the last minute, we decided to leave Sibley the Peregrine at home, as she had just laid a NINTH egg! Instead, Ansel the Gyr/Peregrine made the trek, in great spirits and accompanied by the Red-tail, Pygmy-Owl and Jillian the big Great Horned. The next day we braved the 70 mile an hour wind gusts and observed Golden Eagle and Swainson's Hawk nests, then on to the birding HOTspot - Freezeout Lake. Here (right) David is playing a Marsh Wren song from his new Sibley iPhone app, on my list to buy. The wren wasn't responding to the eastern version, but got pretty curious when he heard a familiar western Marsh Wren song right on his territory. "Pushed his buttons," David observed.



On the way back from Pine Butte, Sharon and I stopped at Two Creek Ranch near Ovando for a program for the Burchenal's. Every year Ralph has a get together of old friends, and we were invited to share our birds and stories. Thane Maynard, Director of the Cincinnati Zoo was there, and I met him last year. But a highlight was wildlife painter John Ruthven, whom I have known since a kid. He used to critique my pen and ink drawings and I even released a rehab fox at his farm when I was 15. I don't think he remembered but what a good sport. I gave him a Falcon book and he sent me a beautiful gift that now hangs in my living room - a Kestrel painting! I hope he can continue to critique my artwork as I embark on a quest to learn oils, just in time for the Plein Air workshop next summer.



Kate, David Sibley, and Sharon Fuller at Freezeout Lake.

TUESDAY, APRIL 20

Score!

Mac Donofrio and I wanted to confirm the mystery birds, Peregrines spotted way back up One Horse Creek the last two years, and this time we approached from the north. Starting with a big drive up logging roads, the top still holding deep snow, we had to hike to the canyon edge. We brought some homing pigeons that we planned to toss off the top to see if we could inspire a chase, had we not been able to locate the falcons. Instead, we spotted the pair within minutes soaring around the big air space, encouraged to see the male perch repeatedly on a sentinel snag at the top. He gave chase to a few of the pigeons (that were back at my house when I got home) then fetched a particularly attractive item from a cache in the rocks. For ten minutes he flew back and forth in front of the cliff face dangling the stripped pectoral girdle of what we guessed was a merganser, bare bones and just the wing tips intact. It dragged below him like a banner, three feet in length and larger than he was. I'm sure the female was impressed, and he finally dropped it into the trees below. Too bad I just had the wide angle lens. So Peregrines are back to One Horse Creek, nesting over a mile back, Prairie Falcons at the mouth of the drainage. The best of both worlds.



continued WEDNESDAY, JULY 21, 2010

Up One Horse Creek again and today we can say with confidence, three babies. With nothing going on, Mac was looking at my house across the valley through the spotting scope and a bird flew through his field of vision. A fledgling Peregrine quietly found a nice snag perch in the distance. A half hour later the big show started as that bird was joined by his sister, then a third exactly in between the two in size. Male? Female? Male? Who knows. Anyway, they flew around us screaming and playing, then one landed next to us, thirty feet away! The spectacle continued, kids playing with no adult supervision, scrapping and diving, noisily honing those flying skills, and a sight I'll never forget.

SUNDAY, MAY 23, 2010

20th Annual Owl Day at Franklin

This was our 14th year in a row at Franklin Elementary School in Missoula in celebration of Owl Day, and for that full amount of time, the 200 + students have adopted Graham the Barred Owl as their mascot, with an assembly in the gym. After weeks of a penny drive, they present us with a check for \$200, rather than all of the pennies. Teacher Ron Ramsey came up with the idea 20 years ago, and every spring organizes a full day of activities for the 4th and 5th graders.

They begin with a reading of *Owl Moon*, the classroom darkened and one spotlight over the principal as he tells the tale. They finish up in the afternoon with owl pellet dissection, gluing the mouse skeletons to sheets of cardboard, true art. This year, a reporter from TV station KECI was there, and she captured the "group hoot" or students hooting like a Great Horned. Ron Ramsey promises this won't be the last as "with just a mention of the words Owl Day, it puts a twinkle in the students' eyes." Well put, Ron!



WEDNESDAY, JUNE 23, 2010

Wild Shot Filmmakers

Ron Scholl and I have been helping kids make films for years, starting back with the International Wildlife Film Festival workshops at the old Raptor Ranch in Clinton in the '90's. One of the first projects won an award at IWFF that year, a cool documentary about our Great Horned Owls complete with narration in a BBC-type British accent. "They eat everything...raw." Today it

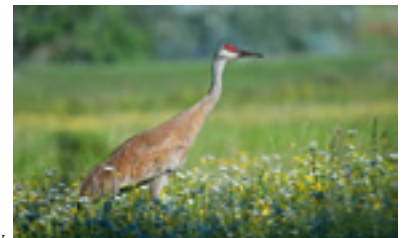
was with MCAT (Missoula Community Access Television) and seven youngsters shot the footage for four films, to be broadcasted for the big debut Friday night. The students filmed an eagle movie, and one on falconry birds (Ron, kids, and Sibley eating a quail pictured here.) Popular were the owls, especially the little guys, and I even had to pretend that the circus was in town, don't ask me why, and we'll see when the movie is complete. At the end we let Chesty the Harris's Hawk fly around the yard, video cameras blazing, but she wouldn't do her trick of catching tidbits thrown into the air. We found that she had two eggs back in her building and was perhaps distracted. When I asked a young filmmaker if I should pull the eggs, he said, "No, let her have some fun with those for a while more." Perfect answer and day!



TUESDAY, JUNE 29, 2010

Sandhills Cranes in the Front Yard

A snapshot 'o the day, when parent birds were escorting their two youngsters around the property here in Florence hunting bugs. Unfortunately, my sneaking up on the family only resulted in the dad photograph, as female and kids were hiding expertly. I left them all alone after a short time and hope to see them again.



THURSDAY, JULY 1, 2010

Hurricane Florence

Even growing up in the Midwest and tornado-land, I have never seen a storm like Tuesday night! Ominous black clouds appeared over the Bitterroots to the west at dusk, bringing a wallop of a show for nearly an hour. Tom and I watched from the driveway, then retreated to the dark house as the power was out. Literally thousands of lightning bolts in every direction and winds up to 100 mph, reported from a friend's home weather station. Florence was Ground Zero, and it whirled around the Raptor Ranch, sounding like the old cliché of a jet engine. No, *louder*. Luckily the buildings withstood the onslaught of wind, rain and lightning, and Max the eagle was restored to his high perch by flashlight, soaking wet and looking very bedraggled. Our backyard and street didn't fare so well, and these trees were sawed out of the middle of the road at 2:30 am by the rural fire department (thanks guys!), only to spring back up into place by the weight of the root wads. Nice trick. Thanks also to Northwestern Energy for restoring our power, a quiet day with no computer and stereo. The storm was a microburst, and no more, thank-you.



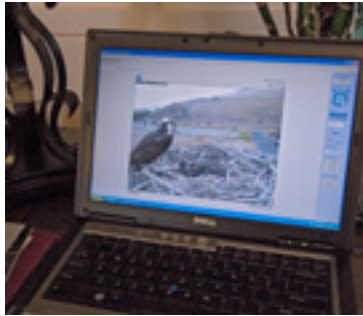
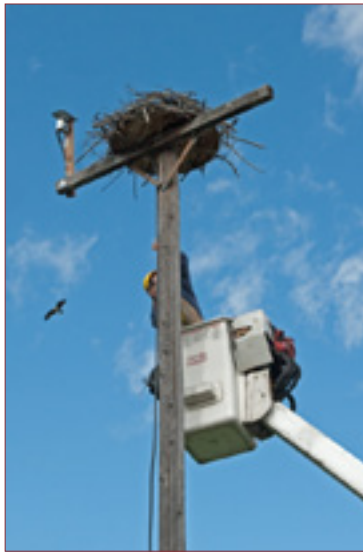
Riverside Osprey Nest Web Cam

We were happy to help out with Project Osprey when they put a digital video camera in the nest at Riverside Health Care in Missoula in June. Project heads, Heiko Langner and Erick Greene at the University of Montana and Rob Domenech have been monitoring Ospreys in the area for four years banding babies and taking blood and feather samples to check for toxins. They wondered what types of fish were being consumed, and thought about using a camera to see. Heiko came up with this impressive set-up, installed thanks to NorthWestern Energy. Powered by a solar panel attached to the pole, a live feed was available on the Project Osprey web site with daily updates.

My friend Karen Wagner (whose mother was a resident) and I wanted the folks at Riverside Health Care on the Clark Fork River to enjoy the Ospreys close-up. NW Energy erected this platform in April of 2007, and we had the first Osprey pair last year. The residents enjoy watching these "Fish Hawks" from their patio, often crowded with bird lovers, and this year they also had a live feed from the web cam on a computer in the lobby.

On July 26th, Heiko and Erick decided to revisit the Hellgate Osprey nest and take a final blood sample from the chicks before they fledged. This is essential to determine how the mercury levels change as the birds grow. I was lucky to come along, with family in tow. My brother Jonathan and son Zach Phillips were in town for two days and got a bucket ride, as did my nephew Brady Needles.

Both babies successfully fledged in August and remain in the area, learning to fish on their own. Project Osprey will install a better camera next year, now that the bugs are worked out, and we will be there to help again.



Live feed on a laptop in Riverside Health Care. Next year, a TV, maybe bigscreen!

Camera installed and adults in the air. With all of the rain this spring and summer, the river was up and water very murky. Catching fish was difficult for several weeks after the young had hatched, and the female even left the nest in search of fish. One baby's growth was stunted, but he caught up and actually outweighed his sibling, as Erick Green puts them back in the nest, university in the background.

Kate Davis photos ©



Great Egret at Lee Metcalf NWR

Montana Waterfowl Foundation Update

Director John Jarvis reports that ten Trumpeter Swans hatched at the Waterfowl Foundation were recently released on the Flathead Reservation, year old birds that joined the wild population. Formally endangered due to over hunting and habitat loss, these birds are making a comeback, thanks largely to breeding programs. The Salish Kootenai Swan Reintroduction Program is making strides, and benefits by having the Foundation right there in Ronan, and so successful and savvy when it comes to the giant Trumpeters Swans. They have ten more for next year!



Purely illustrative, these are Tundra Swans in the Blackfoot.



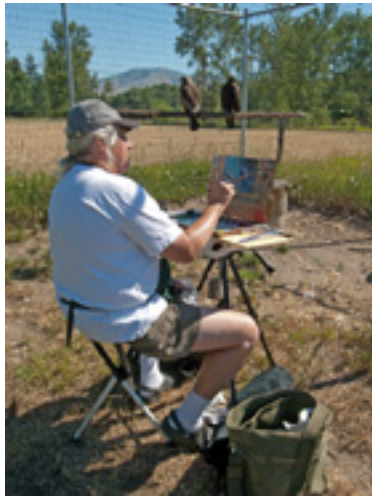
The Raptor Ranch on a stormy August evening. The little dead tree on the right is the favorite hummingbird perch (page 8.)

Kate Davis photos ©

6 Plein Air Painters Take Over the Raptor Ranch

What does that mean, *en plein air*? It is painters from around the region landing at the ranch at 8 am and spending the day painting our birds in the out-of-doors on perches in the yard and in their enclosures. This was a brainstorm three years ago after I ran into several folks with French easels set up at our local fishing access painting landscapes in Florence. I asked what they were doing and they were proud to say that they were with the Dana Gallery in Missoula. One gal came over here because she needed more painting panels which I could supply rather trying to get to an art store. As she pulled up, Chesty the Harris's Hawk was perched on the telephone pole in the driveway, and she exclaimed, "What IS this place?! Does he live here?" pointing at the bird. We agreed that it would make a wonderful stop for artists during their "Paint-Out."

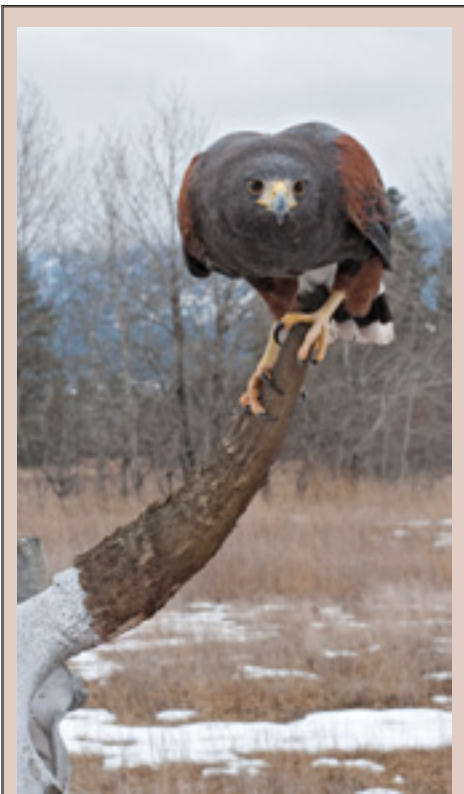
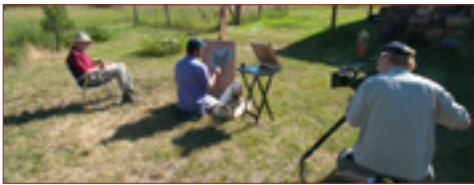
So with this idea to do a workshop here, Candice Crosby and Dudley Dana had 9 painters, 5 writers, the Missoulian and Independent newspapers and 2 videographers here for the day. A few birds rested on perches in the shade, and the rest modelled from their buildings, painters and writers inside and out. All of the paintings were on display at Dana Gallery with an opening that included Alisa the Red-tailed Hawk, our expert model. This could get habit forming, and plan on more painters workshops in the future.



Left and right: Mike Untiedt paints the eagles, and his final product.



Below: Janet McGahan paints the Great Horned Owl, and Alisa the Red-tail examines her portrait at the Dana Gallery Opening.



Chesty the Harris's Hawk turned twenty this spring, flying around the property every day for the last 3 1/2 years. She is even in the new book, with an explanation about why a photo of desert bird would have snow in the background...

Kate Davis photos ©



Ohrmann Museum and Gallery



Western Bluebirds perch on the Penguin sculpture, announcing that spring is here.



My welding mentor Bill Ohrmann and I recently spent a day sculpting Alisa the Red-tailed Hawk in his studio, using Polyform clay as a medium. Bill made the wings and I made the rest and this time I didn't leave it with Bill to bake. Last time I did that he changed the falcon face - Sibley was the model then.

Bill has been painting up a storm, the piece at the top left "inspired" by the Gulf oil spill. No shortage of ideas it seems and stop over to see his wood carvings, bronzes, paintings, and of course welded steel animals. I still want to make a collaborative dinosaur, and only wish we lived closer.

**The Ohrmann Museum and Gallery,
located 2 1/2 miles south of Drummond, Montana
on Highway 1**

Adopt a Raptor for A Year



Food Purchases
Enclosure Maintenance
Daily Care, 365 days a year
Program Insurance
Travel
Web Site, Blog Page
Telephone, Postage
Freezer Space
Office
Fundraising

Deja the Harris's Hawk

Teaching Team:

Golden Eagles	Max ~ \$ 1000
	Nigel ~ \$ 500
Rough-legged Hawk	Otto ~ \$ 200
Swainson's Hawk	Evita ~ \$ 200
Red-tailed Hawk	Alisa ~ \$ 150
Harris's Hawk	Deja ~ \$ 200
Harris's Hawk	Chesty ~ \$ 150
Sharp-shinned Hawk	Margo ~ \$ 100
American Kestrel	JayDub ~ \$ 75
Peregrine Falcon	Sibley ~ \$ 400
Gyr/Peregrine hybrid	Ansel ~ \$ 250

Northern Saw-whet Owl
Northern Pygmy-Owl
Barred Owl
Great Horned Owls

Buster ~ \$ 50
iPod ~ \$ 75
Graham ~ \$ 300
Jillian ~ \$ 150
Miles ~ \$ 250

Suggested adoption rates, and receive a matted photo of your bird and tax-deduction, listed on our web site and next newsletter. Thanks adoptive parents for your support!

YES, I want to sponsor the Raptors of the Rockies with this tax-deductible contribution:

Name _____

Address _____

Contribution amount or Adopted Raptor _____

Thank you Raptor Backers!

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Tina and Rob Jacobs
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Check out our new Photography Web
Site, and thanks to EzPics!

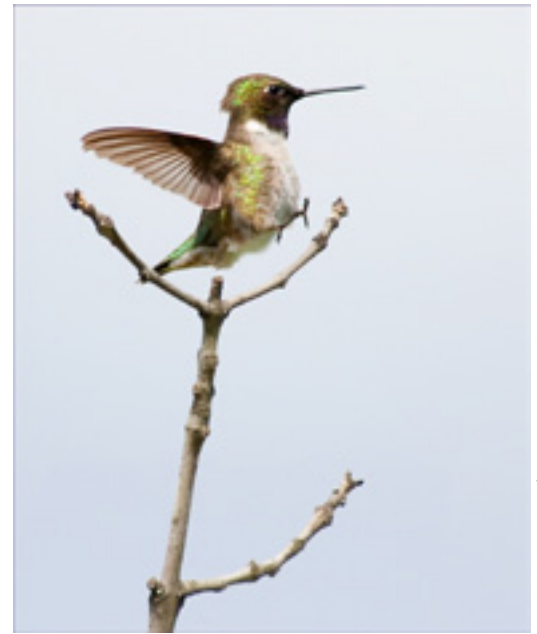
www.raptorsoftherockies.com

Rob Palmer Web Site:
www.falconphotos.com

Nick Dunlop Web Site:
www.nickdunlop.com



*Note Cards, including a new
batch, are available from us and
at Rockin' Rudy's in Missoula.
Over 70 different images and all
proceeds to benefit our program!*



Kate Davis photo ©

A Black-chinned Hummingbird, my favorite photo of the
summer, taken while standing on a ladder in our back yard.

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Raptors of the Rockies

P.O. Box 250, Florence, MT 59833

raptors@montana.com
www.raptorsoftherockies.org
www.raptorsoftherockies.com

