



Raptors of the Rockies
 P.O. BOX 250, FLORENCE, MT 59833
 Education Programs since 1988

Raptor Round-Up

www.raptorsoftherockies.org
 See a color version of the newsletter
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 Photography and Book web site

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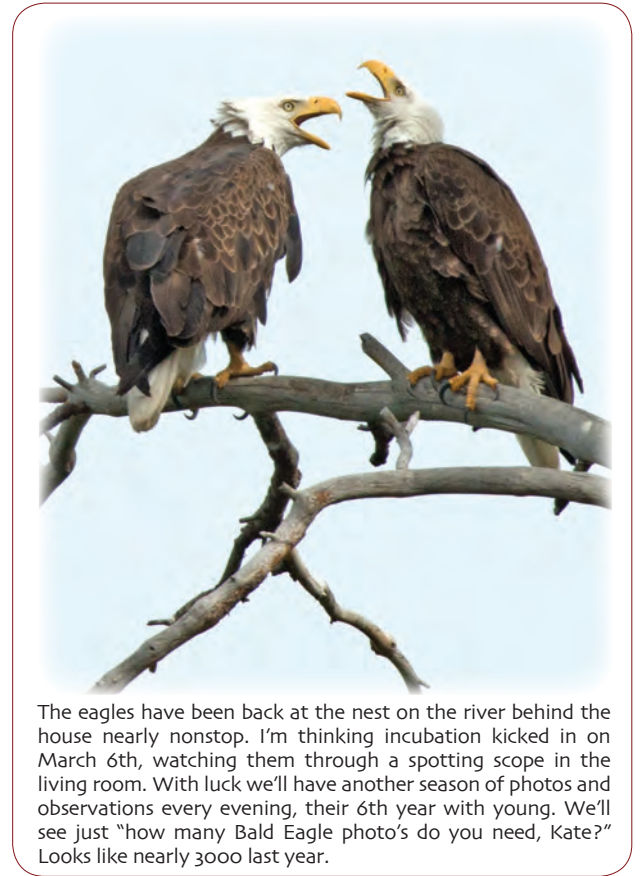
Welcoming In the New Year



Kate Davis photos ©

We're quite a bit late with the Holiday Issue, or very early if you look at it another way. Better yet - the Easter Edition. This has been a long winter. Our lives changed just before Thanksgiving when Tom went to Nowcare in Missoula with a fever, and has been recovering from a critical illness that had a very poor prognosis. After two weeks in the ICU at St. Patrick Hospital, he was finally diagnosed with a rare autoimmune disease and underwent radical treatment that beat all odds. Then my mother fell ill, so back to the hospital, in rehab now, then back home. We are so grateful to have such fine medical care and supportive friends these many months.

Many thanks to our Raptor Backers! You rallied even without the end-of-the-year encouragement and we enjoyed extraordinary sponsorship once again. The schedule has been filling up for the Teaching Team birds and looking forward to another stellar year.



The eagles have been back at the nest on the river behind the house nearly nonstop. I'm thinking incubation kicked in on March 6th, watching them through a spotting scope in the living room. With luck we'll have another season of photos and observations every evening, their 6th year with young. We'll see just "how many Bald Eagle photo's do you need, Kate?" Looks like nearly 3000 last year.



My photo of the young Bald Eagle flying with a kestrel perched on her head made Montana Outdoors Magazine, first page spread in their annual photography issue. This was the young bird from the local nest in her first flight, and the I have been handing off hundreds of these cards to everyone. Let us know if you'd like one for your very own.



Exciting programs, workshops, book events, and conferences in 2016. Totals for 2016 were 48 programs and 36 tours for an audience of 3025 kids and grown-ups, all memorable and fun. I was the Keynote Speaker for the St. George Winter Bird Festival in southwest Utah, Keynote for the Montana Audubon Annual Bird Festival held in Missoula plus programs at Bannack State Park, Travelers' Rest State Park, Georgetown Lake, and Montana Tech college in Butte. The best were the presentations at The Peregrine Fund in Boise, Idaho "the Mecca" for raptors and enthusiasts. One in November and just returning from the gig at the annual Falconry Rendezvous at The Archives of Falconry, audiences of raptorphiles!

Sibley the Peregrine had her 500th program in 2016, here at Clinton Elementary.

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 falcons, hawks, eagles 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.



I couldn't imagine the luck of having my three All Time Heroes at the same place, the RRF Conference 2016. First was a reunion with Dr. Ian Newton (above), scientist and author of "Population Ecology of Raptors" a must-read. Plus David Sibley, of field guide fame appeared at the end for the 40th Anniversary of Cape May Hawkwatch. And finally Dr. Tom Cade, founder of The Peregrine Fund, and Champion #1. These friends are the icons of the bird world, and I am so proud to have known them all for years and years.



Cape May, New Jersey - 50th Anniversary of RRF

The gathering of the best and brightest (and funnest) in the raptor world every year is the annual conference of the Raptor Research Foundation, this last one in October on the east coast at the birding hotspot Cape May. It was especially momentous as this was 50 years of RRF! I haven't been a devotee that long, just since 2004 when I presented my first paper "Allometry of Alarm Calls" in Bakersfield CA. The meeting was in conjunction with the California Hawking Club, and I was hooked. I have since been Education Chair, Conference Chair, and Conference Host in 2008, with Erick Greene and the U of M. This year - look out Salt Lake City, hosts are the buddies at HawkWatch International and they know how to throw a shindig.



Katie Harrington and Becca McCabe of the Hawk Mountain Sanctuary had the near-impossible task of topping the Raptor Research Foundation Conference last year in Sacramento, and they pulled it off. They got the notion of a plenary panel called "Women in Raptor Research: Trailblazers and the Next Generation," and take a look at who they chose! We heard a little history from each and their thoughts on the future for women in the field, both literally and figuratively. Sure made me proud.



TOP Right: Dan Varland's paper on Peregrine trapping on the west coast.
Right: Poster session, boat cruise, and hawkwatching from the platform.

Left: Passengers on the airport shuttle check out my upcoming PowerPoint at The Peregrine Fund, a humorous slide of the Hooters Gals with our owl Jillian. - Kevin Corwin of Colorado, Oliver from Germany and Torgeir Nygard from Norway.





Butte, America

In September we had a whole new audience in The Mining City of Butte, a quick 286 mile round trip and a fine program at the college. What an awesome campus, the historic mining district and will definitely head back for a tour from my old pal Idamarie who knows all the cool haunts and views. We had a big PowerPoint and new photos, everyone's favorite was the kestrel riding on the Bald Eagle's face. That photo above was taken as I was leaving and flipped it so you could read the "Montana Tech," if it looks weird.



Above: Here are my new Saudi friends showing us photos of their falcons on their cell phones with Sibley perched on the left. Lots of Gyrfalcons are flown in Saudi Arabia apparently, and one video showed stoops on a houbara bustard, wow.

Montana Tech Public Lecture Series

Presented by:
The Office of Research
College of Letters, Sciences, & Professional Studies
School of Mines & Engineering
Highlands

"Raptor Education In the West"
Kate Davis
Founder of Raptors of the Rockies
15 September, 2016
4 pm the Montana Tech Library Auditorium

Ospreys At the River



One of my favorite animals is the Osprey, due back here soon after a long migration to Mexico and Central America. Readily using utility power poles and even cell phone towers, Ospreys have increased in populations, not spooky around people. One thing we can do to help nesting success is to eliminate the huge hazard of plastic baling twine scattered on the ground - an attractive additive to their stick nests. For some reason these birds will go out of their way to collect this refuse, deadly to chicks and adults both when they become entangled and die. Easy to remedy so please don't leave baling twine out and our Ospreys will continue to delight us with their flying and fishing prowess.



Kate Davis photos ©



Otters? Yes down at the beach last week, a surprise.

Over on the right, see iPod our Pygmy-Owl? Our friends Dan and Sue Anne Lass showed me this photo of an owl on the tail section of a Frontier airplane, Sue Anne's employer as she is a flight attendant. That's iPod! My first time to see our little owl appearing and he's on 119 jet tails, thanks to Frontier CEO Bill Franke who loves our Raptors of the Rockies program.



Dan Lass photo of the Frontier Airlines tarmac, iPod on the tail! Accompanied by a prairie dog on the left and dolphin in the back.

TUESDAY, August 30, 2016

Two Stories

First, my friend Miguel Saggese just sent me the completed article he wrote for his home country Argentina Bird Society's 100th Anniversary Journal. Miguel just happens to be the President of the Raptor Research Foundation and used my photographs to illustrate his Osprey paper. He writes in a postscript: *Agradecemos especialmente a Kate Davis por facilitarnos algunas de las fotografias.* You bet.

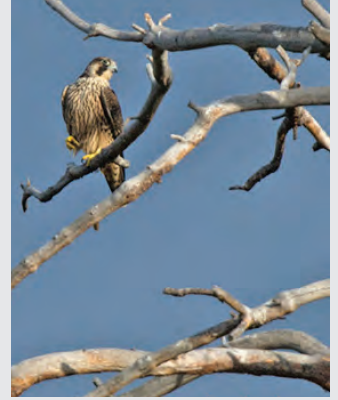


And I was just doing a program today at a retreat for 50 people from around the U.S. and one woman told me she had owls nesting in boxes on her property. She wondered what were the sounds from the boxes that resembled a clock. All I could figure would be the owls snapping their beaks - a clock. I said, "Barn Owls, right?" Yes. "And you live in California, right?" Yes again. Then I went out on a limb. "And you are a Sagittarius." She shrieked, "How did you know that?!" I totally made that up and know nothing of astrology. True story, and will add it to my "material" in programs. HA!

THURSDAY October 6, 2016

Behavior Explained

I wondered why this Peregrine stooped on an Osprey flying by the other night, and maybe she was trying to pirate a fish. Talking to biologist Terry McEneaney yesterday he described a Peregrine nest in Yellowstone that routinely had large fish in it, turns out stolen from an Osprey! I think this was just a "can't resist scaring another big raptor" behavior. And, I was just buying a sack of bird seed at Ace Hardware and took it from the young man delivering it to my car from out back. "I have a bird in my car," I told him gesturing to Sibley standing on her perch. He practically shouted, "That's not a bird! That's a hawk!" Close enough.

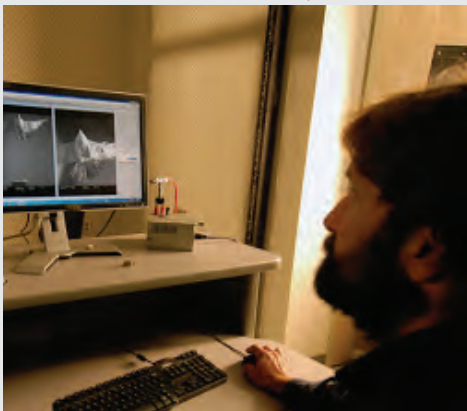


THURSDAY, September 29, 2016



Sib at the American Museum of Natural History

Our program and book signing at Shakespeare & Co. last Friday was one of the best of the year, and I met some new friends. One was Hila Chase, PhD student at U of M and raptor enthusiast. She informed me that a the video introduction to the "Dinosaurs Among Us" exhibit at the American Museum of Natural History in New York features Sibley the Peregrine! Click on the second film on the page and at 1:44 minutes, there's Sib filmed at 500 frames flying straight up 28 feet. Dr. Bret Tobalski invited us to try this in 2011 in the University Flight Lab Tower of Power and Sib was a pro. Then the BBC showed up in November 2012 and captured her at 1500 frames per second, 8 trips up the Tower. A thrill to see this footage in new display at the American Museum because after all, birds are dinosaurs, too.



TUESDAY, October 25, 2016

Etta Hui Is Cool!

Back in 2008 when Raptors of the Rockies and U of M hosted the Raptor Research Foundation in Missoula, I received an email in semi-broken English. It was from Etta Hui in Hong Kong and she was having trouble joining RRF, so I just sent a check and signed her up. She is a Black Kite biologist and educator, Hong Kong so very different than Montana. Etta arrived at the RRF Conference a bit early so I drove her around the campus. Grizzly football was in practice mode, so I rolled down her window and had her shout "Go Griz!" in her little voice and she repeated it every time I saw her during the week. She gave me a set of gorgeous cloisonné owls that I have treasured here in the office. Fast forward 8 years and she gave me these new owls in Cape May. Etta had gifts from China for all of her friends, and I gave her a pack of my 35 greeting cards and envelopes, and bet you ten bucks they will never be mailed. Thanks pal, Etta!



WEDNESDAY February 8, 2017

Winter Goes On and On



Back To The Peregrine Fund



Two wonderful programs at The Peregrine Fund, the first in November when I was the evening guest speaker, PowerPoint with over 100 "slides." With 100 in attendance it turned out to be the last program of the year, schedule cut short. Then the ultimate honor, speaker for the Falconry Rendezvous at the Falconry Archives in March. This annual gathering honors those who have passed with a speech and plaque on the Wall of Remembrance. At the evening banquet I was pleasantly surprised when the audience of falconers broke into applause for that full framed photo of young children reacting to the Golden Eagle, Nigel. And even more delighted when they responded to my request to "hoot like an owl." Well, most of them anyway. Falconers tend to not enjoy Great Horned Owls as they may kill their cherished hawks or falcons. This was a major highlight and just what the doctor ordered.



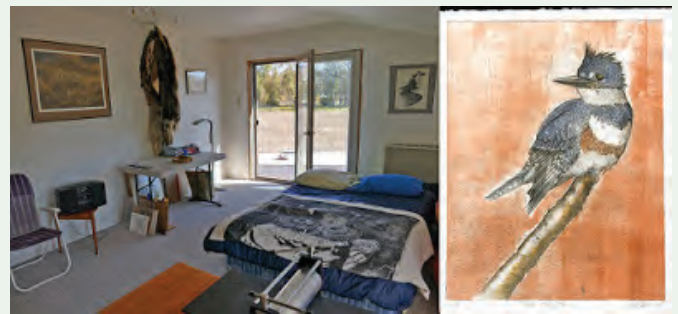
TPFund founder Dr. Tom Cade remembers John Craighead, and how seeing John's Peregrine Ulysses changed his life. I honored him in my presentation, a good friend. Tom Maechtle, who suddenly and tragically passed, is very much missed by family and anyone who ever met him; his loss a shock to the raptor world.



Thanks Cinnabar Foundation!
You are our longest-running supporters, starting way back in 1999 when we became a 501(c)3 non-profit outfit!

My great buddy jeep Pagel from Albuquerque came by for a visit with his son Shale and a surprise girlfriend. Jackie it turns out is the daughter of my pal back in college, Kate Lugar! Twins, practically, of Kate in her 20's. What fun. Jeep is pointing out the "tomial tooth" on my Gyrfalcon sculpture in the back yard.

PRINTMAKING STUDIO NOW!



My "Belted Kingfisher" drypoint etching brought in some bucks for the MAM in the Missoula Art Museum Auction 2017. I am exploring this "safe" kind of printmaking after years of etchings starting back in the 1989 under the tutelage of Don Bunse at U of M. A waxy ground is painted on a zinc plate, lines are drawn through with a needle, and the exposed metal is etched with several baths in nitric acid. The ground, "aquatints" of spray paints, and ink is removed with solvents. This isn't the healthiest of materials and chemicals. Now I am busy with drypoint etchings, the printing press installed upstairs over the garage. It's lines and dots incised on plastic and water-based inks you can wash off in the sink! Thanks to artist Bev Glueckert for turning me on to plastic.

Crazy Magpie

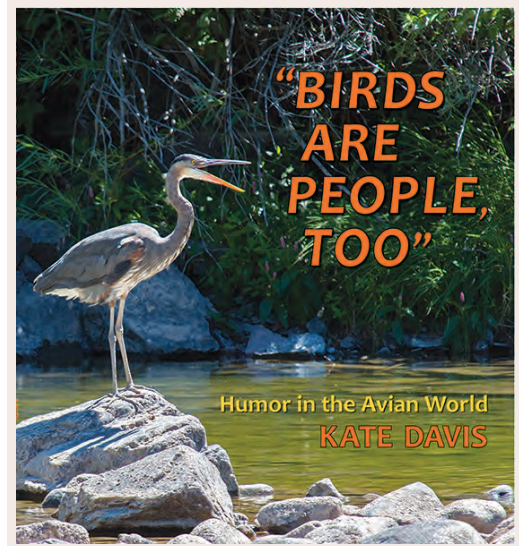
Teasing an American Kestrel, Merlin, young Peregrine Falcon.





Michael Peterson Trial Story in Audubon

No Fake News here, this is absolutely true and featured in Audubon on-line in November. In short, Mr. Peterson spent 8 years in prison for killing his wife with a fire blowpoke, when in fact a Barred Owl hit her in the head. She subsequently fell down some stairs, where he found her and she died. Like I say in the interview, the owl didn't kill her but did hit her in the head, unfortunate and wish she hadn't fallen backwards down the staircase. I became involved in the case in 2008, my affidavit submitted in 2010, called The Owl Theory with two other owl authorities. Michael Peterson was released from prison in 2011 because of faulty expert blood-spatter testimony and was just in court. He was asked to plead guilty and declined once again, so the saga continues. Watch "The Staircase" from Sundance about the original trial at 6 hours and a masterpiece. Now, something that will go even bigger; trust me on this one. www.audubon.org/news



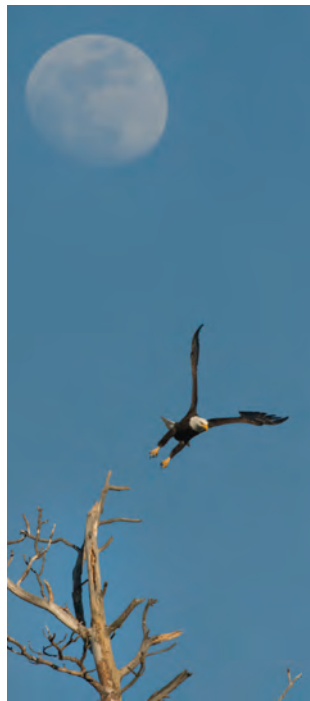
Contact me for a copy or at Mountain Press and your favorite bookseller. "It's a riot!" - Bill Harley 2016



Frosty, snowy winter in Western Montana and everywhere it seems. Clear shower curtains stapled to the outside of the enclosures kept the birds out of the biting breeze, and Sonora the Aplomado Falcon had two red 100 watt bulbs plus her heated perch. Several of the Teaching Teamers spent especially frigid nights indoors, just to play it safe. And of course, mice, quail and squirrels heated up in buckets by the wood stove. Spoiled birds and worth all the efforts.



Kate Davis photos ©



Not just eagles to photograph at the river, but a great excuse to head down there every evening. Also seen through the lens - Red-naped Sapsucker and Pileated and woodpecker nests, kingfishers fishing, sandpipers and killdeer strutting, mergansers swimming by, and the usual suspects of corvids, hawks, falcons, and Ospreys and Lewis's Woodpeckers soon. Oh, and waxwings as well.

Chief Charlo Elementary 4th Grade



John with my falconry gear, and no, not a rifle but telemetry case. We made sure the secretary knew that when we came into the school.

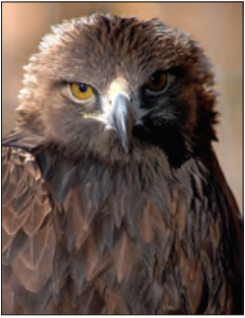


Our friend teacher Kevin Cashman invited us back for a program after the 90 4th graders at Chief Charlo had finished reading their favorite book, *My Side of the Mountain*, written by Jean Craighead George. In this classic, the protagonist Sam runs away from home, lives in a hollowed out tree and hunts with a Peregrine Falcon, all things I wanted to do when I read it in 4th grade. We had our "slide show" with Sibley and iPod on hand and the milestone: our 130,000th audience member since we started in 1988! Riley in orange behind me was the lucky winner of some nice bird cards.

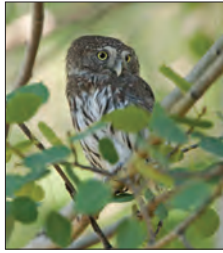


Radioheads on Montana Public Radio Childrens' Programming Pea Green Boat Show, host Annie Garde. Guests McCall, Sydi and teacher Kevin talk about their favorite book and how much they love to read, Sibley in the background. I admitted to reading H.G. Wells books at this age and looking up mysterious new vocabulary words in a big Webster's dictionary, the first one I remembered was "excruciating." We were treated to a song on CD by Kevin's band Whizzpops called "Owls" with Jillian the Great Horned Owl in attendance.

Our Raptors: Sponsorship Appreciated!



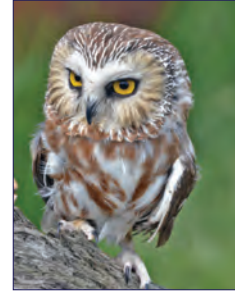
Max the Golden Eagle



iPod the Northern Pygmy-Owl



Evita the Swainson's Hawk



Owen the Northern Saw-whet Owl



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Sonny the Bald Eagle



Jillian the Great Horned Owl



Otto the Rough-legged Hawk



Sonora the Aplomado Falcon



Sibley the Peregrine Falcon



Alisa the Red-tailed Hawk



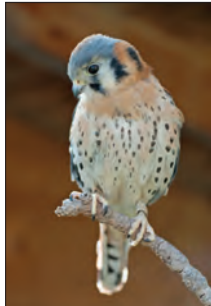
Nigel the Golden Eagle



Ansel the Gyrfalcon/Peregrine



Ella and Wes the American Kestrels



Eighteen below zero at dawn, December.

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 3 Newsletters a year

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Jonnye Mastel in honor of Bob and Gwen Wood

*SPECIAL thanks to Michael and Ginny DeNeve for holding down the fort all winter, Pat Johnson and Kelly Brewster for help on all fronts. Dogs Mookie and Peanut (and we) love you! Mark Nanke and Kim Thomas merci. Kristen Wood, PT genius, Cary Griffin Pal. Thanks Lou and Vicki Chouinard!
You Friends are AWESOME!*

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Bev Beck Glueckert - WELCOME!*

Thanks John Heffernan, Board Member Extraordinaire, who will continue as our advisor.

Raptors of the Rockies

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