



Raptors of the Rockies

P.O. BOX 250, FLORENCE, MT 59833

EDUCATION PROGRAMS SINCE 1988
ALMOST 30 YEARS!

Raptor Round-Up

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Photography and Book web site

NUMBER 53, JULY 2017

Bald Eagle Buds 2017



An update and Tom is recovering from his devastating illness, albeit slowly, and the disease is "well-controlled" through medication and a positive attitude. We are hanging at home taking in the sights and sounds of our avian neighbors on the Bitterroot River, and my highlight is the evening of watching the Bald Eagle nest from the beach. From observations through the spotting scope in the living room, I guessed incubation began March 5th, then add 35 days and hatching April 9th. A month later I wrote in my notes, "either they were scurrying about quite a bit, or we may have three in there. That happened two years ago and freaked me out." A third bird suddenly appeared and they've had that number twice starting with their first young in 2012.

In June Kristi DuBois of Fish Wildlife & Parks was flying the river observing nests and reported that one had THREE young. I could never spot all three at once, but finally got photographic proof on June 12. The high spring waters prevented me from my evening beach vigil, and was relieved when they receded, and we weren't flooded!

The first bird fledged right at 80 days (textbook) and in his first flight landed almost right over my head. I had to back way up to get a picture. Looks like he has two sisters and they are currently standing around begging, and returning to the nest when their father brings something delicious. Occasionally one or more is perched on the eagle building, and our birds couldn't care less. They are sort of a fixture around here for a while longer, and thanks eagles for making my day, every day.



Kate Davis photos ©



We have a number of raptors taking turns hanging out in the office, starting with the Aplomado Falcon Sonora first thing in the morning to eat some quail. Sib comes inside many afternoons, just because she likes to. The latest addition to the family is Simon the Great Horned Owl. All three were raised in the office, and constant attention keeps them nice and friendly and socialized, important for their roles as educators. The term is "imprint," or think they are people. With favorite perches, clean-up is simple, and a pure joy to have our raptor pals hanging out near-by. More on Simon page 2



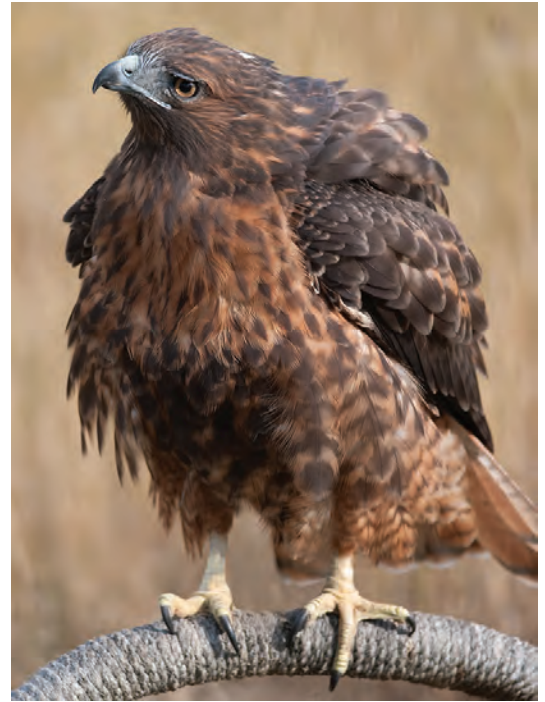
Missoula Art Museum Raptors And Art Camp 2017, with Bev Glueckert and paper mache raptors of all kinds.

MISSION STATEMENT

Raptors of the Rockies is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) raptor education project located in Western Montana. Starting in 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;
- * To get people to go outside.

A very difficult year and our wonderful Red-tailed Hawk Alisa died suddenly in April. She joined us as a fledgling in 2009, very poor vision that I feared had been getting worse lately. But her death was tragic and we sent her body off to our friend Dr. Jamie Bellah at Auburn University, director of the Southeastern Raptor Center in Alabama. The necropsy found that she died of acute clostridial enteritis, unusual in raptors but apparently occurring in poultry. Jamie told us, "The bug is in the environment," so a nervous spring around here. It was heartbreaking and we have been at a loss for program star as she was the centerpiece, especially modelling for hours for art classes. We sure miss Alisa, and there will never be a more beautiful hawk.



Simon the Great Joins the Family



A baby Great Horned Owl has joined us from the Wildlife Center of Montana in Helena. Director Lisa Rhodin knew we were hoping to acquire a second Great Horned Owl and took in this downy chick after he was confiscated by authorities. People in Chester, Montana were keeping him as a pet and feeding him hamburger, two big no-no's. Federal and State Permits are required to keep all native birds, with strict regulations and reports. So Simon as we named him is an imprint bird, and thinks he's a human so can't be released. He has spent major time in the office, nights outside in his enclosure. Simon is now listed on our Possession Permit (thanks USFW Service Linda) and has joined the Teaching Team. This gives the other big owl Jillian a break from the program schedule, which they will now share.

Simon can amuse himself for an hour with a crumpled ball of newspaper, hides toys all over the place and has a few hangouts so he can watch out the windows to the front or back yard. Plus he sleeps out of the way on top of the book shelf, cuddling up to bear skull. I never imagined that owls could be this playful. He is a natural, that's for sure.



Simon's program debut on Pea Green Boat with host Annie Garde, Montana Public Radio. For children of all ages!



On the Raven sculpture in the living room.

Simon Caddy was a very dear friend and was tragically killed in a motorcycle accident in his home of the UK the week this owl arrived at the Raptor Ranch. We have been pals with the family, meeting his dad Adrian in 2002, a delegate for the International Wildlife Film Festival in Missoula. Simon and his brother Alex were teenagers, staying with us many times, enjoying all things American and raptor. We are in shock with his sudden passing at age 29, and profound condolences to Adrian. As a tribute we are calling the new owl Simon - smart as a Formula One race car driver, super-friendly with a wry wit, enjoying fun and games at all times, and handsome as can be, both Simons. Welcome Simon.



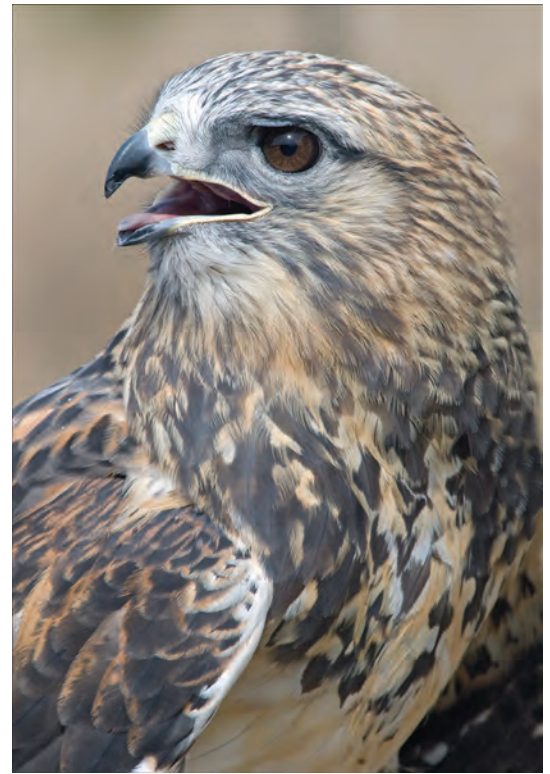
Otto Was A Pal

Poor Otto the Rough-legged Hawk died in June, a tough time around the Raptor Ranch. I had been treating him for an illness for just over three weeks and thought he was on the mend. He was on death's doorstep the Sunday of Memorial Day weekend and was laying on the ground. I frantically started making phone calls for advice. Lisa Rhodin at the rehab center in Helena suggested a steroid injection and we located some Dexamethazone at the home of our semi-retired veterinarian Dr. Melinda Robin in Hamilton. We didn't know if it would work as it was a long-expired bottle, but somehow Otto hung in there. Then a fresh batch on Tuesday, tube feeding twice a day, and in a kennel and baby crib. After a week he suddenly stood up and walked across the yard! Our vet friend at Auburn University suggested doses of Metronidazole to treat his GI tract, prescribed by Willow Mountain Veterinary in Corvallis and acquired at Florence Pharmacy. He was getting around his building, bathing and eating mice on his own, a happy miracle we thought. Then the shock of finding he had died during the day after returning from Missoula.



Sneed Collard photo ©

At the original facility in Clinton circa 1998, on the banks of the Clark Fork River.

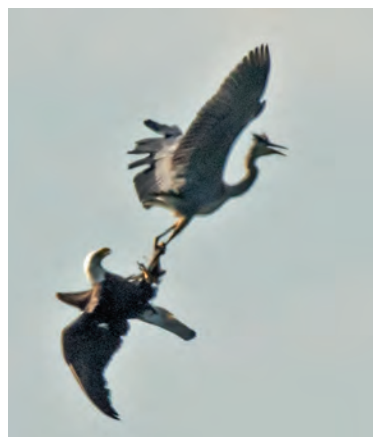


I suppose it was old age as he joined us as a hatch-year bird in 1997, handed over from a rehabber. A car collision and broken wing prevented him from being released, but he was calm and comfortable, living in an old barn in Clinton and nice enclosure with a "screened porch" and roommate Evita the Swainson's Hawk here in Florence. I named him after my Dad's buddy that was visiting at the time, Gene "Otto" Miller. We enjoyed Otto's antics for 20 years, a favorite on the MTPR radio shows as he squeaked, much to Annie's delight. He is much missed.



Raptors And Art, MAM

All the Artists: Snowy Owls, 2 Bald Eagles, Rough-legged Hawk, Golden Eagle, kestrel, Aplomado Falcon, three Peregrines, , and Saw-whet Owl! Great work, class!



This was a popular post on Facebook, the male Bald Eagle grabbing a Great Blue Heron that happened by. Just harmless play...not! Sure scared that heron he'll steer clear of Mr. Grumpy from now on.



Wilson's Snipe at Lee Metcalf NW Refuge

SUNDAY, APRIL 23, 2017

Spot the Target Species?

My friend Mac Donofrio did within a minute, searching for a pair of Peregrines up in the Bitterroot Mountains Friday. I came slogging in after punching through a few feet of snow on an old logging road then bushwhacking up a ridge for an hour. Mac was way ahead of me, and gasping for breath I asked if he had anything, sitting on a rock and peering his scope. "Got em," he declared. We decided to stay in hopes of some closer action, but this was it - one up on that distant cliff of One Horse Creek. With Mac looking through the scope I had him tell me when she/he was in profile for this photo. HA!



THURSDAY May 11 2017

Max the Genius

Our big bully Golden Eagle Max is 28 years old and has a new trick this spring - nest duties on the ground. He's been laying down in the dirt for hours a day, a few weeks now, and wish he would knock it off. At first I thought he was mortally ill, as he'd let me touch and hand feed him which is quite a stretch from his big bullydom. Keeping a careful watch on our three eagles, I am sure now that Max is incubating a nice rock. Gives him a sense of purpose, I suppose and I don't think it will hatch.



ps: I took the sticks and rock away when it began raining non-stop and he was getting soaked. He's fine and back to stealing everyone else's food.

MONDAY, APRIL 10, 2017

Non-Lead Bullets

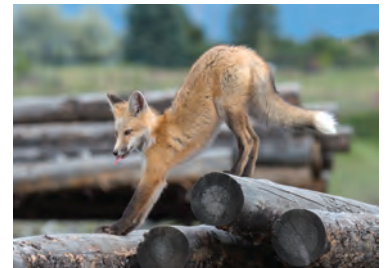
Thanks Mike McTee at the MPG Ranch for organizing this demonstration of lead versus non-lead ammunition, and an eye-opener. Friend Chris Parish of The Peregrine Fund and new friend Leland Brown from the Oregon Zoo are perfect partners in demonstrating and describing why the healthy and ethical choice of hunters should be bullets made of copper or other alloys. Ingested lead fragments can remain in the shot quarry and ingesting them is unhealthy for humans and can be lethal for scavengers like raptors. Chris shot various caliber rounds into water traps (brilliant) and ballistic gel so we could see the relatively clean path of copper and the stuff left behind with traditional lead. Made me want to bust out the ole 270!



SUNDAY, JUNE 18, 2017

Fox Photos

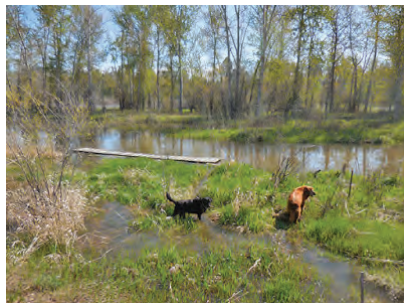
I took an alternate route home from Stevensville yesterday (there to buy a fox squirrel trap!) and lo and behold, four baby foxes were playing on a big log pile at an old saw mill. I had "Exile On Main Street" on the CD player pretty loud, and they didn't mind, two of them posing. My first ever fox photos, unlike pal Rob Palmer that filled a book (Swift Foxes.)



WEDNESDAY, MAY 10, 2017

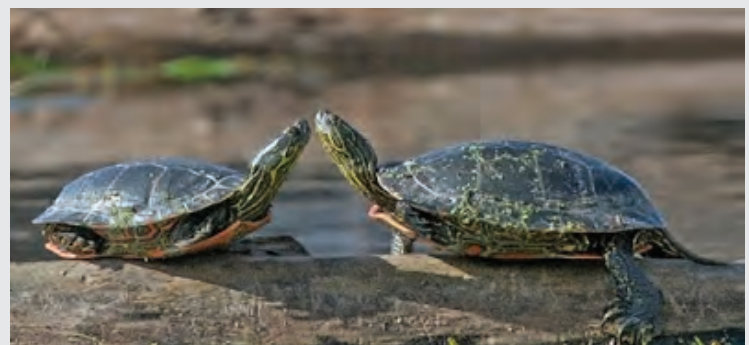
Floodwaters

We have a slough that runs through the back, east of the house and then the river beyond that. When we moved in back in 2001 Tom built a bridge that we installed and he has repaired after the neighbor rode her horse across, and some kids had a jumping contest. It is cabled to a stake in the bank and every year or two the floodwaters rise and bridge floats. Once again, our friend Mike DeNeve to the rescue and he pulled the bridge out with his skid steer (Bobcat) and it's safely on land until the high waters recede.



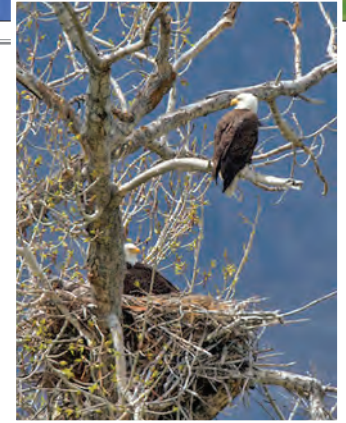
MONDAY, MAY 1, 2017

Painted Turtle Romance



Nice Field Trip, Mr. Fett

We made the exception to the rule “kindergarten through 5th grade only” big time and spent two days with senior advanced science students from Hamilton High School, teacher Birch Fett. First was a classroom PowerPoint and bird program with Sibley in February, and then in May a visit to a nearby Bald Eagle nest. The kids proved that you really don’t need a camera setup that costs more than your car when you have an iPhone. They were taking amazing pictures through the spotting scope, lined up with their phones. We were really roughing it on the lawn of the Daly Mansion, a nice field trip. The eagle nest is circled in white, two chicks, very scenic, and right in our Bitterroot Backyard.



Our Constant Companion Shorebirds

I always love “shooting” whatever happens by and sometimes the shorebirds have all the fun on the beach, here a Killdeer and Spotted Sandpiper.



Kate Davis photos ©

Just as we were driving by this Osprey nest platform at Metcalf Refuge in April, I noticed the occupants were about to bail. The female Canada Goose had been incubating for about a month, all of the young had hatched at once and they were off for their first “flights” with a harmless bounce on the ground below. I swear we just pulled up and I said, “Tom watch this!” and handed him the binoculars. In one minute the female flew, her mate honking below and then, one after the other, all six were leaping and tumbling, specators awaiting their turn. Unbelievable timing and luck which doesn’t happen very often in the photography world. Photo on the right is the plunge of the last chick, joining the family below and foraging on vegetation, brooded by the female at night. Two months before their feathers grow in and they fly. The very next day the platform was taken over by the rightful owners, Ospreys.

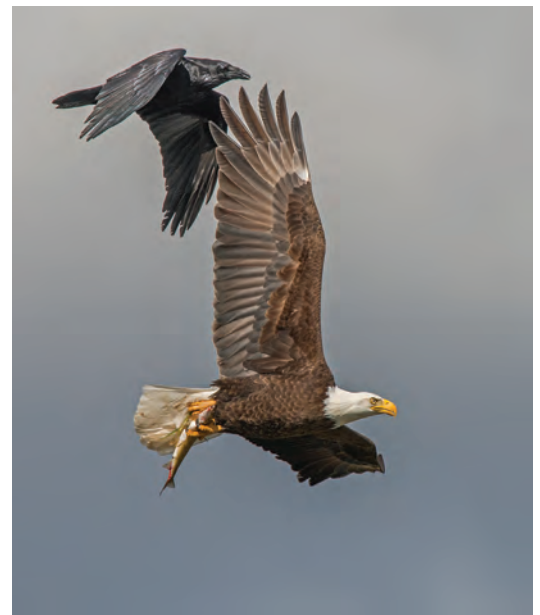


The same platform with Ospreys and smoke from the Lolo Peak forest fire, and then blowing up that evening across the valley, July 23rd.



LEFT: Over 60 images have been made into greeting cards by our friends at Pyramid Printing. Rockin Rudy's of Missoula has all of the new cards on display now, here with our friend Erin. Sales of these greeting cards goes to benefit Raptors of the Rockies, and thanks owner and fellow jazz-lover Bruce Micklus for the opportunity and generosity. He's sold our cards since the very first color printer and about 5 cameras ago, and now they are expertly crafted. Team effort!

RIGHT: This photograph from April 25th was accepted in the Raptors At Risk Photography Competition with The Peregrine Fund, along with the lucky shot of the kestrel riding on the Bald Eagle's head. That one might make their calendar, as the image from last year of the eagle and fish being chased by the Red-winged Blackbird is the photo for this month of July. I'm in a couple more calendars for 2018, one of all my photos produced by HawkWatch International, available soon.



Ospreys Are People Too



Thanks to our friend Kathy Price, I was treated to a front row view of an Osprey nest in her front yard. I was installed in a cushy chair, photographing the birds from a room over the garage! Luxury. Three young this year and the second morning I captured one bird's first ever flight as she fledged to a near-by utility pole. Then the female posed with the remaining two. Caught it just in the nick of time, whew.

Kate Davis photos ©



I got this photo at the beach with Tom sitting next to me on a log. Very special, especially as that Osprey missed three fish downstream but scored right in front of us, just before dark, and crazy light with the Lolo Peak forest fire smoke.



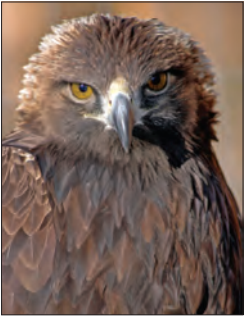
Chief Charlo Elementary 4th Grade, Part II



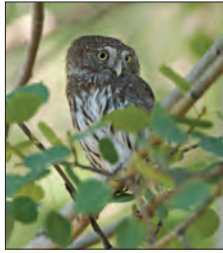
The weather cooperated, the raptors were on their best behaviors, and the bird refuge was packed with avian life. We enjoyed a wonderful field trip with Kevin Cashman's 4th graders from Chief Charlo School in May. Starting out with Sonora the Aplomado Falcon and a tour of the Raptor Ranch, the kids took notes and made sketches in their journals. Then we had a picnic at Lee Metcalf NWRefuge and a great chat by director Tom Reed, spotting scopes, binoculars and field guides galore. Kevin kept track of species with writing projects when they all get back to the classroom. Now this is the way to learn! Lucky youngsters, and great job, Kevin.



Our Hard-working Teaching Team



Max the Golden Eagle



iPod the Northern Pygmy-Owl



Evita the Swainson's Hawk



Owen the Northern Saw-whet Owl



www.raptorsoftherockies.org



Sonny the Bald Eagle



Jillian the Great Horned Owl



Sonora the Aplomado Falcon



Sibley the Peregrine Falcon



Nigel the Golden Eagle



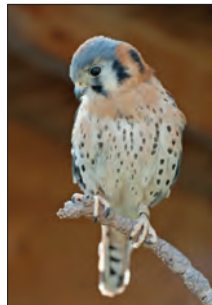
"You lookin' at me?"



Ansel the Gyrfalcon/Peregrine



Ella and Wes the American Kestrels



Simon the Great Horned Owl



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For Eagle Food!



One of our new cards at Rockin Rudy's, a Red-naped Sapsucker.

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Raptors of the Rockies

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Raptors of the Rockies

Educational Programs since 1988

