

RAPTORS OF THE ROCKIES

P.O. BOX 250, FLORENCE, MONTANA

Education Programs since 1988

Raptor Round-Up



www.raptorsoftherockies.org
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Photography and Book web site

NUMBER **56**, NOVEMBER 2018

Wrap-Up Of the Year, and What a Year

Perhaps you noticed that we skipped the summer issue of Raptor Round-Up. I just couldn't write after the loss of our Golden Eagle Max, too saddened and it would not have been cheerful. Tragedy struck back in April and he was euthanized right away, very much missed around here (story page 2.) This was the day before, incubating his rock. RIP Max.



Kate Davis photos ©

Our Teaching Team had a fine year, 40-something programs and more coming up including our Holiday Pea Green Boat with Sibley the Peregrine and her bells, Montana Public Radio with Annie Garde. Jingle jingle.



Maybe we missed out on the eagles breeding by the house this year, but sure lucked out on some other images like this Osprey and a huge brown trout, plus lots of non-raptors like kingfishers, sandpipers, ducks, and a handsome Dipper. *Prints of all available, cards at Rockin Rudy's*



Wood Duck Drakes

Young Burrowing Owl

Photography Show at Blacksmith Brewing, downtown Stevensville for the month of December

Other news - In 1989, I began creating zinc plate etchings and after a twenty year hiatus, I'm back at the printmaking projects, drypoint etchings at home now (thanks Bev Glueckert!) I am also continuing work with Mountain Press Publishing for a new and revised *Falcons of North America* book. Originally published in 2008, this will include lots of new science, new photos from Rob Palmer and Nick Dunlop, and be a larger trim size! Falcons were split from the hawks in 2016 and have their own order Falconiformes, right up there with parrots and perching birds. Sonora the Aplomado sure reminds me of a parrot perched here in the office and flying over to my shoulder!



Hawk Mountain Rules! And lots of other fun programs all over the place!



Doggies on the deck, and summer flowers galore

MISSION STATEMENT

Raptors of the Rockies is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) raptor education project located in Western Montana. Four Federal and State Permits are required. Starting in 1988, our mission has been:

- * 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 encourage everyone to go outdoors.

We Miss Our Pal, Peanut

Peanut was welcomed to our family in 2003, loving life until the very end in July. A constant companion, she loved the river and would stick her whole upper body underwater to retrieve big rocks, often hauled back to the house. She also loved to hunt 'em up with Sibley but missed out on the duck hunts the last year because of her deafness. Or perhaps she just ignored when we called. She has a big grave in the front yard and I swear, a wild turkey took a dust bath right on top an hour after she was laid to rest. Hunt 'em up, Peanut!



TOP: A favorite "perch" at the river for our evening trips to photograph the eagles.



LEFT: A popular picture, Peanut on the far left, then Rudy, and Pat Johnson and Kelly Brewster's Golden Retrievers. There was a fifth dog but the stick was too short.

R.I.P Max the Eagle

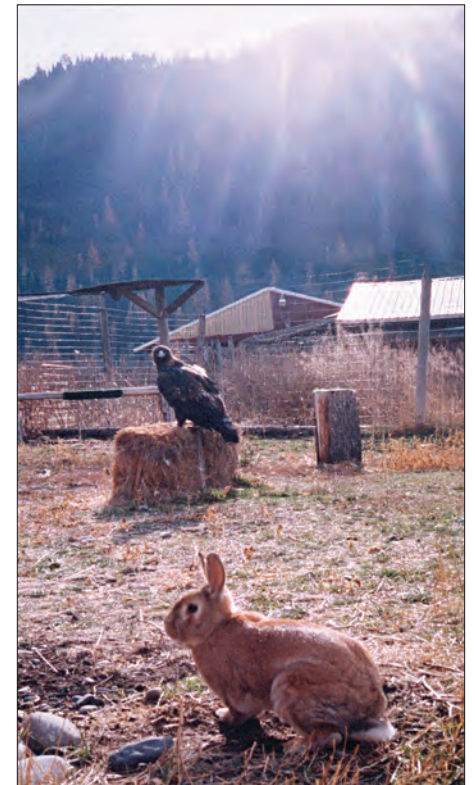


Max our 29 year-old hero Golden Eagle and program favorite in over 1000 appearances died in April. He suffered a terrible accident when a coyote tore his wing right through the fence wire. All of skin and feathers were scattered about up to 30 feet outside the enclosure. With nothing to do medically, our veterinarian buddy Dr. Lynn Robin and I euthanized him in her yard. He had been incubating his rock, as he does in the spring, and a wing tip must have been jutting through the fence. A huge coyote was seen at the sight of the crime two weeks later.

Max was found by the side of the trail in the Bob Marshall Wilderness in 1989, and packed out for several days on horseback. A few years ago up in the Snowbowl locker room, I met the gentleman that recovered Max and he described the event, delighted that Max was still around. His companion stuck the big eagle in a wooden pannier and for the ride, and made a little stick cage for him at night, I imagined Gilligan's Island-style! He was a fledgling bird with no injuries yet was unable to fly, so my guess is that he had brain damage due to starvation.

For his first program I tried the traditional jesses and perching on my glove and THAT didn't work, to the amusement of a gymnasium full of kids. His balance problem made me think of building a travel crate, sliding the lid back and Max hopping up to a perch on the side. Perfect and that's how Max toured the state, once doing four assemblies in a row, another day at three different schools. The olden days with Max the star.

Max, the Education Icon and Big Bully Bird. So very sad, and sure loved him.



TOP: Here he is in the early 1990's with his friendly pet rabbit who lived with him for two years in Clinton, no kidding. Max got rambunctious at one program for a little rural school, the whole town showing up for an assembly in the gymnasium. Off he went from his travel box/perch and then scurried into the boy's bathroom. I finished the talk, then was alerted by the male students that I could not set foot in there to retrieve him. "Oh yea? Gals, let's go." The entire female student body of about 6 girls joined me in this sacred place, and the first one put her hands on her hips and announced, "No fair! They have a drinking fountain in here." Urinal awareness day for the youngsters.

LEFT: Our eagle enclosure by the river, his nest on the ground in the right-hand corner.



Programs at Hawk Mountain Sanctuary, Pennsylvania



Heroes Rachel Spagnola and Laurie Goodrich Director of Long-term Monitoring at the North Lookout, meeting and greeting the public plus watching the raptors on their way south. And right, Rachel flying with some kids.

In September I was honored to be the guest speaker at The Mecca of the East - one of my favorite places, established in 1934 as the world's first privately owned refuge for raptors. Raptorphiles were delighted to visit when Hawk Mountain hosted the Raptor Research Foundation Conference in 2007. Awesome and an honor to return as the featured "expert" and observer.

Tens of thousands of raptors per year fly by this spot, formerly used as a shooting gallery, bounties on dead hawks. Their visitor's center is stunning with an interactive migration map (right), and the site of my presentation, dozens of hawk carvings overhead. I was met at the Newark, NJ airport by the Rachel Spagnola, Senior Educator, the perfect host for a perfect visit. We enjoyed a frenetic few days exchanging ideas and stories and a great program with trainees and the public. Definitely make this a destination, fellow bird fans.



Broad-winged Hawks are a favorite species at Hawk Mountain. I had to head home at around noon so I hightailed it to the South Lookout at 10 am, just in time for the first flood of birds. It had been raining for weeks and this was the first sunny day, hawks awaiting the moment to migrate south. These are "kettles," or flocks of raptors circling together in the rising air as the ground heats up - a thermal. At one point we counted (guessed) over 400 at once in a flock, easier to see with a backdrop of clouds. Then they all "stream" or glide to the next thermal to gain altitude again, little energy expended. All the way to Brazil! In that two hour time span, 2770 Broad-wings flew by, 3308 for the day. So glad I got to see it, mostly.



Owl decoy and Turkey Vulture

And Detroit, Michigan-Hawk Migration Association of North America



The every-three-years Hawk Migration Association of North America Conference was in Detroit in October. I delivered the opening Keynote and (almost) everyone hooted up an owl at the finale. Then I was a tourist, and attended papers from *le creme de la creme* in raptors, migration, and even banding Monarch Butterflies. Thanks Paul Roberts for suggesting I attend and Tom for feeding the birds. Whew.



TOP: Buddies Rebecca Lessard, Wings of Wonder in Michigan, me, then HMANA Director Jane Ferreyra, and Laurie Goodrich of Hawk Mountain Sanctuary fame and Jerry Liguori Conservation & Education Award winner Excellent conference Jane!
 ABOVE: My plug for MTPR in the Powerpoint, with Annie and Joan.



I returned from the whirlwind Detroit round trip, despite numerous airline nightmares including de-icing in Denver, and so glad to be home. I got to hang with so many pals and here is the highly esteemed Dr. David Bird's last two images in his keynote on kestrels: "The future of wildlife" and next a photo of Owen Manning with his award-winning taxidermy mount, plus me with Sonora on MTPR Pea Green Boat three years ago! I blushed.



The Bald Eagles are back at the nest now, hopefully eggs beginning of March. And right, 2 1/2 Owls



TUESDAY, APRIL 17, 2018

Program Hero Today

We just had a program at The Living Center in Stevensville, assisted living and skilled nursing care for seniors. 40 residents and about 20 staff enjoyed Simon the owl and he was an angel! Perfect. Right away I met a woman that remembered my dad - he passed at that facility in 1994. She said, "Carlos, with the blue eyes and dark hair." Hugs, then a fun visit. After the half hour program in the dining hall, you should have seen the reaction on the faces of all the residents in their rooms. What a surprise to have an owl visit them at their bedside. Simon is the star, home now in the office. Dad would be so proud.



MONDAY, JULY 9, 2018

Milestone (on FaceBook)

Just passed the 200,000 mile mark in Subaru Number 6, in my Mom's driveway, zero gas HA



SUNDAY, JULY 1, 2018

Peregrine Watch (on FaceBook)

Peregrine watching at the Lindberg Ranch up the Blackfoot, with friends Betsy McDonald, Land Lindberg, Jay Sumner, Erin Lindberg and my dear friend Vince Freeland from Minnesota, raptor expert at 15 years old. Future falconer.



SATURDAY, AUGUST 4, 2018

Banner Day in Bannack

Our first program in Bannack State Park in 2006 was such a surprise - great turnout with new and a few old friends. Saturday we broke all travel records as I somehow miscalculated driving time (and got side-tracked with the baby Sharp-shins) - we made it in 2 hours and 14 minutes. Got out of the car a bit late and was ON! Thanks birds, many old friends, and trusty Subaru, the Time Machine



SATURDAY, JUNE 9, 2018

Those Crazy Ospreys!

Yesterday at my sister Betsy's home in Turah, Mom and I spotted three Ospreys flying around as we pulled in the driveway. Bets has two adjacent nests on a big steel power pole nearby, vacant so far this season. Not yesterday, as a fourth Osprey showed up, one even bringing in a fish, both nests "occupied." Strange to see three adults standing around like they were nest mates. Ospreys are peculiar in that the juveniles stay on the wintering grounds for a year, some for two years before migrating back north. They would then return their second or third spring, breed on their fourth. Then may have a mate/nest site for 15 years if they are lucky.



THURSDAY, JULY 5, 2018

OH NO!

Tragedy for Kate Davis, River Photographer - the floodwaters took out our favorite tree. The "Scenic Snag" across the river is now laying in the Bitterroot. I was down there a minute and thought, something is wrong, then discovered what: the skyline had changed. I'll bet 75% of my photos are birds in that tree - eagles, Ospreys, Peregrines, Kestrels, Merlins, you name it. That's the ex-snag right under the eagle in this composition photo used in the Audubon Bird Festival. Plus featured quite a bit in the *Birds Are People, Too* book. Bummer, but at least the nest tree is still standing.



SHARP-SHINNED HAWK PROJECT



In late July I was handed three baby hawks, recovered by logger Jordon Johnson after the nest tree was felled. His work to get them to me was heroic, especially since he was told to throw them in the bushes and get back to work. I haven't done any rehab in years but for some reason offered to take them. They started out in indoor and outdoor "nests" in a playpen, and fed themselves diced mice and ground quail. Two females and the tiny male that seemed to rule the roost as far as food and later, bathing and flying. My plan was to "hack" them out here, released with continued feeding.

After they were fully feathered, all were moved to a remodeled enclosure with limbs and even an Aspen tree in a wrought-iron Christmas tree stand. I began catching (non-native and nuisance) House Sparrows, dropped anonymously through a tube at the feeding platform. Then at two weeks, with nice weather and plenty of wild food around, I peeled off the hardware cloth at the shelf in that back and out they flew after a while, the male first.



Kate Davis photos ©

Fortunately they stuck around, not returning to the building to be fed but taking mice and sparrows I tossed out in the yard and driveway. "Hey, watch this." The male disappeared first and his sisters had different tactics - one just grabbed the prey and kept going, the other settled in to deal the death blow. They were here for about three weeks, trailing off but one standing on the fence at the back door in defiance just last week.



LEFT: Sister- brother- sister and displaying those *sharp shins* for which they are so famous, not a great field mark. What is an excellent one - that "startled expression," a perfect description by Hans Peeters, separating them from close relatives, the Cooper's Hawks. RIGHT: The hack site with screen stapled inside throughout, an Aspen tree in a stand, and feeding station in the back. Sparrows were dropped down the PVC pipe, a mysterious food supply so hopefully they wouldn't associate with people when they were released. It seemed to work as they were mostly shy except when I presented a meal once a day or every few days. Success, I would say. Now friends, please come catch all of these House Sparrows in the yard.



Buffleheads

Exactly 180 degrees from my Bald Eagle nest photography spot is a Pileated Woodpecker hole, excavated by the birds five years ago. Last year a family of Buffleheads took over, male and female flying in at 20 miles an hour from across the river and one continuing on, one disappearing suddenly. By watching the old woodpecker nest, I found that the female had stopped on a dime, disappeared in the cavity, and a duck nest now. Then the babies in the slough on June 12th.





Floodwaters of the Spring

Water from our gate to the far side of the Bitterroot, on and off all spring. In May I had to blast through standing water in our driveway in the Subaru to park at our (good) neighbor's house for a while, hopping the fence to get home. We were reminded of 2003 when we parked on the road and took a boat in and out to the house for 5 days. I also recall taking turns manually pumping out the crawspace every few hours, seems like I had the 3 am shift. That was the worst water episode, but ten years after that we had to install sandbags by this gate, keeping it out of the yard at least. That's what happens when you live on the river, our sympathies to those with terrible natural weather events, and worsening everywhere it seems.

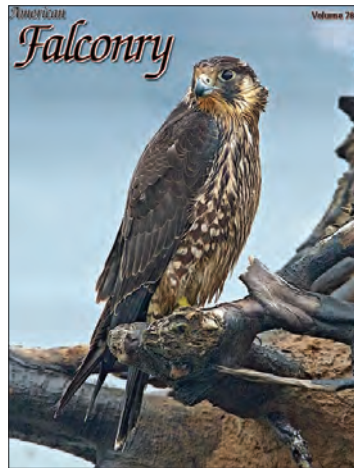
RIGHT: And that handsome American Dipper I promised.



Raptors In Art 2018



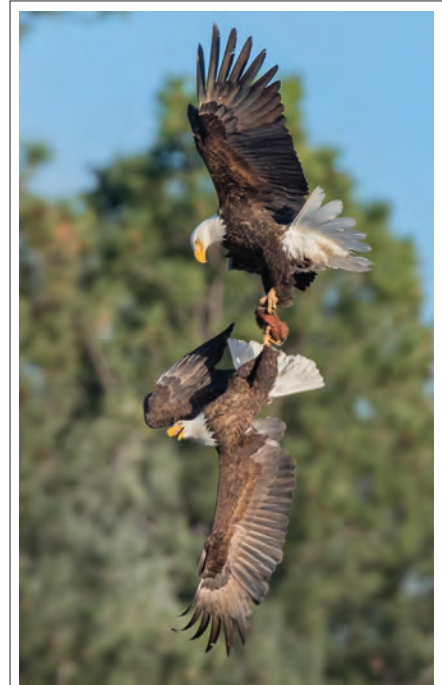
Kate Davis photos ©



I made the cover shot for the latest issue of American Falconry Magazine, immature Peregrine on the Washington beach in the rain. Thanks researcher/tour guide Dan Varland of Coastal Raptors! Our second cover, the first of Sib catching a duck.



Teacher Extraordinaire Kevin Cashman's Kids at Chief Charlo Elementary escorting us to the car after a program. Big tour and field trip to Metcalf Refuge the following week!



Not Exactly a Smooth Transfer...

Incoming huge chunk of meat, probably from a road kill, and the female wanted it right away. *Mine mine mine!* Someone asked how I got such a photo and I told them that I stand there behind the camera for two hours or more an evening. "At the same road kill?" they asked. No, thankfully.



Our junior zoologists and artists with their paper mâché raptors! Missoula Art Museum Camp 2018 with instructor Bev Glueckert and me. You can see we had our fair share of Peregrines, Red-tails, Snowy Owls, Barn Owls, two Great Horned and one Saw-whet Owl, plus our first ever White-tailed Hawk and Harpy Eagle. Plus two Rainbow Hawks, leave it to your own imagination, kids!



Aspens nearby in October and you should see it in living color on the web site.



Program for the Clearwater Resource Council in Seeley Lake, hundreds of friends and we got this email from the host: "You hit a big homerun yesterday - wow. One of the people who raved about your talk and birds was Jean Maclean Snyder, Norman Maclean's daughter who brought her family. I had several moms come up to me afterward to tell me how engaged both they and their kids were. Others said they never expected to be so entertained!" *Hey, thanks*

Season's Greetings from the Teaching Team with the years they joined us



Sonora the Aplomado Falcon 2013



iPod the Northern Pygmy-Owl 2010



Evita the Swainson's Hawk 2004



Owen the Northern Saw-whet Owl 2012

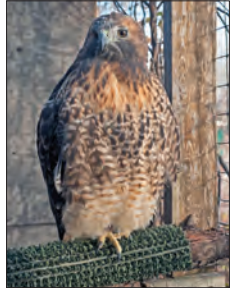


Nico the Black Lab 2018

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Simone the Red-tailed Hawk 2017



Sonny the Bald Eagle 2011



Jillian the Great Horned Owl 2003



Sibley the Peregrine Falcon 2003



Nigel the Golden Eagle 1999



Ansel the Gyrfalcon/Peregrine 2004



Ella and Wes the American Kestrels 2013 sister & brother

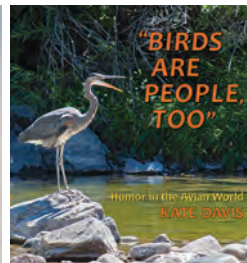
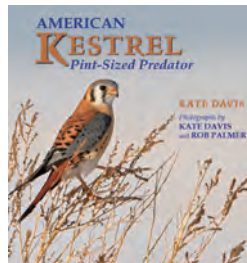
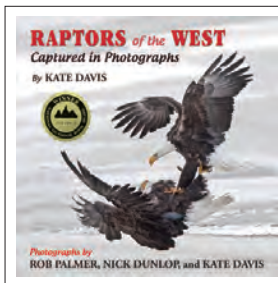


Simon the Great Horned Owl - baby here 2017



Free posters! Hawks and Owls

Many thanks to our fine Raptors Friends, and superb Raptor Backers! Here's to another wonderful year of education in 2019.



Books available and a proceed of sales to benefit Raptors of the Rockies.



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

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Thank you Raptor Backers!

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Thanks, Barry Gordon!

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Raptors of the Rockies

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