



RAPTOR  
RESEARCH  
FOUNDATION  
2017  
Salt Lake City, UT

CONFERENCE REPORT

Raptor Research Foundation  
2017 Annual Conference  
Salt Lake City, Utah  
November 8-12, 2017



Prepared by:

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## Acknowledgements

Sponsored by: Avian Power Line Interaction Committee (APLIC)  
 Kaddas Enterprises  
 Cellular Tracking Technologies  
 George S. and Dolores Dore Eccles Foundation  
 Kidd Biological, Inc.  
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In-kind Sponsors: Swarovski Optik  
 Caffe Ibis Coffee Roasting Company  
 Uinta Brewing  
 MindShift Gear  
 Memorial House  
 Kate Davis (event photographer)

<b>RRF 2017 Conference Scorecard</b>	
<b>Total Attendance</b>	<b>331</b>
RRF Member	134
Non-members	49
Students	86
Single Day	32
Volunteers	17
Sponsor/Comps	13
<b>Total Programs</b>	<b>197</b>
Speakers	147
Posters	31
Symposia	4
Workshops	7
Field Trips	8



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## Local Planning Committee

Dave Oleyar, HWI Conference Co-chair  
Joseph Dane, HWI Conference Co-chair  
Nikki Wayment, HWI  
Neil Paprocki, HWI  
Nelson Holmes, HWI  
Kirsten Elliott, HWI  
Jesse Watson, HWI  
Steve Slater, HWI  
Paul Parker, HWI  
Annette Hansen, HWI  
Eric Chabot, HWI  
Janet Nelson, HWI  
Janice Gardner  
Russell Norvell, UT DNR

## RRF Planning Committee

Gerald Niemi  
Dan Varland  
Dave Oleyar  
Joseph Dane  
Libby Mojica  
Miguel Saggese  
Beth Wommack  
Travis Booms

## Planning

Dan Varland and Kate Davis approached Dave Oleyar about the possibility of HawkWatch International hosting the 2017 RRF conference in Salt Lake City at the 2015 Sacramento conference. Dave got buy-in from the staff and board of HWI in Dec 2015 and put together the initial proposal to host the conference working with Jerry Niemi and Dan Varland.

Dave and Joseph Dane (conference co-chair) explored venue options in Salt Lake City, eventually working with Kathy Webber of Experient Select to secure terms and a contract for the Salt Lake City Sheraton to serve as the conference venue. We strongly recommend taking advantage of the free service that Kathy/Experient offer as they secured much better terms at multiple venues than we were quoted when dealing with the hotels ourselves, and she had much more negotiating influence when inevitable changes came up.

Oleyar, Dane, and a local planning committee comprised of 10 other HWI staff and two others met a total of 6 times between Dec 2015 and Oct 2017. We took a divide and conquer approach with small subcommittees dealing with field trips, the offsite event, registration and

venue issues, with subcommittees meeting more frequently. The RRF conference committee had monthly conference calls during this same time to keep all on the same page and ensure nothing slipped through the cracks.

We announced the location and dates of the 2017 conference during the banquet at the 2016 RRF Conference in Cape May, NJ. The Feb 2017 Wingspan was the first media announcing the conference and unveiling the conference logo. We contracted HWI alum and RRF member Bryce Robinson to design the conference logo featuring a Northern Harrier and the Wasatch Mountains. We chose this logo in part because we planned to have an understudied, open-area species symposium during the conference and Harriers fit this bill. Around this same time we announced the meeting on RRF and HWI social media outlets and websites.

## Registration

This is the first year RRF used OSNA's Membersuite software for registration. Joseph Dane and Libby Mojica took on the challenges posed by using this platform for the first time and took care of all registration related tasks. We piloted the software during the 2017 conference to handle all conference registration transactions. Libby Mojica invested a significant amount of time in March and April to setup the event and enter in all conference information. While the template for the event is now in place inside the software, it will require some time each year to re-enter current conference information. Libby worked on creating video tutorials to achieve procedures for future committee members.

### Pros to using MemberSuite:

- Centralizes the registration process, rather than relying on each co-host to choose their own process and use third party systems (i.e. EventBright, Constant Contact, etc).
- Centralizes registration data into RRF database, allowing RRF to use the data for future development and communication purposes.
- MemberSuite cross checks current membership status and applies membership discount automatically, minimizing abuse and encouraging membership renewal and new membership.
- Saves money by not having to pay high fees to third party software companies. OSNA contracted a low credit card transaction fee among all four organizations, which is much lower than what third party companies charge. (The average credit card rate for 7 months was 3.04% through MemberSuite, compared to EventBright fees of 2.5% + \$1.99 per registration plus a credit card transaction fee of 5%. So, for example, \$50,000 in revenue through 300 transactions, the total fee through MemberSuite would be \$1,520, and EventBright would be \$4,347.)

### Cons to using MemberSuite:

- Giving the local hosts access to the database opens up liability to RRF, since it gives the local host full access to member data. Otherwise, RRF would need to handle all data entry, management, and reporting in-house.



- Backend is not very user friendly nor intuitive, which makes it extremely difficult to impossible for new people to learn the system from year to year. This means there will need to be one point person to handle MemberSuite for RRF.
- Refund process can be confusing and cause issues with reporting revenue and registration data. The front end worked pretty well for registrants with few complaints, but one of the biggest questions was modifying a registration (the person had to scroll down below the “registration” button to click on “modify registration” which confused people). This could be an easy fix with some large text instructing people how to modify, or text in the automatic email receipt after registration.
- Revenue goes through OSNA account and takes time to funnel down to RRF and then to the hosting organization; the same is true for pulling monthly credit card transaction rates.

## Hotel

Thanks to Kathy Webber at Experient, we secured a nightly rate of \$113 for single and double rooms at the Salt Lake City Sheraton during the conference dates. We contracted for 515 room nights, and \$18,000 Food and Beverage minimum expenses during the conference. We surpassed the F&B total and met the 80% room night threshold required to avoid meeting room fees (473 room nights). Hotel fees totaled \$36,315.52 (\$25,901 F&B and \$10,413.57 AV services). We saved some costs during the conference thanks to a generous donation of bird friendly coffee by Café Ibis Coffee Roasters, a local company. We negotiated a flat rate with the hotel to use this outside source for coffee. We rented 8 poster boards from Modern Expo, a local event company for \$866, which included delivery and pick up.

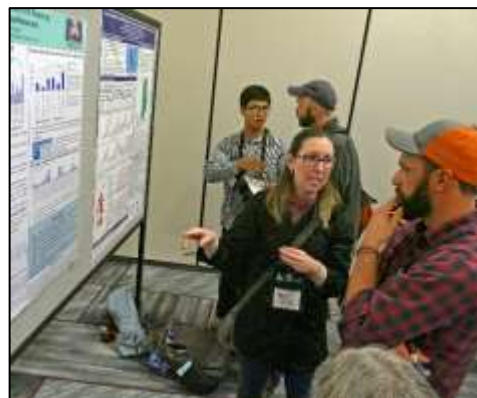
## Scientific Program

Working with Elizabeth Wommack, RRF Scientific Program Chair, we set the abstract submission deadline for June 15. We scheduled two plenary speakers, one for each of the first two days of the conference. Jim Bednarz gave a reflective talk on his work as a raptor researcher and highlighted areas of research in raptor social ecology that he felt were ripe for pursuit. Andre Botha spoke about Vulture conservation in Africa in general and about the multispecies action plan for African-Eurasian Vultures recently approved by the UN’s Convention on Migratory Species. Both talks were well delivered and received.

Attendees presented a total of 172 scientific papers in the form of 140 talks and 32 posters.

The breakdown of talks included:

- 71 general session
- 23 Understudied Open-land Raptor symposium
- 12 Raptors and the Energy Sector Symposium
- 16 Innovations in Raptor Education Symposium
- 5 Environmental Contaminants Symposium



- 13 speed talks

Volunteers and local conference members did a good job of ensuring that all talks were loaded before each session, but were challenged by 1) a less than fast wireless connection in the conference area, and 2) a large number of attendees waiting until the last minute to bring their presentations to the loading table or speaking room.

## Program Book

We again contracted Joseph Dane to work on the design and layout of the program book. He has done this for three of the last four RRF conferences. We printed the book locally in SLC and posted a pdf version to the RRF website at the start of the conference. We also piloted an event app this year through Eventbase, a free event app to provide an option for conference attendees to have the schedule and talk locations available on their smartphones.

## Conference Schedule

This year's meeting featured a new schedule for the conference proposed and approved by RRF. We essentially moved the RRF board meeting a day earlier (Tuesday, Nov 7) in order to create separation from this meeting, and workshops and fieldtrips planned for Wed, Nov 8. The goal was to allow board members the option to participate (or lead) these activities.

### Wednesday, November 8, 2018

7 Early Career Raptor Researcher workshops were offered:

- Road Trapping workshop, led by Jesse Watson and Dave Oleyar of HawkWatch International
- Harnessing Raptors with Transmitters workshop, led by Brian Millsap and Jeep Pagel of the USFWS
- Field and In-hand ID and Aging workshop, led by Bill Clark
- Tips and Tricks for Graduate Students workshop, led by Chris Venum and Ben Dudek
- Handling, Measuring, and Marking Raptors workshop, led by Dan Varland and John Smallwood
- Using Telemetry Data workshop, led by Jessi Brown, Ross Crandall, and Bryan Bedrosian
- Handling and Tracking Biomedical Samples in Raptors workshop, led by Miguel Saggese
- Climbing workshop was also planned but as has happened before, liability concerns caused potential venues to back out and we cancelled

3 field trips were offered:

- Snowville/Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge
- Antelope Island State Park
- Farmington Bay Waterfowl Management Area

The conference Ice Breaker was held in the hotel lobby.



### **Thursday, November 9, 2018**

Official conference activities started with Jim Bednarz's plenary "Whatever you do, don't study raptors! –Past, present, and future explorations into the social ecology of birds of prey by a wayward ecologist".

Symposia presentations and general talk sessions included, Raptors and the Energy Sector, Environmental Contaminants and Raptors, and Conservation and Ecology of Understudied open-land Raptors.

The Poster Session and Reception was held, along with an ECRR social and a HawkWatch International Migration Crew Alum social.

### **Friday, November 10, 2018**

Andre Botha started the day with a plenary titled "The CMS Multi-species Action Plan for Africa-Eurasian Vultures".

The Open-land Raptor symposium continued all day, along with speed talks and general session talks.

In the evening we held an offsite Fiesta dinner featuring food from local favorite, the Red Iguana, a stunning Salt Lake Valley sunset, and music by HWI's Jesse Watson and Eric Chabot. Some guests then pub-crawled back to the Sheraton. At the Sheraton we screened the film Resilience—Fish Eagle of Naivasha by Munir Virani and Kiran Ghadge.

### **Saturday, November 11, 2018**

The morning jumped right into presentations with concurrent general sessions and an all-day symposium on Innovations in Raptor Education. The day ended with the RRF business meeting and then the Banquet and Awards session and Photo Contest.

### **Sunday, November 12, 2018**

The final day of the conference included 3 field trip options to see local landscapes and western raptor species.

- Snowville/Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge
- Snowbird/Alta in Little Cottonwood Canyon of Wasatch Mountains
- Farmington Bay Waterfowl Management Area

## **Symposia**

Four symposia were part of the Salt Lake City Conference, several of them organized by local groups. Feedback was positive for all, special thanks to symposia chairs and organizers:

- **Raptors and the Energy Sector:** Sherry Liguori, Steve Slater, and Janice Gardner
- **Environmental Contaminants and Raptors:** Erica Miller and Michael Jones



- **Conservation/Ecology of Understudied Open-land Raptors:** Jesse Watson, Neil Paprocki, and Jeff Kidd
- **Innovations in Raptor Education:** Nikki Wayment, Erin Brown, and Kate Davis

## Sales/Gifts

We purchased registration bags and goodies from Eco Imprints, a certified green business. The registration tote included a 9-oz stainless steel coffee mug with the 2017 conference logo printed on the side, coupons to the local Aviary and other businesses, a downtown map of Salt Lake City, a light rail transportation map, and the conference book. We partnered with Swarovski who provided an in-kind donation of the name badge holders, which included their logo, host logos, and the conference logo. We designed and ordered shirts with the conference logo printed on soft tri-blend material (polyester, cotton, rayon blend); shirts were made in Honduras. We ordered 200 shirts (S: 35, M: 70, L: 70, XL: 20, XXL: 5), and ran out of all sizes except medium and large. We sold the conference shirts for \$20 each. We also sold HWI shirts at the registration desk, along with 2018 calendars by HawkWatch International and Raptors of the Rockies.

## Volunteer Coordination and Contribution

Leading up to the conference, we kept a list of local HWI volunteers and friends who were interested in helping out with the conference. We also recruited from our network of fall migration monitoring crews, giving them access to talks and players in the world of raptor research in exchange for time volunteering. Nelson Holmes, HWI Volunteer Coordinator, coordinated the scheduling of volunteers. In all, 24 volunteers contributed over 200 hours during the conference, helping load presentations, run registration, sell merchandise, and anything else asked of them—we could not have done it without them! Thanks to: Istvan Balazs, Winston Brundige, Greg Cooper, Lauren diBiccari, Kayla Dreher, Caleb Hansen, Niki Crabtree, Tana Hunter, Teresa Hyatt, Becky Joplin, Mackenzie Kincaid, Mikalann Miller, Liam Price, Alex Ramsey, Isa Schwartz, Wendy Sears, Mike Shaw, Scott Shively, Francesco Simeone, Christina Slade, Linda Stearns, Tori Thorpe, TC Walker, and Casey Weissburg.

Kate Davis volunteered her time to be the official photographer/historian of the conference, and Nick Dunlop volunteered his time to coordinate the photography contest, which included accepting all submissions, choosing winners with Kate, creating a slide show presentation for the banquet dinner, and presenting the winners during the banquet.

## Sponsors and Vendors

In total, we had 12 event sponsors: 1 Aquila Sponsor \$5,000, 3 Buteo Sponsors at \$2,500, 5 Falco Sponsors at \$1,000, and 4 in-kind sponsors. We had 8 vendors who participated in the conference: Cellular Tracking Technologies, Hancock House Publishers, HMANA, LS Traps, Natalia Wilkins-Tyler scientific illustrator, Nick Dunlop Photography, Vertebrate Systems, and

Wildlife Computers. Additionally, 4 event sponsors had tables in the vendor area: APLIC, GeoTrack, Kaddas Enterprises, and Lotek Telemetry. Of our sponsors and vendors, 7 were local and 14 were non-local.

Beyond supplying the vendor form on the RRF Conference website, to recruit vendors we reached out to former vendors of past conferences to solicit their participation and targeted local companies we thought were a good fit. We charged \$300 for an eight-foot table and two chairs, with \$50 for each additional table and/or power outlet. One of the complications (or confusions) we had were people purchasing a vendor table, bringing two individuals, and then assuming that included their registration fees as well. Further clarification on the vendor form to avoid this confusion and loss of revenue for future conferences is advised.

## Final Thoughts

HawkWatch International was honored to host the 2017 RRF Conference, marking the 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary since Salt Lake City last hosted the conference. We chose the Sheraton because of the space the hotel provided for socializing and breakout meetings; however, it was on the higher end of cost when it came to food and banquet charges, audio visual fees, and hotel rooms—based on feedback it was a good decision.

We sent out a post-conference survey to 310 participants and received 140 responses (an outstanding 45% return rate!). Full survey results are at the end of the report, but 96% of respondents said they were either very satisfied or satisfied. The chief complaints were not having enough food at the social events, the hotel not having adequate lunch options, and confusion on the MemberSuite registration process. Overall, everyone was satisfied with the conference.

There were several comments about students and others wanting to attend the awards ceremony who did not have the money to purchase a banquet ticket. The local committee made steps towards addressing this concern this year by having several open tables at the banquet designated for those not eating. The tables were used by many, and all seemed to appreciate them; many paid banquet-goers shared food and beverage tickets with people at these tables. RRF may want to consider breaking apart the awards ceremony and banquet dinner. Perhaps including the awards ceremony with the RRF Business Meeting, both to give everyone a chance to attend the awards ceremony and boosting attendance to the RRF Business meeting.



We were pleased by the high student attendance (nearly 30% of overall attendance), with a good portion coming from Idaho and Utah.

This was the first year that the conference booklet included a conference code of conduct. More than one issue arose during the conference where having the code included proved useful, and we would recommend it be a part of the booklet going forward.



## Budget

Registration Breakdown						
	Early Registration (May 1-June 30)		Mid Registration (July 1-Oct 15)		Late Registration (Oct 16-Nov 12)	
	Register	Revenue	Register	Revenue	Register	Revenue
RRF Members	44	\$8,600	65	\$14,600	25	\$6,470
Non-Members	13	\$3,120	24	\$6,480	12	\$3,900
Students	33	\$2,500	35	\$3,270	18	\$2,160
Single Day	-	-	1	\$125	31	\$3,875
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>\$14,220</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>\$24,475</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>\$16,405</b>

Revenue		
2016 Seed Money	\$1,500	
Sponsors	\$17,800	
Vendors	\$1,625	
Registration	\$55,100	
ECRR Workshops	\$6,075	
Field Trips	\$2,165	
Saturday Night Banquet	\$10,020	
Friday Night Event	\$4,760	
T-shirt Sales	\$1,070	
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$100,115</b>	
In-kind	\$4,491	
In-kind included: Swarovski: \$820, Uinta Brewing: \$274, Memorial House: \$1,000, MindShift Gear: \$540, Caffe Ibis: \$719, Plenary hotel comp: \$678, Plenary conference registration comp: \$460		
Expenses		
2018 Seed Money	\$1,500.00	
Sheraton	\$25,301.99	
Audio Visual & Tech	\$11,620.33	
Speaker Fees	\$1,889.00	
Poster Boards	\$879.10	
Field Trips	\$2,005.08	
Friday Night Event	\$4,534.61	
Conference Book	\$3,424.41	
Registration: 9 oz coffee mug	\$1,852.00	
Registration: tote	\$478.02	
Conference Logo Design	\$250.00	
Name Badge Supplies	\$139.52	

Conference T-shirts	\$1,976.35	
Misc Printing	\$25.00	
Credit Card Processing Fees	\$2,268.89	
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$58,144.30</b>	
*ECRR workshop discount	\$1,500.00	
**ECRR social	\$600.00	
<p>* ECRR provided \$50 off for the first 30 student registrants who used a code.  ** ECRR hosted a social on Thursday evening before the poster session and reception and distributed \$600 in drink tickets.  We will deduct \$2,100 from Net Revenue to reimburse ECRR costs from their RRF annual ECRR budget.</p>		

<b>Final Numbers</b>	
Gross Revenue	\$98,015.00
Total Expenses	\$58,144.30
*Net Revenue	\$39,870.70

\*Net revenue to be split between 2017 conference co-hosts, Raptor Research Foundation and HawkWatch International.

