

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear all,

This will be my final President's message as my four-year tenure is coming to an end and I'll be handing over the reins to Clint Boal at the close of our annual conference in October. It seems a good time to reflect on our recent achievements as well as to highlight areas where I think we still need to improve.

Our revamped website has been a huge success, thanks to the hard work of Libby Mojica and her committee of helpers. Our old site was functional but left a lot to be desired – the new one is professional, attractive and informative and continues to attract visitors from around the world. This site showcases our activities in a way they haven't been presented before and it also serves as the one-stop shop for anyone interested in attending our annual conferences, standardizing registration and abstract submission procedures in one central location. In addition to the new website, we've also established a presence on social media with our own Facebook page, which continues to grow.

The creation and development of our Early Career Raptor Researchers group has been particularly pleasing. Travis Booms has chaired this group from the start and has led a dynamic team to find ways of fostering and supporting emerging talent within our ranks. As well as hosting several social events and setting up an ECRR Facebook page to encourage networking opportunities, the ECRR Committee organized a series of practical workshops at our 2011 conference in Duluth. The workshops, taught by a number of RRF experts, were well attended by students and young professionals and I understand the ECRR Committee is planning more of these at this year's annual conference in October.



The Journal of Raptor Research, under the brilliant editorial management of Cheryl Dykstra, just goes from strength to strength and is now offering electronic submission for manuscripts, bringing us up to date with many international journals. This new procedure saves us time and money and makes the whole process far more efficient for all concerned. Cheryl's expertise is held in high esteem and she has recently been formally invited to deliver a workshop on the preparation of scientific manuscripts at the Asian Raptor Research Conservation Network's annual conference in February 2014, being held in India. The RRF Board voted unanimously to cover Cheryl's travel costs as her attendance is seen as an important opportunity for RRF to continue to develop links with our colleagues in Asia.

Our Conservation Committee has been restructured and is currently being jointly led by Rick Watson and Joan Morrison. We now have committee representatives from all global bioregions and the aim is for those regional specialists to highlight conservation issues occurring in their area so that RRF can provide scientific support and expertise where appropriate. The Committee was particularly active on providing the US Congress with timely information about the effect of lead shot as a conservation threat to several raptor species (notably the California Condor) and the delivery of that action was well supported by RRF members offering to help mail out the material. We have yet to see much activity from committee members outside of North America but I hope we can continue to find ways of interacting purposefully in the near future.

Another area where we could increase our efforts is the Education Committee. We have some very good educational material available on our website but there is scope to expand this significantly, as well as develop novel ways of delivering this information to a wide audience. Our Education Committee Chair, Jeremy Scheivert, is currently holding the fort alone and could do with some help so if this is an area where you think you could contribute, please contact Jeremy.

Some issues are still works in progress, including the re-assessment of our by-laws (being coordinated by Mike Kochert) and the splitting of the Treasurer's considerable responsibilities from single volunteer to single volunteer + paid business assistant (a move currently underway). We've also been talking recently about developing a proposed code of ethics for all RRF members and our incoming President will be leading on this as one of his first tasks.

I'm especially pleased that this year, for the first time in our organization's history, our annual conference will be held in Argentina. Co-hosted with a number of raptor organizations, this event marks another significant step towards our goal of expanding our international perspective. We owe a debt of gratitude to conference host Miguel Saggese and his team of organizers for taking on this ambitious task and it looks set to be a memorable and historic conference.

Talking of conferences, last year we honored a long-standing commitment to participate in the North American Ornithological Conference in Vancouver. It wasn't a great experience for RRF as an organization, mainly because we had to forgo many of our long-held traditions and there was limited scope for raptor-focused presentations, although several RRF members who did attend told me they'd still had a good time. Unusually, we also had to conduct our annual Board meeting remotely, via email, as many Officers and Directors weren't attending the conference. All in all this joint conference was unsatisfactory for us on many levels and for this reason the Board has recently voted not to participate in the next NAOC in 2016. The Board hasn't ruled out participating in later NAOC events – that will be a decision for the Board in future years – but for the time being we want to focus on our own specialized raptor conferences, either singly or partnering with other raptor groups, because we do them well and we know that the membership enjoys them.

On a related point, one of the most defining issues we have dealt with was the proposal to disband RRF in favor of forming the Society for Ornithology, a sort of super-society which would act as the single representative group for ornithological interests in the western hemisphere. This was always going to be a non-starter for us, and I was delighted with the Board's decision, along with considerable support from the membership, to reject the idea at the earliest possible stage.

So, it's been an eventful few years and I'd be lying if I said it was all enjoyable. It wasn't, but large parts of it were, and that includes having the opportunity to work with some inspiring people. One of the things I already knew but that has been reinforced over and over again during my presidency is that for progress to take place, you need people who are prepared to put in the time and effort to make things happen. They're not always easy to find as many have professional and personal demands on their time. I consider myself extremely fortunate that my tenure has coincided with the presence of some highly motivated individuals who have gone the extra mile for our organization.

As well as the named individuals above, I'd like to take the opportunity to thank all the Directors, Committee Chairs, Committee Members and Editors for their efforts, and especially Petra Bohall Wood, our Wingspan Editor who is finally shutting down her computer after eight (yes, eight) years of service. If anyone fancies a crack at editing this newsletter please see inside for info. I'd also like to pay tribute to my long-suffering fellow Officers, Vice President Ted Swem, Treasurer Angela Matz and Secretary Greg George (and Joan Morrison before him) for helping me find my way.

RRF has meant a great deal to me during my career and I'm grateful for being given the opportunity to contribute something back, so thank you to you all for having me.

I hope to see loads of you in the bar in Bariloche where I'll be ceremoniously burning my immaculate copy of *Robert's Rules of Order*, as well as my tattered copy of *An Idiots Guide to Robert's Rules of Order*.

Safe travels,
Ruth



RAPTOR RESEARCH FOUNDATION, INC

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Vice-president: Ted Swem

Secretary: Greg George
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| | |
|--|------------------------------|
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For more information about the Raptor Research Foundation, Inc. (founded in 1966), please visit the RRF website at: <http://www.raptorresearchfoundation.org/>.

Persons interested in birds of prey are invited to join the Raptor Research Foundation (RRF). *Wingspan* is emailed twice each year to all members of RRF and is available on the RRF website. Members also receive *The Journal of Raptor Research* (ISSN 0892-1016), which is published quarterly. For membership and subscription information, please contact: Ornithological Societies of North America, 5400 Bosque Boulevard, Suite 680, Waco, TX 76710, USA; 1-254-399-9636 (phone); 1-254-776-3767 (fax); business@osnabirds.org (email); <http://www.osnabirds.org> (web).

Editor's Note – Thanks to the following contributors for this issue of the *Wingspan*: Heather Barrett, Rob Bierregaard, Clint Boal, Kate Davis, Cheryl Dykstra, Wade Eakle, Rick Harness, Gene Jacobs, Jeff Lincer, Darcy Ogada, Jemima Parry-Jones, Eugene Potapov, Kendall Simon, Jenna Sutherland, Ruth Tingay, Susan Whaley, Maria Wheeler.

Wingspan welcomes contributions from RRF members and others interested in raptor biology and management. Please submit contributions via email to the new *Wingspan* Editor whose contact info will be posted on the RRF website. For long contributions, please send as an MS Word attachment. If you are submitting photos, please include them within the Word doc with a caption and photo credit. Contribution deadline for the next issue is **15 February 2014**.

All issues of *Wingspan* and content guidelines are available at:

<http://www.raptorresearchfoundation.org/publications/wingspan-newsletter/online-newsletters-pdfs>

**RAPTOR RESEARCH FOUNDATION
2013 ANNUAL CONFERENCE**



**I WORLDWIDE RAPTOR CONFERENCE
October 18-27 2013**

Miguel D. Saggese (RRF Director at Large and I Worldwide Raptor Conference Co-chair)
Kate Davis (RRF Conference Committee Chair)

The upcoming **I Worldwide Raptor Conference** to be held in Bariloche, Argentina this October should prove to be a big success, with enthusiastic interest from delegates from all around the world. Currently, we have raptor researchers coming from five continents and more than 25 countries. The local committee chairs and the representatives from Raptor Research Foundation, the Neotropical Raptor Network (The Peregrine Fund) and the World Working Group on Birds of Prey and Owls are working tirelessly to offer you an unforgettable experience. Bariloche is ready to welcome you!

On Sunday, Oct. 20th we have several workshops planned for those interested in learning more about raptor biomedical sampling, harnessing, trapping and application of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV) in wildlife studies. The online registration for these workshops will be open in early September, so please, visit the conference web site for updates not only about the workshops but also to learn more about the conference program, sponsors, travel tips, Argentine culture and other important announcements that will be added in the upcoming weeks.

Each morning we will have a plenary speaker who will present on a wide range of topics, from long-term raptor studies to ecology of owls and ecotoxicology. With nearly 150 scientific presentations, both oral and as posters, delegates will be able to learn about current and cutting edge raptor research conducted around the world along several symposia and sessions. The evenings will close with special presentations, including a talk called, "Everything you wanted to know about Patagonian raptors, but were afraid to ask!"

For those interested in learning even more about Patagonian wildlife and raptors and the astonishing landscapes surrounding Bariloche you can still register for a long list of field trips, available on the conference website. Led by professional guides and also by local expert birdwatchers, field trips will be an excellent way to help observe and identify the characteristic Patagonian avifauna. But hurry, as space is limited and some field trips are almost completely filled.

A meeting like this one cannot only be about raptors but also about people. There will be many opportunities for networking, reconnecting with old friends and making new ones. Monday evening we will have an icebreaker accompanied by a live tango show, so be prepared to TANGO! Poster sessions will provide additional opportunities to know who is who in the raptor research world. After the poster session Wednesday evening, we will visit a local and most famed brewery in Bariloche for drinks and dinner. On Thursday night we will have the closing ceremony and banquet at the Hotel Panamericano where you will not only enjoy the flavors of Argentine *cucina* and famous Argentine wines but also be entertained by live Andean and folk music. If you or your guests haven't registered for these evening events remember is not too late; we keep registration open on our website.

A reminder to make reservations at the hotel in advance, as rooms are being filled fast. The Panamericano Hotel is conveniently located in downtown Bariloche and on the coast of the Nahuel Hupai Lake, and the views are breathtaking.

This will truly be an international event, and we look forward to seeing you in Argentina. Please, visit the conference website for news and updates <http://www.raptorresearchfoundation.org/conferences/current-conference> . For any questions please contact the local Co-chair Miguel D. Saggese at barilocheraptors2013@gmail.com or msaggese@westernu.edu . We will do everything possible to help you have the best Patagonian experience ever!

Sincerely, Miguel D. Saggese and Kate Davis



Upcoming Conferences

RRF 2014 24-28 September Corpus Christi, Texas USA

Make sure to save the week of Sept 24-28th 2014 for the Raptor Research Foundation Conference, back in the United States in scenic Corpus Christi, Texas. Co-hosts are the Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute at Texas A&M and HawkWatch International. It's migration time in Texas, with workshops, keynotes, and symposia, scientific papers for three days, poster sessions and field trips before and after. Contact Kate Davis (raptors@montana.com) to lend a hand.

Eagles of the Palearctic 20-23 September 2013

Conference "**Eagles of Palearctic**" will be held in Elabuga, Russia, **September, 20-23, 2013** hosted by the Russian Raptor Conservation Network, with the support of the Russian Geographical Society and GEF/UNDP and help of the "Nizhnyaya Kama" National Park, Volga-Kama State Nature Reserve, the Elabuga Institute of Kazan Federal University, and the "Siberian Environmental Center" (Sibecocenter).

The conference aims to bring together raptor biologists and conservationists in order to discuss the current status, biology, ecology, distribution, risk factors, study methods, and conservation of the eagles inhabiting vast areas of the Palearctic.

Details on the conference are given here. <http://rrrcn.ru/en/archives/19731>
Or contact: Elvira Nikolenko,
eagles-2013@yandex.ru
cell phone.: +7-923-150-12-79.
<http://rrrcn.ru/en/conference-2013>

Raptors of the Northwest Symposium February 5-7, 2014

The "Raptors of the Northwest Symposium" will be held in conjunction with several other meetings and symposia, including the annual meeting of the Washington Chapter-TWS, and the 4th

International Burrowing Owl Symposium. The specific dates for the Raptors of the Northwest Symposium are February 5-7, 2014; the other meetings/symposia will overlap or extend past these dates. The venue will be the Red Lion, in Pasco, WA, which is ¼ mile from the Pasco Airport.

The geographic areas to be focused on during the symposium are the NW U.S. states, including Alaska, and the Western Canadian Provinces. The theme will be the critical challenges to raptor conservation and management and relating research to those needs. Both diurnal and nocturnal raptors will be addressed.

We want there to be widespread and diverse geographical and organizational involvement and support from as many agency, academic, NGO sectors, and other land management stakeholder groups as possible; so if you have suggested contacts, we would welcome them.

For more information on the Joint Meeting, or to submit an abstract (for all meetings), please see <http://wildlife.org/washington/sites/wildlife.org.washington/files/images/2014%20Joint%20Meeting%20Call%20for%20Papers.pdf>.

See you in Pasco!

Jeffrey L. Lincer, Ph.D.
Raptor Symposium Organizer
JeffLincer@gmail.com
(619) 668-0032

8th Asian Raptor Research and Conservation Network Conference 6-9 February 2014

This conference in Pune, India is focused on Asian raptors. For more information, contact Satish Pande, pande.satish@gmail.com or visit the website at <http://www.raptorresearchfoundation.org/conference/8th-asian-raptor-research-and-conservation-network-conference-6-to-9th-february-2014>.



International Conference on Overhead Lines March 31 - April 3, 2014

The International Conference on Overhead Lines will be held March 31 through April 3, 2014 in Fort Collins, Colorado. The call for papers will be released in late August and conference organizers plan to include papers covering topics related to raptor protection and power lines. For additional information or to submit an abstract, please contact:

Lisa S Nelson
Conference Technical Director
EDM International, Inc.
LNelson@edmlink.com
970.204.4001

News from the RRF

***Wingspan* Newsletter Editor Needed**

After serving as Editor of *Wingspan* for 8 years, Petra Wood is stepping down. A new editor is needed to begin with the March 2014 edition. Duties of *Wingspan* Editor include soliciting contributions to the newsletter, writing some sections, editing all sections, compiling and formatting the newsletter, and arranging for distribution. If you are interested in becoming Editor, send a letter of interest to Clint Boal (clint.boal@ttu.edu), incoming RRF President, by 30 Sept 2013. The Board will consider applicants at the October Board of Directors meeting.

Raptor News

A Tale of Two Eagles: The Pre- and Post-Reintroduction Population Genetics of Bald and Golden Eagles

Submitted by Maria Wheeler

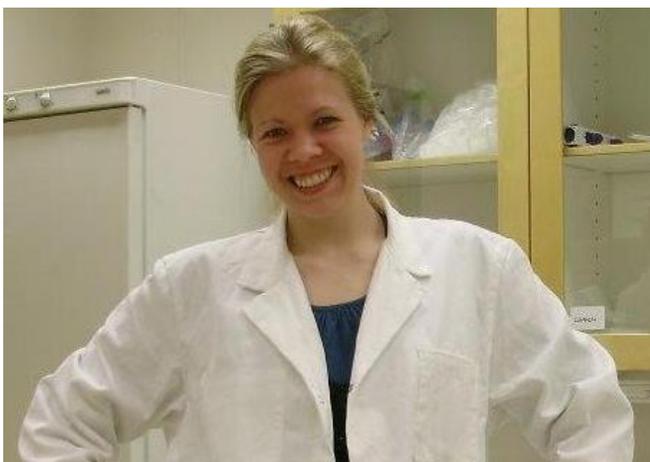
Within a relatively similar time span, two raptors with similar life histories, the bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) and the North American golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos canadensis*) both were the subjects of broad-scale translocation and reintroduction projects across the US. However, and luckily for scientific exploration, the respective introduction projects were carried out very differently. My

goal as graduate student has been to figure out how those differences have impacted the genetic population structures of each species. To do this, I am looking at the respective species' nationwide population genetics from before the 1980's (when the bulk of reintroductions and translocations occurred) and their population genetics today.

In the spring of 2012, I was awarded the Dean Amadon Research Grant from the RRF to support the contemporary bald eagle portion of my project. With this, I was able to begin work on my stockpile of bald eagle feathers and blood samples that I had slowly been hoarding over the previous few years. Suddenly I was free to extract as much DNA as I had the freezer space for! Thus, over the past year, I have been working on unraveling the story of how reintroductions have shaped the genetic population structure of bald eagles. To do this, I am using museum specimens to represent historic populations, and I am using samples collected by researchers and at wildlife centers across the continent to represent the modern populations.

The work on bald eagles has been thoroughly enjoyable because of the unique detective work involved in learning their history. Bald eagle reintroduction projects were numerous, widespread, and involved a plethora of governmental agencies, wildlife facilities, conservation organizations, and even zoos across the country. Because of this, tracking down the number of birds that were relocated and determining their origins presents a really remarkable challenge. Some sources and conversation trails lead to dead ends, and in some cases reintroduction records have been lost completely. Throughout the processes, though, I have encountered many individuals who have been a great help and, as an additional plus, are excellent biology mentors for a graduate student.

Overall, it's been quite the undertaking, but with a little luck and a lot of lab time, I'm slowly completing the picture of bald eagles' pre- and post-reintroduction genetic population structure. I hope that my findings will be of assistance to a wide range of threatened or endangered species that may be under consideration for translocations, assisted migrations, or even complete reintroduction; and I'm exceedingly grateful to all of the people and organizations who have helped and supported me thus far.



Ready for some lab work! Maria Wheeler at Duquesne University



Learning to band juvenile bald eagles with the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries.

The following was originally published in National Geographic's Explorer's Journal which gave permission to reprint it in Wingspan. The author was awarded an RRF Leslie Brown Memorial Grant in support of this research.

How to hold a vulture while in the grip of a jackal

Submitted by Darcy Ogada

'Show me where the jackal bit you' was the first thing my six-year old gleefully asked when I returned from a week in the field. No hugs, no 'I missed you', just show me your wound. Clearly, he watches too many predator shows on Nat Geo Wild and I was just one more victim with a story to tell.

Noosing a jackal was not part of the plan, nor was the melee that ensued between feathered, furred and fair-skinned beasts. I'm no Muhammad Ali and this was one rumble in the jungle where bigger was certainly not better. I was outfoxed by a fox.

Our targeted Ruppell's vulture was alone at the carcass. When it flapped its wings, I knew we had our bird. Jamming the car into second gear, we arrived in less than a minute. Problem was the jackal arrived even faster. He no sooner arrived for the feast, then got cluttered in the coat rack while he attempted to dine and dash.



Leaping from the car my trapping partner Simon yelled, 'you get the vulture, I'll get the jackal'. Jackals are not infrequent uninvited guests, so Simon was prepared. One arm ensconced in a thick leather glove, Simon attempted to entice our unwanted guest towards freedom. Quickly into my mother hen mode I settled the vulture, but clearly the jackal was Wile E. Coyote on speed. My allegiance firmly with my roped in feathered friend meant taking one for the team. And I did, on my left hip.

Perhaps the bite was a release of pent-up jackal aggression. Let's face it, it can't be easy playing second fiddle to a host of sexy alpha predators strutting their stuff on Big Cat Diary. Soon subdued and released, my mind flashed through what jackals are most notorious for, carrying rabies. Before I could start foaming at the mouth, we had a vulture to attend to. Fortunately the bird proved to be the polar opposite of Wile E. Coyote and mellowly reclined into my lap while we attached a transmitter and quickly sent him on his way.

Happily back into the skies, our bird is already showing us the important sites it needs for nesting and roosting. Protecting these with the help of Kenya Wildlife Service is what we must do to ensure the

future of these spectacular and highly imperiled scavengers. And who knows we may just feed a few jackals along the way, but preferably next time it will be with our bait rather than my butt.

The author would like to thank the following organizations for their support of this project: The Peregrine Fund, National Geographic Society Conservation Trust, Chester Zoo, Raptor Research Foundation-Leslie Brown Memorial Grant, OI Pejeta Conservancy, North Star Science and American Bird Conservancy.

Owl Conservation is Life's Work

Submitted by Darcy Ogada

Many cultures loathe owls, African cultures are no exception. Throughout Africa owls are believed to be harbingers of death. It is widely believed that if an owl lands on your house someone inside will die and their hooting call spells misfortune. That's why Kenyan Paul Muriithi is an exceptional individual.

The charisma of owls captivated Paul in his youth when he would hear eagle owls calling from the cliffs near his home in Central Kenya. Though local residents could not understand his fascination with these 'dreaded' birds, Paul was determined to learn all that he could about owls. He was soon guiding birders to the secretive haunts of the Mackinder's Eagle Owl, an uncommon species found in scattered locations in the Kenyan highlands. He shared the proceeds from his guiding forays with local residents. Not surprisingly, local attitudes towards owls gradually began to change. Now some of the converted are Paul's biggest source of information regarding the breeding and conservation of these birds within the local area.



Through numerous television and radio programs, the 'owl man' of Kenya has a huge following and continues to convert many more. During a radio program in 2011 the local network provider had to shut down the phone lines as calls from over 4000 individuals overwhelmed local capacity. Over the airwaves, Paul had inspired thousands of Kenyans keen to learn about owls.

Since 2012 Paul has led three expeditions up Mt Kenya in search of the elusive Abyssinian Long-

eared Owl, a species not seen in Kenya for more than 20 years. While the owl has remained elusive, the elephants and buffaloes in the forests of Mt Kenya have not. A close encounter with a buffalo recently claimed one of Paul's nine lives. Clearly, the harbingers of death in this part of Africa are more likely to be furry black beasts on four legs.

From his humble beginnings at being labeled a witch, Paul rose to be awarded a Lifetime Achievement Award at the International Festival of Owls in 2008. This year with support from The Peregrine Fund, Paul has returned to the classroom to complete a diploma in Wildlife Management at the Kenya Wildlife Training Institute. With Africa's great landscapes and wildlife facing an increasingly uncertain future, passionate individuals like Paul are a key to ensuring future generations will continue to appreciate all that Africa has to offer.

News from the International Centre for Birds of Prey

Submitted by Jemima Parry-Jones

Late Spring and Summer at the International Centre for Birds of Prey, Newent, Gloucestershire, UK.

After a bitter spring with an incredibly cold east wind for weeks on end, we are now in the first spell of proper summer weather for several years and it's wonderful. The birds are coping all bar the Snowy Owls who are not impressed and the flying demonstrations are seeing some very high flying and spectacular stoops from the falcons. The breeding season has been good, with the usual ups and downs, we bred a Verreaux's Eagle after a long gap, the Steller's produced one young only this year, so next time they will not be left to incubate themselves. The owls did well and we have three baby merlins growing nicely. We also managed to breed four Yellow Billed Kites three of which are already in training, and doing well. Our imprinted Eurasian Eagle Owl having laid four of her own eggs did sterling work incubating various rare eggs for us and finally we thought we would try her with a chick to thank her for all the work she had done. She took to it well and after a little help from us, learnt to feed it, so she is now the proud mother of a Spectacled Owl!!



We ran a harness workshop here in March for those putting harnesses on birds of prey for satellite tagging for research purposes. Both the BTO (British Trust for Ornithology – who are basically in charge of ringing and harnessing in the UK) and ourselves have been concerned about how many people are requesting to put harnesses on raptors (and other birds) without at times the necessary training. The workshop was held here at the Centre over two days, many of the people were

experienced at harnessing, but it was really good to exchange ideas, look at the various harness designs and think on into the future.

Following on from that we are now testing some harnesses and a new design of Satellite Tag on the African White Backed Vultures, prior to starting to harness and track a number of the Oriental White-backed Vultures when the first releases start in India and Nepal. It is interesting and challenging research but stuff that needs to be done, and valuable use of our collection of bird here at the Centre.



For some reason best known to themselves we have had a number of young wild raptors in who have fledged early. A young peregrine from a church in Bath was picked up in the road, he spent eight days here, was taken back and within 24 hours mum was feeding him again. The young buzzard sadly did not do so well, its injuries were such that euthanasia was the only option. A young Kestrel is with us now and eating well, a Tawny Owl was down a chimney for five days, but is now clean and feeding for itself and due to go back any day. A young buzzard turned out to be a four week old

female Sparrowhawk with severe trichomonas, I suspect the rest of the clutch are probably dead by now, she is a fighter, but the huge junk that we removed after treatment has left holes in the top of her upper mandible and we are not sure she will recover. We are seeing more and more trichomonas, and not just in Sparrowhawks where it used to be most common, now we see it in Buzzards and Tawny Owls as well. It's a nasty parasite, but responds well to Spartrex which has been developed for racing pigeons.

That is just a small sample of the injured wild birds of prey that we get in, however I am very pleased that after a long struggle we have planning permission for a new hospital facility and it looks like we may get a £20,000 grant towards building it, which will make a huge difference to how we can take and treat birds in the future.

Finally we have some new arrivals here at the Centre, a Hobby will be here soon, this beautiful Martial Eagle just arrived to stay, and we are hoping that a young Red Kite will be with us next week.



News from the Peregrine Fund

Submitted by Susan Whaley

Winter results for Arizona-Utah condor program: preventable deaths remain focus of recovery effort -- Half of the California Condor deaths that occurred over the winter in the Arizona-Utah population were caused by lead poisoning, a rate consistent with the entire condor population in California, Arizona, and Utah, according to The Peregrine Fund. Of the eight condors that died between December 2012 and February 2013, 4 died of lead poisoning, 2 died of trauma possibly caused by a predator, and 2 were unrecoverable

Of the 54 necropsies performed since The Peregrine Fund began releasing condors to the wild in 1996, lead poisoning accounted for 50% of deaths, followed by predation at 30%. This year, our field crew captured nearly all the condors in Arizona and Utah and discovered that 39% had toxic levels of lead in their blood. The birds were treated with chelation therapy. Based on more than 10 years of data, the birds are most likely to encounter lead during and after the hunting seasons in northern Arizona and southern Utah. The final necropsy, conducted on Condor #210, showed acute lead poisoning, with extremely high levels of lead and 10 fragments in her digestive tract. Further analysis showed that her last meal consisted of deer.

Since 2005, hunters on the Kaibab Plateau in northern Arizona have voluntarily assisted efforts to protect condors from lead, with more than 80% of hunters participating in the Arizona Game and Fish Department's lead reduction program. In response to the shifting pattern of condors now feeding extensively in southern Utah, the Southwest Condor Workgroup supports efforts by the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources to ramp up education and outreach efforts there.

Conservation group supported by The Peregrine Fund discovers nest of rare bird of prey in Central America -- For the first time in more than 50 years, researchers have found a nest of one of Central America's rarest birds of prey, raising hope that there is still time to prevent its extinction in this region. For unknown reasons, populations of the once-common Red-throated Caracara (*Ibycter americanus*) have crashed in Mexico and Central America, according to the Honduran Conservation Coalition, which made the discovery.

The nest was found in Honduras, deep in the pine forests of the northeastern province of Olancho. In February and March, local conservationist Isidro Zuniga located and tracked three small groups of caracaras across some of the most remote terrain in Honduras, according to Mark Bonta, a geographer at Penn State-Altoona and leader of the research team. Every day for six weeks, Zuniga sat in a blind and recorded the daily activities of a caracara family that raised a single chick. The Red-throated Caracara is still common in parts of South America, but until recently was believed to be gone from its former range north of Panama.

200th California Condor chick hatches at The Peregrine Fund's captive breeding facility -- A tiny California Condor chick that emerged from its shell on May 2 marked a major milestone for The Peregrine Fund. It was the 200th chick to hatch in our captive breeding facility since joining the effort

to breed endangered condors in 1993. The captive breeding facility at the World Center for Birds of Prey is home to 62 condors, the world's largest flock of captive condors. This year, 18 pairs produced 20 eggs. When the chicks are about 9 months old, they will be transferred to the release site near the Grand Canyon to join the wild flock in Arizona and Utah. Three eggs produced in Boise were placed in the nests of wild condors in California to replace eggs that were not viable and hatched successfully. An egg that was transferred to the Oregon Zoo also hatched successfully.

Critically endangered Ridgway's Hawk fledges from nest in Peregrine Fund recovery project in Dominican Republic -- A 7-week-old Ridgway's Hawk fledged from its nest on July 10, marking another milestone in the effort to save the critically endangered species from extinction. The chick was produced by adult Ridgway's Hawks that were released by The Peregrine Fund, with support from the Puntacana Ecological Foundation, into protected habitat inside Punta Cana's resort property. The pair was the first to reproduce outside their previously small stronghold in a national park in Dominican Republic, the only place where the bird existed.

In 2008, The Peregrine Fund began an innovative "assisted dispersal" project to re-introduce the species to its former range. Biologists move young hawks from Los Haitises National Park and release them at suitable sites up to 100 miles away. Historically, the Ridgway's Hawk was found throughout the Dominican Republic and Haiti. After researching and monitoring the species for a decade, The Peregrine Fund found that only about 300 individual birds remained, leaving them vulnerable to catastrophic events such as fire, hurricane, or disease.

Andean Condor in Ecuador is released with satellite tracking transmitter for first time -- Wearing identification tag #1 on his wing, a young Andean Condor was released to the wild on July 23 high in the Andes Mountains of Ecuador, where he has become a national symbol for the effort to save the species from extinction. It was the first time that a condor in Ecuador -- where the birds are critically endangered -- has been released with a satellite transmitter. Andean Condors are listed as "Near Threatened" on the IUCN Red List. The device will allow biologists to track his movements and study condor habitat requirements, foraging behavior, and roosting sites.

Four weeks earlier, the condor had been found weak and dehydrated in a tropical area on the eastern side of the Andes where condors had never before been observed. The bird was recovered by the Ministry of Environment of Ecuador and the Andean Condor Working Group and nursed back to health at an animal rescue center. Currently, there are an estimated 50 condors surviving in the wild in Ecuador. An additional 18 condors are in captivity where captive breeding efforts are underway. The main threats to the species are shooting, poisoning, and loss of habitat. Earlier this year, people killed three condors in Ecuador, greatly affecting the nation's small condor population.

Public release of California Condors will be held Saturday, Sept. 28, at Vermilion Cliffs National Monument -- California condors will be released to the wild in the Vermilion Cliffs National Monument in northern Arizona at 11 a.m. Saturday, Sept. 28. The public is welcome to observe the release from a viewing area where spotting scopes will be set up and experts will be available to answer questions. More information: <http://peregrinefund.org/news-release/267>

Two New Harpy Eagle Nests Found in Maya Mountains of Belize

Submitted by Heather Barrett

Scientists and local community members recently discovered two new Harpy Eagle nests in the Maya Mountains of southern Belize, the most-northerly known breeding pair in the Americas. The new nests are approximately 15km apart; the first, located in Columbia River Forest Reserve, was discovered by a resident of a nearby village in July 2012. A female Harpy Eagle was observed interacting with the nest by the Belize Foundation for Research and Environmental Education (BFREE) Avian Technicians over the following weeks; however, no juvenile was sighted. The second nest was discovered in January 2013 by BFREE Avian Technicians; William Garcia, Liberato Pop, and Marlyn Cruz, during bird monitoring surveys in the Bladen Nature Reserve. This nest and its residents – both adult parents and their juvenile – were monitored on a monthly basis, and in May 2013, the healthy juvenile fledged.

“These nests may be the most significant biological discoveries for Belize in recent years,” states Jacob Marlin, Executive Director of BFREE. The presence of the nests suggests that a healthy breeding population of Harpy Eagles exists in this remote area. The magnificent raptors were thought to be locally extinct in Belize since 2000 and extirpated from Mexico and most of Central America until 2005 when a team from BFREE sighted a juvenile Harpy while on expedition in the Bladen Nature Reserve. Harpy Eagles (*Harpia harpyja*) are designated as “Near Threatened” by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and are considered “Critically Endangered” in Belize.

The initial sighting in 2005 led to a collaborative program begun by Mr. Marlin and Dr. Jamie Rotenberg, ornithologist and Associate Professor of Environmental Studies at the University of North Carolina at Wilmington. The program entitled, *An Integrated Community-Based Harpy Eagle and Avian Conservation Program for the Maya Mountains Massif*, was created to monitor the species, find nests, and study the entire bird community. Central to this initiative is the training of local people from nearby buffer-zone villages to monitor the birds and collect scientific data as part of an innovative alternative livelihood-strengthening program. The resulting team of Avian Technicians conducts the majority of the research; five located both the first-ever recorded active Harpy Eagle nest in Belize in November 2010 ([see Wilson Journal of Ornithology, 2012](#)) and the nest discovered in January 2013.

Harpy Eagles are well known as one of the most powerful eagles in the Americas, hunting prey as large as monkeys and sloths for food. Birds can weigh up to 20 pounds and have a 7-foot wingspan making them a formidable predator. However, due to deforestation and hunting, Harpy Eagles are typically missing from most of Central America’s rainforests where they once freely ranged. In November 2012, another Harpy Eagle nest was discovered in Patuca National Park in Honduras, south of Belize. “These new nest discoveries in Belize and Honduras are significant because only a handful of individual Harpy Eagle sightings were made in Central America north of Panama over the last decade,” said Rotenberg. “It means that Harpy Eagles are hanging on in these remote protected parks and reserves, and they may not be as isolated as we once thought.”

Because of the sensitive nature of the nests, Rotenberg, Marlin and BFREE decided to wait until the juvenile safely fledged before releasing the news. “We waited until now to release the news because we wanted to make sure the young Harpy Eagle fledged the Bladen nest,” said Rotenberg. “After we

publicized the discovery of the first nest in 2010, there was a lot of excitement within Belize about it, including reports on the radio and television. Unfortunately, Mother Nature took that nest tree down with a bolt of lightning,” said William Garcia, Lead Avian Technician at BFREE. In response to BFREE’s request to continue expeditions in search of the surviving birds, in 2012 the Columbus Zoo and Aquarium provided funds to continue monitoring of the area surrounding the original nest.

Ya’axché Conservation Trusts Protected Area rangers also stepped up their protection of the immediate location of the nest. Protected Area Manager, Lee Mcloughlin, indicated that the valley in question had been known to be a target of illegal hunters, fishers and even looters of the many late Classic period Mayan archaeological sites located on the lower slopes,

When interviewed about the 2013 Bladen nest, Mr. Garcia stated, “My technician team and I were on a bird monitoring expedition when we heard a juvenile Harpy Eagle call. Because of all of our monitoring experience with the eagles, we know that call very well. After just a bit of looking, we located the nest right away. It was very exciting to find the new nest only about 500 meters from the old one.” Garcia made the first presentation to the scientific community about the new nests at the Belize Chapter of the Mesoamerican Society for Biology and Conservation’s Natural Resource Management Symposium held at the University of Belize this past spring. Garcia covered eight years of Harpy Eagle research since that initial sighting in 2005. “I was happy to have the opportunity to share our research and let people know that Harpy Eagles are still their neighbors,” said Garcia.

Mr. Marlin added that, “Discovering top predators such as Harpy Eagles in places like the Bladen Nature Reserve and the Columbia River Forest Reserve means that preserving protected areas works. Besides Harpy Eagles, the 1.5 million acres of continuous tropical rainforest that makes up the Maya Mountains protects a wealth of biodiversity. The Belize Protected Areas System is one of the largest protected tropical rainforest ecosystems left in Central America -it is often referred to as the last remaining truly unspoiled wilderness areas of its kind.”



Adult female Harpy eagle spotted on the nest – Columbia River Forest Reserve 2012. Photo by Thomas Pop



Adult Harpy eagle perched near the nest – Columbia River Forest Reserve - 2012
Photo by Liberato Pop

ANNOUNCEMENTS and BRIEF NEWS ITEMS

For Sale

RRF Publications, Pins, and Decals – Hard copies of The Journal of Raptor Research (Vol. 1-30), most Raptor Research Reports, and RRF pins and decals may be purchased directly from RRF (Angela Matz, 101 12th Ave., Room 110, Fairbanks, AK 99701, USA; email: angela_matz@fws.gov). See http://raptorresearchfoundation.org/back_issues_jrr.htm for details and prices. Orders for 4 or more issues receive a 30% discount. Hard copies of The Journal of Raptor Research (Vol. 31+) may be purchased from Ornithological Societies of North America (5400 Bosque Blvd, Suite 680, Waco, TX 76710, USA; phone: 1-254-399-9636; email: business@osnabirds.org; web: <http://www.osnabirds.org>). Some older issues are not available in hardcopy; but all issues from Vol. 1-39 are available on SORA (<http://elibrary.unm.edu/sora/jrr/>) for free download.

Announcements

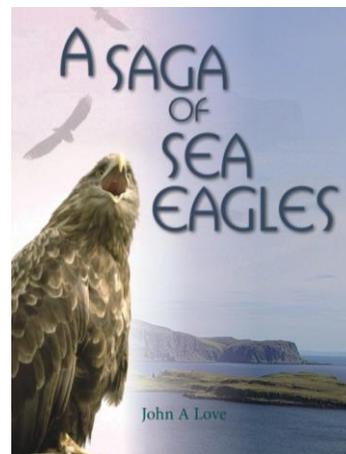
Raptor Workshop: Accredited through University of Wisconsin - Stevens Point

We are offering a 5-day workshop entitled "Introduction to Raptor Field Techniques". It will be held in Stevens Point, WI by Eugene Jacobs of the Linwood Springs Research Station. Fall Sessions: 26-30 August (one space available) and 7-11 October 2013. Receive first-hand experience working with: live raptors, capturing, handling, banding techniques, broadcast call surveys, tree climbing, rappelling, blood sampling, video surveillance and more. Cost is \$435 and space is limited, so register early. For more information, visit <http://www.RaptorResearch.com>.

Raptor Books and Publications

A Saga of Sea Eagles by John A. Love. ISBN 978-184995-080-0 2013. Available from Whittles Publishing

- A personal account from the author's own experiences, enriched with his photographs and illustrations
- Summary of eagles, their classification and folklore, focussing on the Sea Eagle group
- Provides a background to the reintroduction of the White-tailed Sea Eagle to Scotland and the UK
- Current status of Sea Eagles in the UK and the economic benefits



Golden Eagle Records -- The following USGS online publication is available to the public.
Eakle, Wade, Haggerty, Patti, Fuller, Mark, and Phillips, Sue, 2013, Golden eagle records from the Midwinter Bald Eagle Survey-Information for wind energy management and planning: U.S. Geological Survey Data Series 753. URL: <http://pubs.usgs.gov/ds/753/>

RECENT THESES ON RAPTORS

ČALKOVSKÝ, Martin. 2013. Diet of the golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*) during the rearing seasons in Slovakia. MS Thesis, Technical University in Zvolen, Slovakia. 57 p.

Two nests of Golden Eagles (*Aquila chrysaetos*) were monitored by camera system in the mountains of Great Fatra and Low Tatras, Slovakia. Monitoring in the Great Fatra was conducted in 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2008 and 2011, in the Low Tatras in 2005. From these years, data on prey deliveries by the adult eagles to chicks were analyzed in order to obtain a general picture on diet during the chick rearing period. Recorded were 708 pieces of prey for 522 monitoring days. Each species of prey was recorded, or higher taxa, if it was not possible to exactly determine the species. The most frequent prey were identified as representatives of the families of mammals: mice & rats (Muridae), martens & weasels (Mustelidae) and foxes (Canidae), the birds were represented mainly by families: thrushes (Turdidae), hawks (Accipitridae) and pigeons (Columbidae). Interesting is the frequent occurrence of snakes (Serpentes) in the diet during one breeding season in 2008. The frequency of each species were significantly variable year to year, which demonstrates great adaptation ability on a specific group of prey. The results of this study were compared to metadata sets in J. Watsons monography "The Golden Eagle" and were analysed by hierarchical classification. Diet composition was most similar to the results of studies from France (Pyrenees), Slovakia and Italy (Sicily).

Simon, Kendall Lyn. 2013. Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) Population Productivity and Density Dependent Effects in Michigan, 1961-2010.

The bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) population in Michigan has undergone a significant recovery following the ban of the pesticide dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane (DDT), and its subsequent derivatives, mainly dichlorodiphenyl-dichloroethylene (*p,p'*-DDE). This recovery however, has not been uniform throughout the state. Michigan is a heterogeneous habitat, causing the best-fit, experienced breeding pairs to settle in high quality breeding areas first. This high quality habitat mainly occurs in the inland regions of Michigan. These areas experienced the greatest productivity until the 1990's, quickly recovering from the detrimental effects of DDT. Great Lakes breeding areas, particularly Lake Michigan and Lake Huron, are now more productive than inland breeding areas. These Great Lakes breeding pairs however, are the least efficient breeders with greater amounts of changeover between nesting pairs within one breeding area in comparison to inland pairs. A constant turnover of breeding pairs may overshadow any underlying effects causing decreased reproductive fitness in Great Lakes adults.

Skipper, Ben. 2013. Urban Ecology of Mississippi Kites. Texas Tech University

I conducted field work in Lubbock, TX and Palo Duro Canyon State Park, TX from 2009 – 2012 to investigate the breeding ecology and nest-defense behaviors of Mississippi Kite (*Ictinia mississippiensis*). Specifically, I investigated annual survival rates, habitat selection, reproductive success, nest-defense, and mate- and site-fidelity in this species. Survival rates of Mississippi Kites have previously been assumed to be high; however, no empirical information existed in the published literature. I estimated annual survival to be 75% (59 – 86% 95% CI). There was little support for models that included sex- and time-specific survival. The high survival observed here supports previous assumptions about the species. Previous authors have indicated a lack of habitat selection in the species, concluding that kites require little more than trees to initiate settlement. Although broadly true, more detailed information on habitat selection is needed to more effectively manage kite populations breeding in the Southern Great Plains. I modeled nest-site selection of urban breeding and exurban breeding kites at two spatial scales (center-tree and nest-area). At the center-tree scale, both urban and exurban kites selected trees with greater height than expected by chance. Further, in the urban area, kites also selected nest-trees with greater trunk diameter at breast height. At the nest-area scale, exurban kites selected nesting-areas with many, small diameter neighboring trees. In the urban area, kites appeared to select areas with many, tall, but small diameter trees. Daily survival rate (DSR) of Mississippi Kite nest was also assessed in urban and exurban habitats. Models of DSR suggested that year, location, and nest-tree DBH have the greatest influence on reproductive success. Daily survival rates were in agreement with other studies in that nesting success was consistently greater in the urban study areas compared to the exurban study area. Nest-defense was assessed in both urban and exurban environments. The incidence of aggressive nest-defense was low; being display at 16 and 23% of nest in urban and exurban areas, respectively. Kites breeding in the urban area exhibited a shorter flight initiation distance than did exurban birds, indicating habituation to human disturbance. No differences in vegetation or proximity to anthropogenic features was noted in relation to Mississippi Kite nest-defense aggression towards humans. Lastly, Mississippi Kites display high levels of mate- and site fidelity with no variation in fidelity between the sexes. Seventy-two and 75% of male and female kites, respectively, returned in a subsequent year to reform pair bonds with mates from the previous year. Sixty-nine and 57% of male and female kites, respectively, returned to nest in the same tree as the previous year. Additionally, individuals that moved nesting locations between years, moved only minor distances (mean = 343 m).

NEWS of RRF MEMBERS

Rob Bierregaard officially moved his institutional affiliation from the University of North Carolina-Charlotte to the Academy of Natural Sciences of Drexel University, where he is a Research Associate and is continuing satellite telemetry studies of Ospreys.

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