

## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Friends and Colleagues,

The first cold front has hit us here in Colorado in mid-September and it finally feels like fall. The hummingbirds are long gone, my neighborhood's Swainson's Hawks finally dispersed last week, and we're pulling in our last harvest from the summer garden. This November will mark my 1-year anniversary as RRF President and I'm grateful for the support of the Board and members this year. We have addressed some complicated administrative issues like long-term financial planning, legal and insurance updates, bylaw revisions, and the expansion of our online services for the *Journal of Raptor Research*. While these don't sound as exciting as watching a kettle of hawks, the business of running your Foundation is a necessary one. I want to thank many of our Board and Committee Chairs for their time, ingenuity, and persistence to tackle these topics: Jennifer Coulson, Jeep Pagel, Rob Bierregaard, Jessi Brown, Cheryl Dykstra, Manuel Grande, Clint Boal, James Dwyer, Travis Booms, Brian Washburn, Miguel Saggese, Joan Morrison, and Jim Bednarz.

I also want to share my excitement for our upcoming meeting in South Africa in November. We have over 260 people registered from 36 countries. Our conference committee is working tirelessly to organize an amazing meeting in the heart of Kruger National Park at Skukuza Rest Camp. I want to thank Dan Varland, Conference Committee Chair and Andre Botha, Local Committee Chair, for their hard work putting this meeting together. For those of you who have organized a RRF meeting or similar meeting for other scientific societies, you know organizing it is hard work but extremely rewarding for you and your organization. RRF is always seeking new hosts for future conferences so seize your chance to get involved and contact Dan [danvarland@coastalraptors.org](mailto:danvarland@coastalraptors.org). I hope to see many of you in Kruger this fall.

Best,

*Libby Mojica*

*RRF President*

[president@raptorresearchfoundation.org](mailto:president@raptorresearchfoundation.org)



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**RAPTOR RESEARCH FOUNDATION, INC**  
**(Founded in 1966)**

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Editor, *Wingspan*: Brian Washburn  
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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**, 1400 South Lake Shore Drive, Chicago, IL 60546, USA; 1-312-883-4670 (phone); [OSNAMembers@gmail.com](mailto:OSNAMembers@gmail.com) (email); <http://www.osnabirds.org> (web).

**Editor's Note** – Thanks to the following contributors for this issue of the *Wingspan*: Jim Bednarz, André Botha, Kate Davis, Erin Katzner, Libby Mojica, Jemima Parry-Jones, and Dan Varland.

*Wingspan* welcomes contributions from RRF members and others interested in raptor biology and management. Please submit contributions via email to Brian Washburn, *Wingspan* Editor, at [rrfwingspan@gmail.com](mailto:rrfwingspan@gmail.com). For long contributions, please send as a MS Word attachment. If you are submitting photos, please include them within the MS Word document with a caption and photo credit.

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

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

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## Upcoming Conferences

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### **RAPTOR RESEARCH FOUNDATION 2018 ANNUAL CONFERENCE**

**12–16 November 2018  
Skukuza, Kruger National Park, South Africa**

The 2018 Raptor Research Foundation conference will for the first time be hosted in Africa at the *Nombulo Mdluli Conference Centre* which is located in the Skukuza rest camp of the world-famous Kruger National Park in South Africa. Apart from being home to the Big Five and a host of other iconic African mammal species, the park is also renowned for its diversity of bird species with more than 550 species having been recorded there. This includes 43 diurnal raptor, 8 vulture and 10 owl species, many of which occur in substantial populations.

The Kruger National Park is one of the most accessible protected areas in Africa and boasts an extensive, well-developed network of roads which covers most of the vegetation types and facilitates self-drive trips. It also has an extensive range of accommodation options in more than 20 camps scattered throughout the 20,000km<sup>2</sup> of the park. In addition to accommodation and restaurants in most of the large camps, the park also offers a range of guided drives, including night-drives and bush walks accompanied by an armed guide.



Pre- and post-conference wildlife tours of the Kruger and other parts of southern Africa are offered by local and international operators.

Field trip destinations during the conference include a range of areas inside Kruger. In addition, arrangement of field trips to raptor sites in the Lowveld region and along the eastern escarpment are also available.



The conference is graciously co-hosted by the Endangered Wildlife Trust and BirdLife South Africa. All conference arrangements are being facilitated and managed by africaMASSIVE, a professional conference organizing company.

Registration remains open. However, a limited number of accommodations are available.

For information on accommodation availability, contact the conference organizers at the email address [rrf2018@ie.co.za](mailto:rrf2018@ie.co.za).

For information on the conference, go to:

<https://www.eiseverywhere.com/ehome/293968&t=387718a8ea948ee50253dee3856e567b>

The conference promises to be a huge success. At this writing, 260 people from 36 countries are registered to attend.

Unable to join us? The program book with abstracts of all oral and poster presentations will be available in PDF format after the conference at:

<https://raptorresearchfoundation.org/conferences/past-conferences/>

*Come and experience the magic that is Africa and its fantastic range of raptors in November 2018!*

We look forward to hosting you.

**André Botha**

**Manager – Special Projects, Endangered Wildlife Trust**

**Co-chair – IUCN SSC Vulture Specialist Group**



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## **2019 Annual Meeting of the Raptor Research Foundation**

**5–9 November 2019  
Fort Collins, Colorado, USA**

### **Conference Hosts**

Rocky Mountain Raptor Program  
EDM International

([www.rmrp.org](http://www.rmrp.org)) &  
([www.edmlink.com](http://www.edmlink.com))

### **Co-Chairs**

Carin Avila, Executive Director  
Program ([Carin@rmrp.org](mailto:Carin@rmrp.org))

Lisa Winta, Assistant Director Rocky  
Program ([Lisa@rmrp.org](mailto:Lisa@rmrp.org))



Rocky Mountain Raptor

Mountain Raptor Program

Richard Harness, EDM International ([RHarness@edmlink.com](mailto:RHarness@edmlink.com))

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**2020 Annual Meeting of the Raptor Research Foundation  
and the Neotropical Raptor Network**

**4-8 October 2020  
Boise, Idaho, USA**

**Conference Hosts:**

The Peregrine Fund, Boise State University, Intermountain Bird Observatory, Golden Eagle Audubon, and USGS Idaho.

**Co-Chairs:**

Sarah Schulwitz, Director of the American Kestrel Partnership, The Peregrine Fund [Schulwitz.Sarah@peregrinefund.org](mailto:Schulwitz.Sarah@peregrinefund.org) &

Rick Watson, President, The Peregrine Fund [rwatson@peregrinefund.org](mailto:rwatson@peregrinefund.org)

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# News from the RRF

## Highlights from the 2017 Annual Conference

Photos by Kate Davis, Text by Dan Varland

Host Organization: HawkWatch International  
 Location: Salt Lake City, Utah  
 Venue: Sheraton Salt Lake City Hotel  
 Dates: November 8-12  
 Local Committee Co-chairs: Dave Oleyar and Joseph Dane, HawkWatch International  
 Totals: 331 Attended; 147 Speakers; 31 Poster Presentations; 8 Field Trips



Icebreaker.



HawkWatch volunteers at the registration table.



Dave Oleyar opens the conference.



Workshop: Harnessing Raptors with Transmitters (Brian Millsap and Joel Pagel).



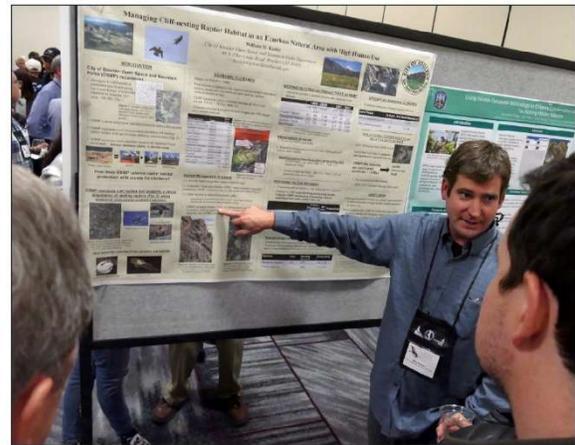
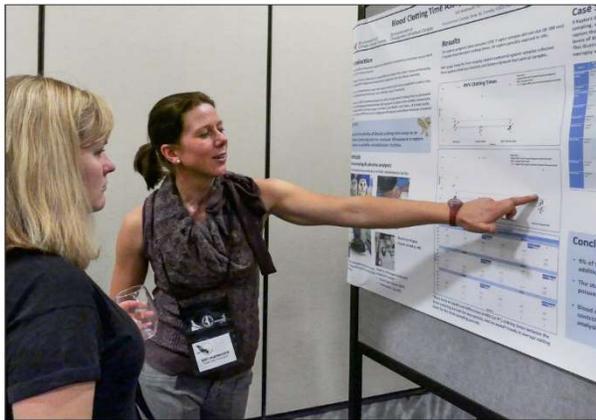
Workshop: Marking and Handling Techniques (Dan Varland and John Smallwood).



Workshop: Raptor Identification (Bill Clark).



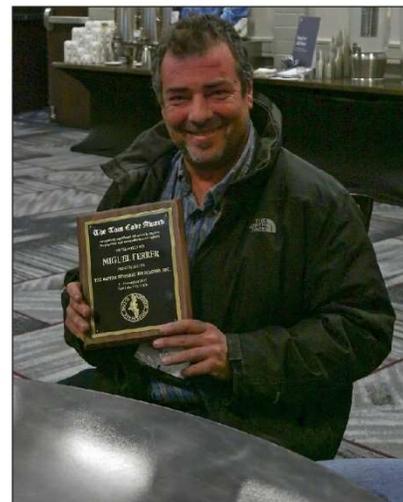
Oral Presentations: Joan Morrison and Chris Vennum.



Poster Presentations: Sofi Hindmarch and Will Kelley.



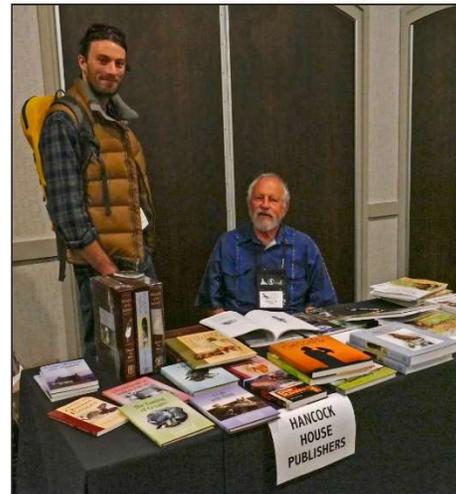
Fran and Frederick Hamerstrom Award winner Brian Millsap with Mike Collopy (left) and Gary Roemer.



Tom Cade Award winner Miguel Ferrer.



Travel award winners Shea Mullikan (left) and Katheryn Watson with Clint Boal.



Vendor: Hancock House Publishing (Myles Lamont and author David Ellis).



Vendor: Nick Dunlop Photography (Nick Dunlop).



Vendor: LS Traps (Luke Smith).



Friday night dinner.



Music provided by (L to R): Jim Watson, Jesse Watson and Eric Chabot.



Hawk Mountain Sanctuary Association.



HawkWatch International.



Boise State University.



Saturday night banquet.



Thanks, HawkWatch International, for hosting!

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**The Vice-President's CHALLENGE  
to all RRF Members**

Submitted by Jim Bernarz

Dear fellow RRF members and supporters,

With your help and support, I have decided to put my foot down in a big way and take action! Importantly, I need your help and the help of every devoted raptor-lover that is a member of our organization. The Raptor Research Foundation, Inc. has been steadily losing members for at least the last 10 years, as has every scientific society focused on a taxa group of organisms. With the decline in membership, we have also been slowly losing our clout and impact in regard to implementing our mission, to stimulate the dissemination of information concerning raptorial birds and to promote public appreciation for the value of birds of prey, and ultimately their conservation worldwide. Thus, I believe it is time for all of us to pitch in and take action for the sake of conserving birds of prey. In that regard, I issue the following challenge to all current RRF members: The Vice-President Challenges each and every member, no matter what your category of membership is (Student, Life, etc.):

**To recruit at least one scientist, biologist, educator, natural resource manager, student, or other person with an interest in raptors to join the Raptor Research Foundation, Inc. for the 2019 membership year.**

I believe this is the single easiest task that we can do to insure the long-term conservation of the resource that we all are devoted to. So, please start your recruiting today with the goal of adding at least one new member to the membership roles of RRF for the 2019 calendar year.

Thank you for accepting and embracing the Vice-President's CHALLENGE!

For membership information and to become a member, go to:  
<https://raptorresearchfoundation.org/membership/>

## Raptor News

### The Peregrine Fund Submitted by Erin Katzner



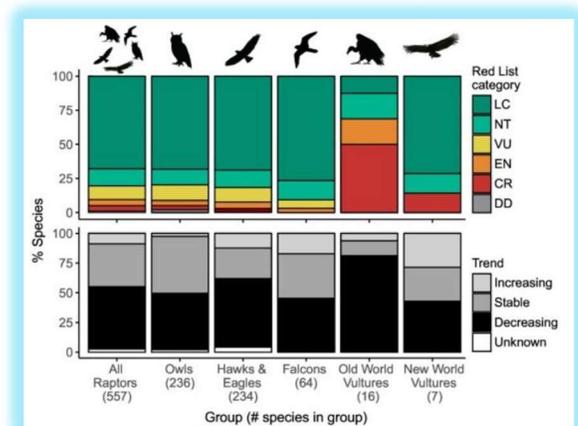
The year 2020 is just around the corner and The Peregrine Fund is excited to welcome you to Boise for the 2020 Annual Meeting of the Raptor Research Foundation and the quadrennial meeting of the Neotropical Raptor Network!

The Peregrine Fund will be celebrating its 50th Anniversary in 2020 and we are already working to make RRF 2020 a memorable celebration of raptor science and conservation worldwide. Mark your calendar today, because you won't want to miss this party!

The conference will be held 4–8 October 2020 in Boise, Idaho, USA. Conference hosts include: The Peregrine Fund, Boise State University, Intermountain Bird Observatory, Golden Eagle Audubon, and USGS Idaho. Conference co-chairs are Dr. Sarah Schulwitz, Director of the American Kestrel Partnership, and Dr. Rick Watson, President and CEO of The Peregrine Fund. For any questions please contact Sarah at Schulwitz. [Sarah@peregrinefund.org](mailto:Sarah@peregrinefund.org).

### Astonishing research shows more than half of the world's species of birds of prey have declining global populations.

The study, "State of the world's raptors: distributions, threats, and conservation recommendations" was recently released in the journal *Biological Conservation*. The researchers looked at the status of all 557 raptor species, as defined by BirdLife International's assessments of these species for the International Union for the Conservation of Nature's (IUCN) Red List, and discovered something staggering - 18% of raptors are threatened with extinction and 52% of raptors have declining global populations.



Dr. Chris McClure, Director of Global Conservation Science at The Peregrine Fund states “Raptors provide critical ecosystem services, but there has never been a systematic, global synthesis of their conservation status or threats. We needed to change that so we can identify and prioritize our conservation efforts.” The original journal article is available here

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.biocon.2018.08.012>



**We are excited to announce a new initiative of The Peregrine Fund in collaboration with the Oregon Zoo and the Institute for Wildlife Studies called the North American Non-lead Partnership (NANP).**

The objective of the partnership is to expand the coalition of hunters, anglers, and other conservationists dedicated to improving ecosystem and wildlife health by choosing non-lead options. When scavenging birds, like California Condors, and mammals eat the remains of carcasses shot with lead ammunition, tiny fragments of the heavy metal can be ingested and then absorbed into their bloodstream, often causing long-term side effects and sometimes even death.

To date three state wildlife agencies – the Arizona Game and Fish Department, Utah Division of Wildlife Resources, and Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife – have joined the partnership, and at least five sports groups have pledged their support. One, the Arizona chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation, even committed to an annual donation to support the efforts. We are thrilled to join forces with hunters and other wildlife enthusiasts to encourage others to voluntarily switch to non-lead ammunition options, such as high performance solid copper bullets. Learn more about the partnership here: <https://www.peregrinefund.org/non-lead-ammo>.

### **Puerto Rican Sharp-shinned Hawks in dire conservation need post Hurricane Maria.**

The Puerto Rican Sharp-shinned Hawk has been at the forefront of our minds and actions since Peregrine Fund biologist, Russell Thorstrom, returned from a surveying trip in February and reported that he found only 19 birds after hurricane Maria devastated their forest stronghold on the



island in September 2017. The Peregrine Fund leapt into action, developing a plan to save this species from looming extinction.

Thankfully the birds were also determined to survive and continued their annual ritual of pairing up for the mating season. As part of our recovery plan, we collected eggs from the nests of the wild hawks. By collecting the eggs, we could keep them safe in incubators and ensure the chicks could hatch without any potential harm from predators or environmental hazards such as storms. Additionally, the wild pair of hawks “re-nested,” meaning they laid another entire set of two or three eggs. This enabled us to potentially produce twice as many chicks from each pair of birds. On May 5 at 2:45 a.m., the first known Puerto Rican Sharp-shinned Hawk hatched in captivity. By the end of the season six eggs collected from three wild nests hatched out of our incubators and all six were released back to Puerto Rico’s slowly recovering forests. By comparison, three wild nest attempts fledged only two young; with breeding failure due to predation during the incubation and nestling periods.

Because of our team’s efforts and the incredible support of our donors, we have shown that we can have a positive impact on population growth to help bolster the species as the forest recovers. For the first step in recovering this species, we were happy with the results. We added 6 hand-reared birds to the 2 wild-reared birds to the population of at least 19 original birds resulting in a roughly 40% increase for the overall known population. Our team is continuing to monitor the young fledglings, and are already eager for the next breeding season to start.

### **Aplomado Falcons on the road to recovery post hurricane Harvey.**



In the aftermath of hurricane Harvey, we were unsure of what to expect when heading out to survey Aplomado Falcon nests this spring. When our biologists finally started checking territories along the barrier islands of Matagorda Island, San Jose Island, and Mustang and North Padre Islands, they were not surprised to find many of them vacant.

In all, Hurricane Harvey reduced the nesting population from 39 pairs to 26, a 33% reduction of the breeding population. However, overall productivity this year was 1.7 young per pair which is slightly higher than last year with 1.5 young per pair. Many of the nesting platforms were in need of repair, and our team got to work

rebuilding using an innovative new aluminum nest structure with better longevity in coastal salt, moisture, and sun than the original wooden models.

The work of The Peregrine Fund and many critically valuable partners prior to the hurricane was working. Despite the natural disaster, there were still falcons nesting successfully on all three barrier islands this season. There is much to be learned now as we document the birds' resilience after a traumatic event. These falcons face their own unique challenges in a world changing around them, but it is evident the Aplomado Falcon in Texas has a strong support group – coast to coast and border to border.

**It is commonly known that eagles and wind turbines don't mix well.**

Eagles that fly through a wind facility run the risk of injury or death from collision with a turbine blade. Unfortunately there is nothing in a bird's evolutionary history that informs it of the dangers of wind turbines. The good news is that Dr. Chris McClure of The Peregrine Fund has been working with biologists from Western EcoSystems Technology and the American Wind Wildlife Institute to test a new technology that has the potential to prevent collisions from occurring.



IdentiFlight is a new, camera-based monitoring system that detects, classifies, and track birds then shuts down the turbine rotors as needed. When the team compared IdentiFlight's ability to detect birds versus the ability of humans to detect birds, IdentiFlight succeeded in detecting 96% of the birds detected by observers and 562% more birds than observers. The study, published in *Biological Conservation*, concluded that automated cameras can be an effective way to detect birds in flight and identify eagles. Read more at <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.biocon.2018.04.041>

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**International Centre for Birds of Prey**  
**Newent, Gloucestershire, UK**  
Submitted by Jemima Parry-Jones



At the start of this last winter I seem to remember saying that we were not likely to see much snow again with global warming. Big mistake! We had a difficult winter, three different incidents of reasonably substantial snowfall, (well substantial for the UK!) two resulting in no staff being able to get in, the last one was in March! Luckily three of us live on site – a crucial part of caring for living creatures, so we were able to cope. In between snowfall two and three we had weeks of one of the most bitter winds I can remember. The Steller’s Sea Eagle loved flying in it as did the Snowy Owl, most of the other birds hated it

and the visitors were usually blue with cold, as were the staff. I rather wanted to get some nice photos of my Great Horned Owl in the snow, however he had different ideas. I started flying him on Friday at 11.30am and he decided to come back in on Tuesday morning at 2.45 am. He was not a popular boy at that point!

We had to take extra care of the vultures here during the very cold period. We have concerns about vultures and cold weather, so much so that we are now doing a survey with EAZA to look at the welfare and husbandry of vultures in zoos in general where the climate is not what they would have to deal with in the wild. As vultures have been listed as one of the most endangered groups of birds in the world it is really important that those in captivity have the highest welfare and also as much effort as possible to get them to breed. The cold weather affected the breeding season, that and an aging collection (along with an aging director), slowed down our success rate. However we did manage to breed our 68<sup>th</sup> species, a Palm Nut Vulture. Although in my opinion these should not be called vultures – they are not vultures!!



Spring was late, the swallows and house martins arriving a month late along with the Hobbys, however for the second year I have not heard one single cuckoo, which is really sad as it is a call that I love.

Our vulture work continues, in South Asia, working regularly in both India and Nepal and I am delighted to recount that we were able to achieve our first release of Oriental White-rumped Vultures happening in Nepal last November. Six birds were released with satellite tags and six months later five are still surviving. One was eaten by something, but we are not sure what. They are doing well and integrated with the wild birds almost immediately. They do not however, move far from the release site as yet. That will come, but because we had the breeding season in the wild we did not want to change the feeding until all wild young were safely fledged. We plan on releasing another 13 birds in September again with tags, and then once they are out and confident in their flying and perching, we will slowly move the feeding station to encourage the released birds to move further and to start to soar properly.



Our Little Owl nest boxes were all checked this year and apparently, we are succeeding in a first-class squirrel and jackdaw breeding programme, but not quite so well with our Little Owls! All undesirables were evicted, the next boxes cleaned and hopefully a few more might attract Little Owls this year. If not we will review and change the boxes next year.

Because of the prolonged period of rain, it seemed to go on for ever – Easter was pretty much a washout, we have also had less injured wild birds in. My theory is that we only get them in because people find them down, and if the weather is awful people don't go out as much and so less birds get found.

Over the winter we felled 76 trees, which made me feel slightly guilty, however as 70 of them were *leylandii* I did not feel so bad and as we have planted 110 replacements of beech and field maple, I think we did the right thing!



Now we are in summer and so far it's dry, although that will probably change when the school holidays start. The wild peregrines being monitored are doing well. It is interesting to watch them fledge and see how often they get into trouble. When training young falcons you start to understand just how bad they are at flying in the beginning and then understand why so many do not survive fledging. I wouldn't jump off a 100 foot tower without actually knowing how to fly!

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**ANNOUNCEMENTS and BRIEF NEWS ITEMS**

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**For Sale**

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**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 (Jessi Brown, RRF Treasurer; email: [treasurer@raptorresearchfoundation.org](mailto:treasurer@raptorresearchfoundation.org)). See <https://raptorresearchfoundation.org/publications/journal-of-raptor-research/back-issues/> for details and prices. Orders for 4 or more issues receive a 30% discount. Hard copies of *The Journal of Raptor Research* (Vol. 50+) may be purchased from Ornithological Societies of North America (1400 South Lake Shore Drive, Chicago, IL 60546, USA; 1-312-883-4670 (phone); [osnamembers@gmail.com](mailto:osnamembers@gmail.com) (email); <http://www.osnabirds.org> (web). All issues from Vol. 1-39 are available on SORA (<https://sora.unm.edu/>) for free download.

**Announcements**

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**Raptor Management and Techniques Manual Available On-line!**

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition of the *Raptor Management and Techniques Manual* – Edited by David Bird and Keith Bildstein – is available for download (as a PDF) on the Raptor Research Foundation’s website

<https://www.raptorresearchfoundation.org/publications/techniques-manual>



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