

**Raptor Research Foundation**  
**2023 Conference – Albuquerque, NM, USA**

Conference Report



Prepared by:

Joan Morrison, Local Organizing Committee Co-Chair, Sandy Boyce, RRF  
Conference Chair, and Rob Bierregaard, RRF President

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## RRF 2023 Conference Scorecard

Total Attendance	323
Total Programs	146
Plenary Speakers	2
Panel	1
Scientific Speakers	117
Posters	29
Symposia	4
Symposia presentations	39
Workshops	6
Field Trips	4
Sponsors	14
<b>Total Profit</b>	<b>\$9,422.26</b>
<b>Final RRF Profit</b>	<b>\$4,711.13</b>

## Planning

The local host organization for the 2023 conference was **Hawks Aloft, Inc. (HAI)**, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit headquartered in Albuquerque, NM. RRF member and former RRF Secretary Joan Morrison was the local co-chairperson and member of Hawks Aloft Board of Directors. The planning process began after the 2017 Salt Lake City conference when Joan spoke with Hawks Aloft Inc.'s CEO Gail Garber about RRF's interest in hosting a conference in Albuquerque, in 2023. The last RRF conference held in the Southwest was in Flagstaff, AZ, in 1994. RRF never held a conference in Albuquerque. The final application to host the 2023 RRF conference in Albuquerque with HAI as the local co-hosting organization was submitted to the RRF Board in January 2021. Planning began in earnest in May 2021, when RRF put Joan in contact with Kathy Webber to assist with a venue search. Kathy Webber, the secret weapon of success for any RRF conference, had the Herculean task of finding an affordable venue in Albuquerque, at a time post-pandemic when many organizations were securing hotels for conferences in hopes of holding in-person meetings. Kathy secured the Marriott Uptown hotel in Albuquerque, and we signed the contract in August 2021.

Serious planning for the 2023 conference forged ahead in January, the conference website went live, and registration opened in March 2023, after much consideration of registration costs based on financial results of the 2022 and other past conferences. Planning was more streamlined for the 2023 conference as well because many lessons were learned by the RRF leadership, having

planned the 2022 conference. Ultimately, the RRF 2023 Albuquerque conference was a huge success as attendees from many parts of the globe participated.

Thank you to the local volunteers involved in the planning process: Gail Garber, President and CEO of HAI, HAI staff including Evelyn McGarry, Liz Roberts, and Jenny Sternheim. Additional HAI volunteers who assisted in helping at the conference included Maggie Stein, Chellye Porter, Trevor Fetz, Brian Dykstra, Mary Bruesch, Lisa Morgan, Carole Heimann, Charles Heimann, and Ruth Latta. Joan Morrison recruited the following volunteers: Steve McGehee, Cathy McGehee, Michelle Dent, Amy Schum, and Jo Strange, and the ECRR volunteers Jessy Wilson, Emma Regnier, and Nicole Richardson.

Thank you as well to the incredible team at RRF including Rob Bierregaard (President), Sandy Boyce (Conference Chair), and Marie-Sophie Garcia Heras and Rebecca McCabe (Scientific Co-chairs), who did a fantastic job deconstructing the challenges of Oxford Abstracts and thus making the abstract submission and program scheduling processes smooth and mostly transparent. Thank you to former leaders, Dan Varland (former Conference Chair) and Libby Mojica (Past President), and to the 2022 conference local co-host Donna Marain, all of whom answered many questions and calmed our nerves with their experience and knowledge. Thank you to Megan Judkins, who developed and maintained (and continually updated as needed!) the entire conference website, and Christy Classi, who handled all things registration and all online payments—both monumental undertakings. Thanks, as well to Neil Paprocki for handling the workshop planning and Lizzi Meisman, Laura Echavez, and Trish Miller, for co-managing the ECRR and DEI activities.

A huge thank you to all the sponsors, 14 in all, who gave a record \$32,000 in support of the conference. Our sponsors were Public Service of New Mexico, Cellular Tracking Technologies, The International Osprey Foundation, Hawkwatch International, Kaddas Enterprises Inc., US Geological Service, Kidd Biological Inc., Audubon Southwest, GeoTrak Inc., Lotek, Hawk Mountain, Coastal Raptors, Eye of the Eagle, and Friends of Valle De Oro.

Vendors are always an important part of our meetings, providing attendees the chance to explore new technologies and meet representatives of other groups focused on raptor biology and conservation. Our vendors this year included Buteo Books, Cell Tower Osprey Management, GeoTrak, Inc., Lotek Canada, New Mexico Ornithological Society, Nick Dunlop Photo and Video, North American Falconers Association, North Star Science and Technology, Power Line Sentry, TE Connectivity, The International Osprey Foundation, The Peregrine Fund, and Vertebrate Systems.

Thanks, also to individual donors who contributed \$5,420 to the conference.

Finally, thank you to all the incredible local companies who supported this conference: Scott Walker for designing our beautiful conference book, Danny Trujillo at Starline Printing for producing the book, Eric May at Alliance AV and his team, for handling all of our technology

needs with the friendliest attitude and the most supportive team and especially Braden Bentley, who managed all our tech needs during the conference. Convention Services of the Southwest provided the poster boards. Thanks to Annalisa Aragon for putting together an amazing off-site dinner/native dance troupe event at the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center. At the hotel - Jasmin Noorullah-Wright, Ana Marie Torres, and especially Jose Mendoza were helpful before and during the conference. Kathy Webber of Maritz Global Events was a miracle worker. We, the conference planning team, really lucked out with all the incredible people we got to work with to make this event a success.

## Bystander Intervention

Prior to the meeting, we (most of the board and officers) participated in a virtual “Bystander Intervention” training session. The purpose of the session was to prepare us for how to intervene when we witnessed an obvious case of bullying, sexual harassment, or other inappropriate behavior.

## Location and Venue

After the venue search, Kathy Webber ultimately secured the Marriott Uptown Albuquerque, whose staff welcomed us with warmth and generosity from the very first site visit. Albuquerque is a unique, diverse, and somewhat quirky city of just under one million people situated along the Rio Grande in the center of the state. The Marriott Uptown is located a very convenient 15 minutes from the Albuquerque International Sunport. Immediately adjacent to the Marriott, Uptown is an outdoor, pedestrian friendly shopping mall that boasts a wide variety of restaurants, bars, shopping, and entertainment making it easy for conference attendees to find eateries and sites for after-hours social activities.

## Marriott Albuquerque Uptown

The Marriott Uptown Hotel was contracted as the venue due to their capacity to host a multi-day meeting with an estimated 400 participants, their welcoming staff, and their \$129 room rate, which was an excellent rate given the competition for hotels post-pandemic.

Kathy Webber set up the conference contract. As the second in-person conference post-COVID, we had no way of knowing what attendance would be, but we assumed it might be relatively high since people had begun traveling again and were eager to see friends and colleagues after several years of virtual or reduced conferences. The 2022 conference had a relatively smaller attendance because many people were still hesitant to travel at that time. So, for Albuquerque, we contracted for 560 room nights in the hotel, assuming people would be eager to attend the conference. The cut off for advance registration at the hotel was initially set for September 17 (one month before the conference) but the Marriott Uptown generously extended this deadline one week due to the high demand and were very flexible about moving rooms among nights as the need developed. Rates were agreed upon at the single/double rate of \$129, and these rooms could sleep up to four

people. A few late registrants who could not get a room at the Marriott ultimately booked lodging nearby.

Including rooms booked after the 17 September deadline, our RRF guests booked 592 room nights. Our contract required us to book at least 80% (448) of our contracted room nights or be financially liable for the difference. We easily fulfilled that requirement.

<b>Rooms booked by the registration deadline, September 14th</b>		
Day/Date	Rooms Contracted	Rooms booked
Tue, Oct 15	0	1
Wed, Oct 16	10	32
Tues, Oct 17	50	78
Fri, Oct 18	125	126
Thurs, Oct 19	125	128
Sun, Oct 20	125	127
Mon, Oct 21	125	97
Tue, Oct 22	0	3
<b>Total rooms</b>	<b>560</b>	<b>592</b>

The Hotel catering costs were the largest conference budget expense. The hotel required a \$15,000 food and beverage minimum, not including the 23% service charge. Luckily, local co-host Joan Morrison acquired tax-exempt status for RRF in New Mexico, so some hotel costs were saved because taxes did not have to be paid. We easily (to say the least) surpassed the food and beverage requirement by spending \$75,523.63. The DEI lunch was sponsored by HawkWatch International, who covered that cost as a conference sponsor.

<b>Hotel Catering Expenses</b>	
Wednesday night Ice breaker	\$20,706
ECRR/DEI Luncheon	\$4,148
Thursday Poster Session	\$16,450
Break food	\$22,667
Banquet	\$8,800
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$72,772</b>

## Registration

Registration for the conference opened on March 25<sup>th</sup> 2023 and was handled by Classi Management Services (CMS) under contract with RRF. CMS is an independent management company whose business it is to assist nonprofit organizations with their day-to-day operations. RRF originally hired CMS to manage registration for the 2020 Virtual Event.

Fee schedule for the 2023 RRF conference.

<b>Registration Type</b>	<b>Early</b> Mar 25 – Jun 15	<b>Mid</b> Jun 16 – Sep 1	<b>Late</b> Sep 1 – Oct 17
Regular (Member)	\$240	\$270	\$300
Student/ECRR (Member)	\$120	\$130	\$140
Retiree/Emeritus (Member)	\$165	\$175	\$185
Regular (Non-Member)	\$275	\$305	\$335
Student/ECRR (Non-Member)	\$135	\$145	\$155
Retiree/Emeritus (Non-Member)	\$190	\$200	\$200
Single Day	\$105	\$115	\$125

Actual registration count and total revenue by category.

<b>Registration Category</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>Revenue</b>
Student/ECRR (Member)	55	\$6,870
Student/ECRR (Non-Member)	39	\$5,515
Regular (Member)	98	\$24,990
Regular (Non-member)	47	\$14,125
Retiree/Emeritus (Member)	18	\$3,060
Retiree/Emeritus (Non-Member)	7	\$1,340
Single Day (Member)	13	\$1,525
Sponsor	16	
Vendor	5	
Volunteer	2	
Plenary Speaker	4	
Gratis	11	
Wings to Fly	8	
	323	\$57,425
RRF mandated fee waivers		\$2,055
<b>Grand Total</b>		<b>\$59,480</b>

## Conference Schedule

**Tuesday, 17 October** - RRF Board of Directors meeting from 8am to 5pm.

**Wednesday, 18 October** – Field trips and workshops. Icebreaker reception at 5:30 pm.

**Thursday, 19 October** – The conference officially opened with a Land Acknowledgement by Isleta Pueblo member Brittany Chavarria. A conference welcome, announcements, including the Wings to Fly awards, and our first plenary speaker, Scott Weidensaul filled out the first morning session. After the coffee break, the panel of indigenous biologists provided information on incorporating Traditional Ecological Knowledge into research and conservation and discussed reintroduction of the California Condor on Yurok tribal lands as a case study. Concurrent sessions from 10:30 am to 5:30 pm. ECRR/DEI lunch and social from noon to 2 pm. Poster session, 5:30-7:30 pm. Women in Raptor Research and Conservation social and networking event, offsite, 8-10 pm. Awards Announced: Wings to Fly

**Friday, 20 October** - Announcements and research awards announcements: African Raptor Leadership, Amadon, Beingolea, Brown, Panuccio, and Tully Research Grants. Plenary speaker, Pat Kennedy from 8:30 am to 9:30 am. Concurrent sessions from 10:30 am to 5:00 pm. Offsite dinner of native foods and entertainment by a local native dance troupe at the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center, 5:30 - 9 pm.

**Saturday 21 October** - Announcements and awards. Student awards were presented in the morning. The Andersen Awards for best student paper and poster along with the Koplín Student Travel Awards were announced. Breakout networking sessions were held from 9:00 am to 10:30 am. These breakout sessions were held in lieu of another set of paper sessions because there was interest in providing more opportunities for members to network, have species-focused meetings, etc. Because coffee and refreshments were provided during the networking sessions, there was no separate coffee break in the morning, and concurrent sessions commenced immediately following the networking sessions, from 10:30 am to 4:00 pm. Concurrent sessions from 10:30 am to noon included lightning talks. RRF business meeting was held from 4:15 pm to 5:15 pm. Social cocktail hour 5:30 to 6:30 pm. Evening Awards Banquet from 6:30 pm to 9 pm. Awards Announced: Cade, Exceptional Service Award, Hammerstrom, Partners in Raptors, President's Award, and Student Travel.

## Live Streaming

This was the second year that we used Zoom to stream our morning award announcements and plenary speakers as well as the lifetime achievement awards at the closing banquet. RRF members were able to sign up in advance for the Zoom sessions to watch live. In addition, the



plenary talks were archived and posted on YouTube. We had 276 YouTube viewings of the awards, and over 100 watched the plenary talks.

One thing we discovered is that if a PowerPoint presentation has an embedded video, it is a disaster (unintelligible audio) on the Zoom recording. There’s a workaround for this. The speaker must provide the original video, which can be spliced into the Zoom recording using iMovie. Consult Rob Bierregaard for details!

## Scientific Program, Symposia, and Posters

A diverse team formed the Scientific Program Committee (Rebecca McCabe and Marie Sophie Garcia Heras, co-chairs)

Abstract submission dates for the conference, were:

- 25 March, general abstract submission opened
- 1 May, symposium proposals due
- 15 May, symposia abstract submission deadline
- 1 June, abstract submission deadline.
- 30 June, completion of abstract reviews
  
- 20 July, notification of general abstract acceptance status

Symposia for the conference were actively solicited and the deadline for submission of symposia proposals was May 1, 2023.

There were four symposia:

**Burrowing Owls.** Organizer: Dr. Martha Desmond, New Mexico State University

**Advances in Raptor Health.** Organizer: Dr. Christine Fiorello, DVM

**Contemporary Issues in the Conservation and Management of North American Raptors.**

Organizers: Dr. Clint Boal and Dr. Brent Bibles

**Fire Raptor Interactions: Emerging Science for Conservation in the Pyrocene.** Organizers:

Marion Clément, Dr. Gavin Jones, Shaula Hedwall, Dr. Marilyn Wright

Below is the number of participants in RRF conference scientific programs, 2017 – 2022.

Program Component	2023	2022	2021	2019	2018	2017
Plenary speakers	2	3	4	2	3	2
Symposia	4	1	8	3	6	4
Round-table Discussions/Panels	1		1	3	2	0

Full length talks*	144	98	216	107	123	127
Lightning or abbreviated talks	12	0	0	15	14	13
Posters	29	31	27	59	64	31

\*Full-length presentations, 15 minutes this year, include talks in general sessions, symposia, and Andersen Award sessions.

A moderator was present at each paper session. Moderators performed their normal functions: introducing speakers, watching time, cutting off speakers when needed, and helping with questions. The floater technician from the local AV company was available all day, each day of the conference and assisted with technical issues as needed, in all the session rooms.

## Mentoring

This was the second conference where our Mentoring Committee played an active role in the conference. The committee sponsored pairings between mentors (established RRF meeting goers) and mentees (those who self-identified in their registration that they wished to be paired with a mentor). We had 24 mentees paired with 10 mentors. Mentors helped their first-time attendees learn the ropes of attending a scientific meeting and introduced their attendees to the old guard members at the meeting.

## Workshops

Six Workshops were held on Wednesday October 18<sup>th</sup>. Discounted rates were available for Early Career Raptor Researchers (<3 years post-graduation) and students who are current RRF members.

Workshops were taught by leading experts and focused on hands-on skill building that is typically not available in college courses. Class sizes were kept small to provide an intimate and interactive learning environment.

**Advanced Molt and Aging in Raptors** [half day, ending at noon]. This workshop described the basics and process of molt used in aging raptors. Then the knowledge was applied to photos and wings of specimens to further enhance understanding. Instructors: Jesse Watson, Nicole Richardson, Andrew Johnson.

**Necropsy, Handling, and Taking Biomedical Samples from Raptors.** [half day, ending at noon]. This workshop provided instruction on how to take a wide range of biomedical samples from live and dead birds, and how to properly handle and secure birds in the field and in the lab. Instructors: Christine Fiorello, Nicole Nemeth. Several participants of this workshop earned continuing education credits through the American College of Zoological Medicine (AZCM).

**Harnessing Raptors with Transmitters** [half day, ending at noon]. An essential skill is attaching transmitters safely to raptors. Several different options and methods were demonstrated and discussed. Hands-on experience was gained by attaching harnesses to raptor carcasses. Instructors: Trish Miller, Vincent Slabe, Mike Lanzone.

**Techniques for Handling, Auxiliary Marking, and Measuring Raptors after Capture** [half day, afternoon]. Hands-on experience was available for applying butt-end and lock-on U.S.G.S. leg bands, feather, and patagial markers to small and large raptors. Students learned and practiced proper handling and measuring techniques using raptor carcasses. Instructors: John Smallwood, Teresa Ely, Laura Echávez.

**All About Permits: U.S. Permit Types and Requirements For Raptor Studies and Management.** (half day, afternoon). This workshop provided participants with an overview of the types of federal and state permits that may be required when studying or working with raptors. The workshop also covered general requirements and procedures for obtaining necessary Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) approvals for research projects involving raptors. Instructors: Kristin Madden, Brian Millsap, Kirsten McDonnell, Jennifer Davis.

**Fundamentals of Bayesian Modeling.** [half day, afternoon] This course covered fundamentals of Bayesian modeling, including the basics of Bayesian inference, priors and how to choose them, conjugacy, fitting models to data, and some general hierarchical models. Instructor: Joseph Eisaguirre.

## Social Events

Sharing knowledge is one of the best parts of the conference, but a close second is reconnecting with old friends and making new ones! The Social Events are made just for this, so we make sure to set aside time each day of the conference for these opportunities.

The **Icebreaker** occurred on Wednesday, October 18. Available for attendees was a wide selection of hors d'oeuvres and a cash bar. Everyone had a great first night.

The jointly sponsored **ECRR/DEI lunch** was held on Thursday, October 19 from noon to 2 pm. ECRR co-chairs Elizabeth Meisman and Laura Echávez, along with DEI committee chair Trish Miller worked together to make this social event a highlight of the conference. The Marriott Hotel provided an excellent lunch and attendees were able to socialize and network by sitting 6-8 at each round table. The luncheon was initially open only to the first 100 registrants. However, so much food was provided by the Marriott that ultimately anyone who wanted to participate could do so, and about 120 people actually attended this lunch.. Attendees came together at this luncheon to celebrate unity and embrace the strength of diversity. Celebrate Diversity ribbons were provided to all conference attendees and these helped spread the message of unity and inclusivity throughout the entire conference. The vibrant sea of ribbons became a symbol of solidarity, filling the air with positivity and inspiration.

Funds from the ECRR Committee annual budget were allocated to compensate the folks who contributed their pieces which allowed us to not charge any fees to anyone who entered the raffle (two tickets per guest). This prompted greater participation and was a successful endeavor that we plan to continue in future ECRR socials at the annual meetings.

The **Poster Session**, held on Thursday evening, was a mix of social event and science, allowing members to present their work while participants could also enjoy hors d'oeuvres and a cash bar. In future years planners should allow for plenty of space to avoid crowding. After the poster session, a group of women raptor researchers, and many others as well, convened off-site, where they enjoyed a bit of comradery and shared tales of their experiences in the field. This social activity is actually open to all!

The **Off-site dinner** was held on Friday evening, October 20 at the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center, the gateway to the 19 Pueblos of New Mexico. Upon arrival, guests walked through the Museum and exhibition galleries. After exiting the Museum, guests received their free drink ticket and visited the dinner buffet, which provided a wide selection of excellent native foods. After dinner, a dance troupe of 3 native children performed some traditional dances. This unique cultural experience will long be remembered by all who attended.

Finally on Saturday October 21, the Awards Ceremony banquet celebrated the accomplishments of our fledgling, international, and distinguished senior members. Three Lifetime Awards were given at the banquet this year, as well as the President's award and the Exceptional Service award.

## Awards

Because this approach of announcing awards throughout the conference was so successful at the 2022 meeting, in 2023 we again chose to spread out the award announcements over the course of the meeting. Each morning after updates on meeting logistics and before the plenary speakers, we announced a different set of awards. On Thursday we announced the Wings to Fly travel awards recipients.

On Friday morning we named the Amadon, Brown, Tully, Beingolea, and Panuccio research grants recipients.

On Saturday morning, we announced the winners of the Andersen Awards for best student paper and poster, as well as the Koplín Travel Awards.

On Saturday evening, at the closing banquet, we announced the lifetime Hamerstrom and Cade awards and the lifetime achievement awards. We closed the evening with Rob Bierregaard awarding Cheryl Dykstra the President's Award in recognition of her outstanding 15 years as Editor of the Journal of Raptor Research. Megan Judkins was awarded the Exceptional Service Award for all her hard work at maintaining the RRF website and, this year, for managing the migration of all our website and emails to a new website host.

## Research and Travel Awards

Grant	Recipient	Home Country	Total
<b>Travel Awards</b>			
Koplin Travel	João Salvadore Falé	Portugal	\$ 500
Koplin Travel	Natia Javakhisvilli	U.S.A	\$ 500
Koplin Travel	Madeleine Barham	U.S.A	\$ 500
Koplin Travel	Alexis Kent	U.S.A	\$ 500
Koplin Travel	Alice Voulfson	U.S.A	\$ 500
Wings-to Fly Travel	Sandra Cuadros	Peru	\$ 1,676
Wings-to Fly Travel	Batbayar Bold	Mongolia	\$ 2,500
Wings-to Fly Travel	Sara Morollon	Spain	\$ 1,043
Wings-to Fly Travel	Sangeeth Sailas	Inida	\$ 2,462
Wings-to Fly Travel	Matias Juhant	Argentina	\$ 1,829
Wings-to Fly Travel	Isamar Flores-Rodrigues	Puerto Rica	\$ 1,058
<b>Research Grants</b>			
African Raptor Leadership	Joan Fadzai Banda	Nigeria	\$ 10,000
William Andersen-Best Paper	Nora Honkomp	U.S.A.	\$ 375
William Andersen -Best Poster	João Salvadore Falé	Portugal	\$ 175
Dean Amadon	Karma Jimba	Bhutan	\$ 2,000
Leslie Brown	Diana Vieira Jorge	Portugal	\$ 2,500
Michelle Panuccio	Marzia Verducci	Italy	\$ 1,500
Oscar Beingolea	Diego Garcia Gallego	Spain	\$ 1,000
Oscar Beingolea	Alan Monroy-Ojeda	Mexico	\$ 1,000
Oscar Beingolea	Carlos Alberto Ale	Spain	\$ 2,000
Stephen Tully	Gabriela Crisanto Téllez	Mexico	\$ 1,000
<b>Grand Total</b>			<b>\$ 34,618</b>

## Lifetime Achievement and Distinguished Service Awards

Award	Recipient	Home Country
Tom Cade Award	Brian Mutch	U.S.A
Hamerstrom Award	José Antonio Donázar Sancho	Argentina
Partners in Raptors	Roy Dennis	United Kingdom
RRF Exceptional Service Award	Cheryl Dykstra	U.S.A
RRF President's Award	Megan Judkins	U.S.A

## Field Trips

The four RRF Field trips were well attended, and everyone had fun. On Tuesday morning, 14 conference attendees visited the **Rio Grande State Park**. Located on the Rio Grande flyway and



only about 10 minutes from the Marriott hotel, the park offered excellent bird watching opportunities and hiking in the bosque. There are indoor and outdoor wildlife viewing areas overlooking ponds, and many trails leading to the Rio Grande and bosque. The Visitor Center offered informative displays and a unique Nature Shop. This trip was so popular that it was repeated, on the morning of Wednesday October 18.



Two all-day field trips were held on Wednesday October 18. The **Valles Caldera National Preserve** is the site of a 13-mile wide circular volcanic caldera in the Jemez Mountains. The preserve is known for its huge mountain meadows, abundant wildlife, and meandering streams. The area also preserves the homeland of ancestral native peoples and embraces a rich human history. Dr. Robert Parmenter, Division Chief, Science & Resource Stewardship, guided the 15 participants on a tour throughout the caldera. Participants were provided a boxed lunch.



Seventeen other conference attendees participated in the field trip to Bandelier National Monument. Bandelier protects over 33,000 acres of rugged but beautiful canyon and mesa country as well as evidence of a human presence here going back over 11,000 years. Visitors saw petroglyphs, dwellings carved into the soft rock cliffs, buried ruins, and some brave folks even climbed the ladders to Alcove House!



## Program Book & Conference Website

Hankyu Kim and others who worked on the 2022 conference program book generously provided the template to the 2023 local committee so they could develop the program book for the Albuquerque conference. The process began by collecting photos of RRF leadership, the local venue and environs, sponsor and vendor logos, and text documents needed for all parts of the book. Then, the book was created as a Google word document that was eventually given to the incredible Scott Waters of NoLifeTillMetal Graphics for the book design. Danny Trujillo and his colleagues at Starline Printing in Albuquerque did an excellent job and the final product was really beautiful. During registration, conference guests were asked their preference for digital or print versions of the program book, and we ordered printed copies accordingly. However, the printed version was so popular at the conference that many attendees who had requested a digital version during registration asked for a printed copy after seeing it in person. Luckily the 2023 local committee had purchased a few extra books, and these were sold for a nominal price, at the conference.

While the program book was a beautiful overall representation of the conference, because the deadline for printing was several weeks before the conference, the schedule and abstract information in the book was not complete and up to date. The most up-to-date version of the conference program and schedule was available on the powerful Oxford Abstracts, which was accessible by scanning a QR code that was printed on the back cover of the conference program book. Posters that listed each room's daily sessions (session titles and moderators only) were printed and posted in front of each paper session room. Conference participants could find the most current information for each paper session by scanning the QR code, which was printed on the posters and was available at the registration desk.

Conference information was maintained on the RRF website and was managed by Megan Judkins, RRF's website coordinator. Additions and edits to the website were topics of constant discussion during planning meetings, especially in the early days around the website's

publication date. Website information from 2022 was used to develop a template for the 2023 website; everyone involved in planning the 2023 conference worked closely with Megan to make sure the most current information for the 2023 conference was on the website.

## Sales and Gifts

### Swag Bags/Registration Packet

RRF's Bryce Robinson designed the conference logo, which was printed on the tote bag that was given to each registrant. These tote bags were assembled ahead of time by HAI volunteers. The bags included various promotional materials provided by sponsors and vendors (stickers, brochures and pamphlets, pens) and a small brown notebook, which attendees found useful for taking notes throughout the conference. Program books were not included in the tote bags but were handed out to registrants who had requested one in pre-registration. Name tags, inserted into plastic holders and clipped to lanyards were alphabetized and given out at the registration desk. Color-coded sticky labels depicting languages spoken other than English were affixed to the front of each name tag. Different colored paper tickets depicting the various field trips and meal choices for the banquet and off-site dinner were inserted into each registrant's plastic name tag holder.

### Vests

Seventy-seven Fitness Fleece vests, in Deep Balsam or Navy were purchased from L.L. Bean and provided at the conference to those who had ordered them. The beautiful RRF 2023 logo designed by Bryce Robinson was embroidered on each vest. Christy Classi included credit card purchases of the vests when people registered for the conference. This year for the first time, RRF used an app called PayPal Zettle, which is linked to RRF's PayPal account. A card reader and a laptop (laptop provided by the local AV company) were used at the registration desk to handle last minute and walk in registrations, purchases of banquet and other event tickets, and when the extra program books were sold. This proved to be very convenient for volunteers at the registration desk because they could handle credit card payments. However, because the registration desk can get busy and because there are usually several volunteers working together at the desk, care must be taken to record all purchases accurately whether it be on the laptop or hand written in a notebook, where for example, notes are taken and ticket trades are often recorded. Ticket trades are when registrants who want to purchase a banquet ticket, for example, can be linked with someone who is giving up a ticket, and the purchase and refund can be recorded so the finances are kept accurately.

## Sponsors & Vendors

For the 2023 conference, sponsors provided a record amount of funds. However, sponsors must be adequately acknowledged, for example logos should be shown in a PowerPoint slide each morning in the announcement session, provided at the registration desk, printed in the program book, etc. They should also be mentioned and thanked as often as possible. We had one disgruntled sponsor who felt slighted because he wasn't mentioned appropriately, in his opinion.



## Sponsors for the 2023 Conference

Sponsor	Amount	Level
Lafeber Co.	\$500	Education
Audubon Southwest	\$1,000	Falco
Avian Behavior International	\$1,000	Falco
Ecotone	\$1,000	Falco
GeoTrak	\$1,000	Falco
Hawk Mountain	\$1,000	Falco
Lotek	\$1,000	Falco
Hawkwatch Intl- ECRR/DEI lunch	\$2,500	Buteo
International Osprey Foundation	\$2,500	Buteo
Kaddas Enterprises	\$2,500	Buteo
Kidd Biological, Inc.	\$2,500	Buteo
USGS	\$2,500	Buteo
Eye of the Eagle	\$3,000	Buteo
Cellular Tracking Technologies	\$5,000	Aquila!
Public Service of NM (PNM)	\$5,000	Aquila!
Subtotal Restricted	\$32,000	

## Other Donations

Sponsor	Amount
Coastal Raptors	\$300
Friends of Valle de Oro National Wildlife Refuge	\$20
Individual donors	\$5,100

## Vendors

Thirteen vendors registered for the conference. All vendor tables paid \$350 each. Vendor names listed below will help future conference planners contact potential vendors. Vendors should also be suitably acknowledged, for example, by printing their logo in the program book. Vendors should also be placed in an area preferably adjacent to the paper session rooms, so each vendor experiences broad exposure and so that conference attendees can easily find all vendors.

In 2023, there was some confusion regarding vendor payments. Vendors were initially asked to pay full conference registration in addition to the vendor table charge (\$350). However, some vendors expressed dissatisfaction with this arrangement because they said they never attend any of the conference sessions or events, they simply man their table throughout. However, it was agreed that vendors should pay something that would cover the costs of their consumption at

coffee breaks. After discussion among the 2023 local committee and RRF leadership, it was decided to refund the vendors who had already paid the conference registration fee and just have each vendor pay the same amount for their table. However, if a vendor wanted to attend conference activities, for example, paper sessions, field trips, social events, or the final banquet, they would have to pay accordingly, the same amount as other conference registrants paid for those activities.

In the future, it might be easiest for the local committee to decide how much to charge for a vendor table, assigning the same cost for each vendor but also adding in appropriate costs for the coffee breaks. Then, if a vendor wants to participate in other conference activities, payments could be made, as suggested above.

### Vendors at the 2023 Conference

<b>Vendor</b>	<b>Amount</b>
Lotek Canada	\$350.00
North American Falconers Association	\$300.00
Buteo Books	\$380.00
The International Osprey Foundation	\$50.00
GeoTrak, Inc.	\$325.00
Cell Tower Osprey Management	\$300.00
North Star Science and Technology, LLC	\$300.00
The Peregrine Fund	\$325.00
New Mexico Ornithological Society	\$300.00
Nick Dunlop Photo and Video	\$365.00
Power Line Sentry	\$325.00
Vertebrate Systems	\$300.00
TE Connectivity	\$390.00
Total-Table Fees Received	\$4,010.00

## Financial Report

### Budget Estimates for the Conference

Conference planning is always a guessing game—much more soothsaying than science, which makes budgeting difficult. One predictor of conference attendance is the number of posters and papers presented, but these numbers are not available until long after the budget has to be submitted and approved by the board.

On top of the normal vicissitudes of the process, the 2023 conference planners had to guess how people would feel about coming to this second in-person, post-COVID conference.

Our original goal was to have 250 participants at the conference, but attendance continued to climb well above this number and correlated revenue also increased above what we had planned for in our application to host.

Also challenging when developing a budget is to guess at the number of program books to be printed and the number of other swag items to acquire. In 2023, second orders were made for program books, tote bags, name tag holders, notebooks, and vests, because the number of conference registrants just kept going up.

## Closing the Books

When we finished paying all the bills, the conference had a net gain of \$9,422 which was split equally between RRF and Hawks Aloft, Inc.

<b>Revenue Source</b>	<b>Amount</b>
Registration Fees	\$59,283
Swag - Conference fleece vest and tote bag, lanyards, etc.	\$3,763
Vendor	\$4,010
Sponsors - Unrestricted	\$29,500
Sponsors - Restricted funds for ECCR/DEI luncheon	\$2,500
Donors	\$5,420
Workshop Fees (includes Continuing education)	\$4,760
Social Event Fees	\$17,740
Field Trip Fees	\$2,845
RRF Budgeted Items - ECRR Social	\$1,000
RRF Budgeted Items - Indigenous Panel (RRF Budget)	\$5,469
RRF Budgeted Items - Board meeting - post to Directors' Travel	\$859
RRF Budgeted Items - Waived registration fees (awards)	\$2,055
RRF Budgeted Items - Credit Card charges	\$1,500
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$140,704</b>
<b>Expense</b>	<b>Amount</b>
Registration comped/Conference	\$1,375
Registration comped/RRF mandated	\$2,055
BOD meeting hotel catering and AV (RRF)	\$610
BOD Lunch-Post to Directors' travel (RRF)	\$248
Indigenous Panel Plenary-RRF budget	\$5,469
ECRR Social misc	49.94
Venue (catering and hotel AV)	\$73,219
Program Book	\$4,908
Swag	\$6,213

Accessibility	\$0
Plenary expenses	\$4,499
Misc (Poster boards, name tags, etc.)	\$1,695
Credit card fee	\$3,800
PayPal fees	\$49
Workshops	\$207
Off-site Dinner	\$11,605
Room Rental/AV Services	\$1,790
AV contractor & Hotel AV	\$11,402.86
Field Trips	\$2,086
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$131,282</b>
<b>Total Profit</b>	<b>\$9,422</b>
<b>50% RRF</b>	<b>\$4,711</b>
<b>50% Hawks Aloft</b>	<b>\$4,711</b>

A spreadsheet with a more detailed breakdown of income and expenses is archived on the RRF Google Drive [here](#). [Only current RRF Leadership Team will have access.]

## Post-Conference Survey

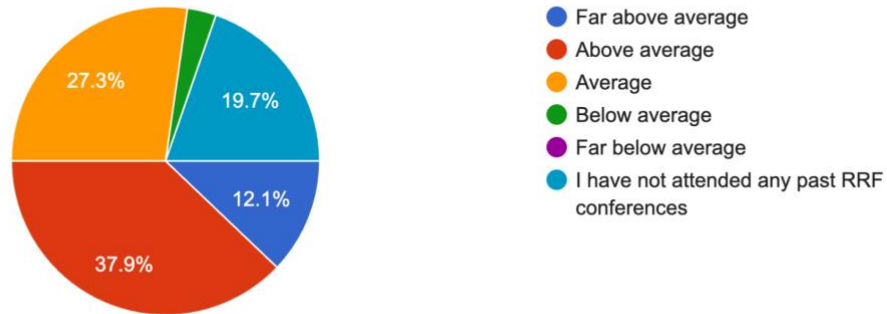
After the conference, we circulated a survey to the 2023 conference attendees. Our principal objective was to get the attendee’s feedback on their experiences at the meeting. In retrospect, the survey had too many questions (38), and we had a rather poor response—less than 70—compared to about 160 for the survey sent out after the Florida conference, although the 2022 survey was sent out to all RRF members, as it had questions about why people didn’t attend the Florida meeting, so that would explain in part the larger number of respondents, but we still think there were too many questions.

Comments on the overall experience were largely positive.

Below are some of the pie-charts showing the responses to “big-picture” questions about how the meeting met people’s expectations.

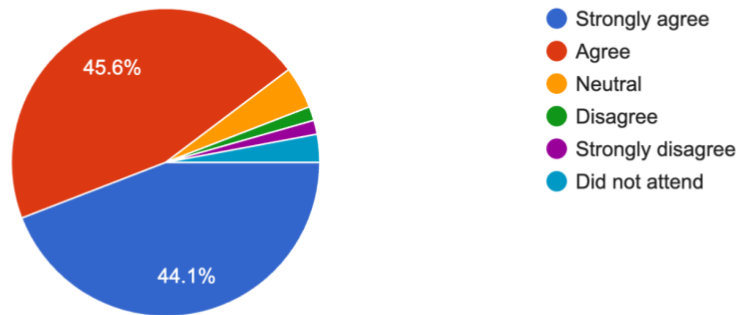
2. How did the 2023 RRF compare to previous RRF conferences?

66 responses



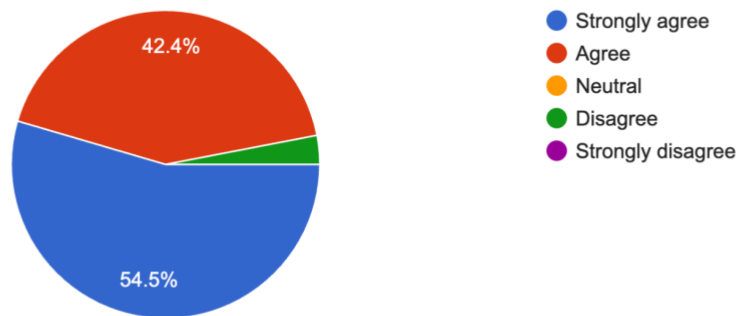
3. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement: The 2023 RRF Conference met my expectations.

68 responses



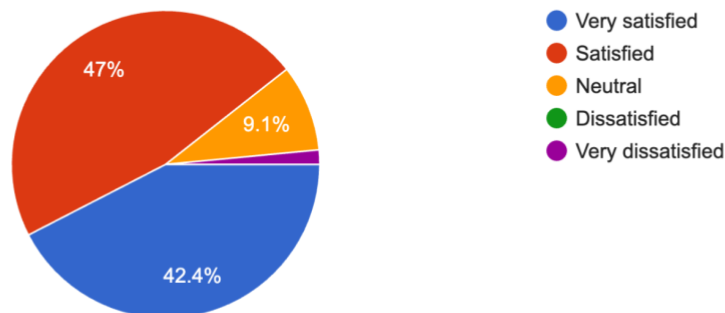
4. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement: The RRF Conference provided an opportunity and place to ask questions and participate.

66 responses



## 5. How satisfied were you with the efforts at the conference to expand and address participation, representation, and inclusivity in RRF?

66 responses



## Final Thoughts

While things sometimes seemed hectic from the local committee's point of view, the consensus from the attendees was that for the most part, everything seemed to flow smoothly, and most feedback was positive.

We make the following recommendations to aid future conference planners and, ultimately, to improve the conference experience for both attendees and planners.

1. Don't underestimate the time or labor needed to plan a conference. It takes a committee!
2. But one or two people need to be in charge and communication between co-hosts and volunteers must be clear and regularly provided. A volunteer training session held before the conference that provides volunteers with information about tasks required, on how to use the PayPal Zettle app, etc., is recommended.
3. It is never too early to start lining up sponsors and vendors, but this can be a juggling act. Some organizations allocate a fixed amount for donations, so making initial requests the year before the conference may get us a place in the organization's budget for the next year. However, sometimes asking too early does not result in a response. The best strategy may be to make an initial ask early in the conference year (i.e., January or February) then go back and make another ask in the summer. This strategy proved effective in 2023.
4. Keep a shared document on a Google Drive with running minutes of all the conference planning meetings and tasks to be completed.
5. Use a shared Google Drive spreadsheet/Dashboard for tracking conference finances.

6. Get written agreements and quotes early. Looking over previous conference budgets can be a good first step when estimating costs, but you don't want to be surprised at the last minute by local variations in costs, a last-minute vendor cancellation.
7. Estimating the number of hotel rooms to contract for is a very important step in the process and must be done conservatively. There is a large potential downside for overestimating room occupancy, as RRF and the local host committee are responsible for paying for rooms not booked by conference attendees.
8. Details must be discussed with the hotel early, and specifics must be clearly spelled out and agreed upon between the hotel and the local committee. For example, the hotel must be clear about, for example, exactly what AV services they will provide so when contracting with a local AV company, there is no misunderstanding as to who provides what and what are the associated costs.
9. Be sure to order enough food. The intent is not to be wasteful but to provide enough of whatever is being offered so that attendees have enjoyable experiences at the icebreaker and poster session. That said, catering costs have been rising dramatically over the past few years, so this is now by far the largest expense for the conference.
10. There are increasing requests for gluten-free and vegan food at coffee breaks and social events, so these choices should always be available. Often the hotel will keep these items away from the general food tables, and people who have these diet preferences should be able to ask for and receive these items.
11. Most hotels either have a business office where documents can be printed or will have other means of printing documents. However, unless the hotel is willing to print documents for free, these costs can be expensive, so thought should be given to minimizing the need for printed materials (for example, maps of the local environs). These days, most people find information on their phones and are even willing to receive all conference information via a QR code.