

Raptors of the Rockies
 P.O. BOX 250, FLORENCE, MT 59833
Celebrating 25 Years of Education Programs

Raptor Round-Up

www.raptorsoftherockies.org
 See a color version of the newsletter
www.raptorsoftherockies.com
 Photography and book web site

NUMBER 44, NOV. 2013

Sonora the Aplomado Falcon



Kate Davis photos ©



Just as snow falls now, a photo of the front deck and flowers in bloom, taken in August. Chesty the Harris's Hawk flies right over Luna the cat.

Our new family member has quite the story, joining us from The Peregrine Fund and already a pro in programs. We picked her up on July 2nd, 17 days of age and fresh out of their breeding project. She grew up in a baby play pen in the living room and on the window sill in the office, an imprint and she thinks I'm her mom. This Northern subspecies disappeared from the U.S. in the 1950's and was listed as endangered in 1986. Habitat destruction and later on, pesticides caused their demise. A breeding and re-introduction program was started by the Santa Cruz Predatory Research Group, and continued by The Peregrine Fund. Populations have been established in west Texas and New Mexico, and the breeding project was coming to a close.

Aplomado means "lead-colored" in Spanish, the contour and flight feathers with that coloration, plus signature bold markings. Her name Sonora comes from the state in Mexico where they lived before their extirpation, or local extinction. She had her debut program as a downy baby on Montana Public Radio, Pea Green Boat children's programming. Sonora was back two months later, all grown up and with her favorite toy, a plastic lizard. She has a daily flight just down the lane, joined by the dogs Peanut and Mookie and my favorite way to start the day.

Disaster struck due to "handler error" in October when she had a big adventure, flying to the south of Darby (60 miles). After three days of tracking with radio telemetry and Jay Sumner's help and perseverance, we got her back. More than anything, I hope that doesn't happen again, and I learned a lesson. We hope Sonora has a long career as an educator, hanging out here in the office where it's safe.

American Kestrel Book

The latest project around here is a book in the works, tentative entitled "Best and Brightest: American Kestrels."

This is a collaboration with Mountain Press Publishing Company and The Peregrine Fund.

I am writing the text and Rob Palmer and I supply the images, over 100, and all sorts of behaviors- kestrels through the seasons. Each of us has spent countless hours at nests, so fledging birds and food deliveries, plus hunting tactics for all sorts of prey. We'll show attacking songbirds and it seems that kestrels don't have many robin or swallow friends, under constant assault and probably for good reason. With writing and design still ongoing then fine-tuning at Mountain Press, we hope to have this book ready to hit the stands by late next year, just in time for Christmas. Rob has some fantastic shots of kestrels in the snow!



MISSION STATEMENT

Raptors of the Rockies is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) raptor education project located in Western Montana. Active since 1988, our mission is:

- * To educate schools and the public through the use of live birds - the eagles, hawks, falcons and owls used in raptor education and wildlife art programs;
- * To provide a lifetime of quality care to permanently disabled birds of prey and falconry birds;
- * To instill a sense of respect and admiration for these skilled hunters and to promote wildlife conservation and habitat preservation for our wild bird populations.

Raptor Round-Up Newsletters

The last RRU was mailed May 1st and all 200-plus copies came back a week later because they weren't taped closed on three sides. News to me and the latest postal service protocol. We opted to cut down to two Round-Ups a year, and even more packed with news and photos. Of course, the full-color versions are on the web site, along with all of the birds, books, and blogs. Thanks, Steve Palmer who launched this site in 1999. Also check out the artwork, schedule, and see your name on our Backers page.



BOISE Trip in June



Kate Davis photos ©

I made a quick trip to Boise, Idaho on June 30th for some business and a lot of pleasure. The business part was a meeting with Pete Jenny at the Peregrine Fund to discuss the new American Kestrel book. I made a little PowerPoint presentation and smooth sailing. Plus I was picking up a baby Aplomado Falcon on the way home to Montana!

Pals Bruce and Evelyn Haak were the perfect hosts, and had fellow raptor folks over, namely Dean Keddy-Hector, Aplomado Falcon expert and author of the BNA account. I got to pick his brain. The next morning a tour of the Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area with hero Mike Kochert (above.) We spotted several Prairie Falcons but a tiny fraction of the past breeding population since range fires ravaged the surrounding habitat. No forage or cover meant no ground squirrels and rabbits for falcons and eagles. Still an impressive landscape and tour guide, with stories from his 30 years at Snake River NCA.

On July 2nd, time to head back. Cal Sandfort at The PFund installed the new falcon in her laundry basket for her ride in the back seat, with some ground quail to feed along the way. My only problem- temperatures were hot enough to fry eggs on the sidewalk at 109 degrees, at one point 112 degrees on the car thermometer with the vapor lock acting up big time. Thank goodness for air conditioning and her first taste of music- "Porgy and Bess," Miles Davis and Gil Evans. Home safe and sound after eight hours. In the words of a Facebook friend, "Let the imprinting begin!"



TOP: Sonora at 21 days of age with her stuffed Peregrine friend. She decided to eviscerate it when she got older, oh well.

RIGHT: Chasing something small at our friend Dan's down the lane. I'm very cautious about these flights now and watching her weight; light and she'll pay attention.



RIGHT: Montana Public Radio with Pea Green Boat host Annie Garde, Joan Richarde to the right, and Cherie Newman at the controls. Sonora's second guest appearance, bell jingling over the airwaves.



Montana Peregrine Institute Update

Records were broken again, with MPI Director Jay Sumner reporting that he and the 80+ volunteers with Peregrine Watch counted 121 fledged falcons this season. That is of the 81 nests monitored and the big news is that he found 9 new nesting territories. Since 1999 when the research began in earnest, MPI has logged in 145 nests in Montana, not all active every year, but impressive when you think of the effort in a state this size...with so many cliffs! Peregrine populations are growing every year, a good sign and healthy environment. Mac Donofrio also broke a record, with 14 nests in the Bitterroot alone. WOW!

<http://www.montanaperegrine.org>



Mac Donofrio looking for falcons in the Bitterroots, Jay and his young Peregrine in a program for forest managers in the Blackfoot Valley, and below hunting ducks. Above, two fledgling Peregrines playing over One Horse Creek, right across the road.



Lolo Complex Fire

I saw the very first wisps of smoke on my way back from the river, and knew they were fighting a fire back by Woodman School. August 20th and two hours later, the second photo with the hawk buildings in the foreground. This became the number one priority fire in the nation and a very tense week for the firefighters and residents around Lolo. A "plume-dominated" fire, it created its own weather and wind, and ran 2 miles in 15 minutes! Plenty scary said Tom who was working at ground zero. The weather cooperated just and a few homes were lost, not the whole town.



Kate Davis photos ©

My brother and his three kids from New Jersey came for a visit in August - Arden, Kayla and Zach. They are pouring over some Phillips Family photo albums with my sister Betsy's two, Frankie and Brady on the right. Brother Jon worked in The Industry in Hollywood for years, and now has his own business dubbing animated feature films into forty-seven languages for world distribution. He's done all of the Shrek films, Rango, Despicable Me's, on and on. I always say he has to find someone that sounds like Eddie Murphy that speaks Cantonese. He told me that a recent addition to the languages is a dialect from India, a film that only hits about seven screens, but very popular. A whirlwind visit and just too short.

MONDAY, MAY 27, 2013

Air View

I was very lucky to have a tour of the Raptor Ranch, from the air for once, and thanks to Erick Greene for the ride! We met at 7 am and flew the Cessna up the Bitterroot to see our spread, the red roofs of the house and studio/garage/etc. and to the right, the enclosures. I can even see the Bald Eagle nest tree across the river. Let's all pitch in and buy Erick an airplane, okay?



SATURDAY, JULY 13, 2013

Ohrmann Gallery, Usually Open

Fantastic Saturday- a visit to Bill and Phyll Ohrmann's in Drummond for lunch and fun in the gallery. I was accompanied by friends Renee Taaffe of the Missoula Art Museum and Deborah Mitchell, my print making guru. Plus I brought Sonora the falcon, a great passenger in her laundry basket. We enjoyed major catching-up with the Ohrmanns, then got this photo in the Gallery with the falcon on her perch and Bill's paintings and sculptures all around. Check out the Ohrmann Gallery, the only spot on Scenic Highway 1 with a 11 foot welded steel Polar Bear next to the road. Can't miss it.



Open House Nov. 16 and 17th, 11:00 am-5:00 pm

FRIDAY, JULY 26, 2013

BirdWatching Magazine

This just sent off to BirdWatching Magazine for their October issue, and a story about the Bridger Mountain migration site outside Bozeman. Another shot of this same Golden Eagle, taken a split second earlier, will be in the 2014 HawkWatch calendar. What a celebrity bird already, and the photos taken a few miles from our house in the Sapphire Mountains. Always have a



Nikon or Canon camera on the passenger seat next to you, and make your friends ride in the back to hand you your tripod. Just a thought.

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 8, 2013

Speedy and Slowly

These photos taken within an hour today. Sibley the Peregrine racing all over the place at One Horse Creek, and a Western Painted Turtle "migrating" from the slough in the back yard to the one in the front. He had major help as we cut the journey in half, at least.



WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 9, 2013

He's EVERYWHERE!

I just got this in the mail, and there is WZ the Peale's Peregrine perched on top of the lettering for this Audubon publication for kids!



Below is the real photo taken last year on the Washington Coast. He was color banded with the "W" and "Z" by Dan Varland of Coastal Raptors as a hatch year bird in November of 2007, a male Peale's Peregrine that is particularly photogenic, and "tame as cat" in the words of Nick Dunlop. WZ has been sighted 21 times since that day, a star in August at the Northwest corner of the U.S. over the summer, more than likely breeding near Shi Shi Beach (the bird, not necessarily Dan.) "WZ - The Greatest Peregrine of All"



THURSDAY, OCTOBER 17, 2013

Another Bitterroot Tour

Tom Dickson, editor of Montana Outdoors Magazine paid us a visit today to work on an upcoming story, tentatively entitled "The Good Enough Guide to Raptor ID." Here we are at the MPG Ranch, chatting with bird experts Kate Stone and Eric "Kerr" Rasmussen. They had record-breaking migration flights in Sept. Thanks to Kerr Rasmussen and his uncanny skill at identifying these hawks at such a distance. He writes of yesterday's observations: "We counted a staggering 665 raptors (14 species) in five hours!" Broad-winged Hawks, one after another, and subtle nuances that separate them from the common Red-tailed Hawks, apparent to this hawkwatcher at miles away. Always a correct ID as they flew near-by, and a gliding Cooper's Hawk that I would swear was a falcon. Nope. The Hawk Whisperer!





Kate Davis photos ©



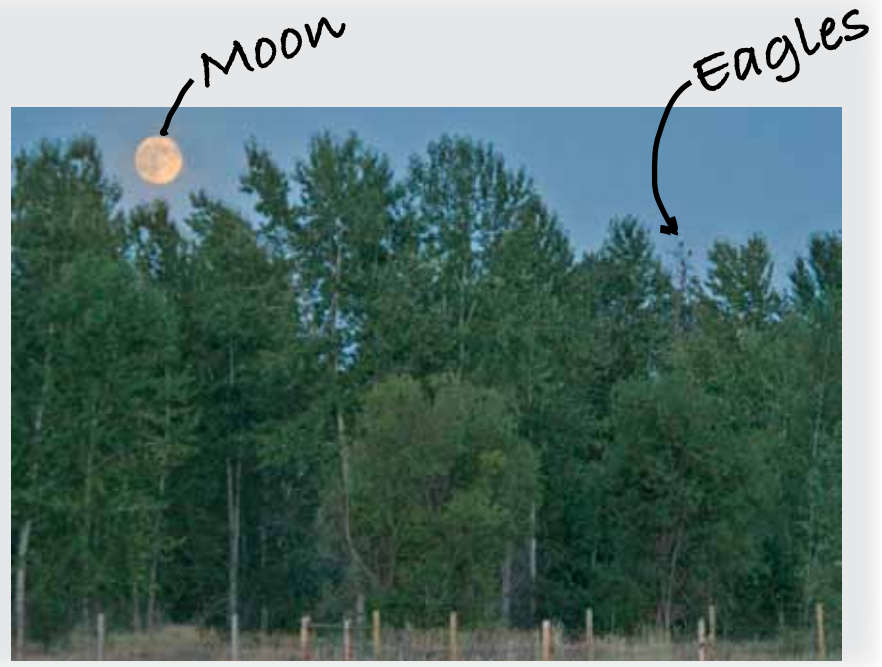
Short-eared Owl



Bald Eagles stays put and Canada Geese migrate south. By the way, Canadian Geese refers to the country of origin.

Astronomy 101

I got this photo of the nearly-full moon and Bald Eagle/nest in July and posted it on the blog and Facebook. Very dramatic. Just as it was getting dark the next night, I spotted *BOTH* eagles at their nest tree and thought, tonight's the night, full moon and what a pose! So I fetched all the gear, set up the tripod where I was the night before, extra lenses on hand, and watched the clock. The moon was over the eagle at 9:07 pm previously, and I waited and waited. Tom was grumbling something about "remember the earth's rotation" or "angle of the ecliptic with respect to horizon"... "Quiet, Tom!" a said and paid no attention. Then, when the moon did rise it was in the *wrong* place, and 30 minutes late! What a gyp.



Programs Galore

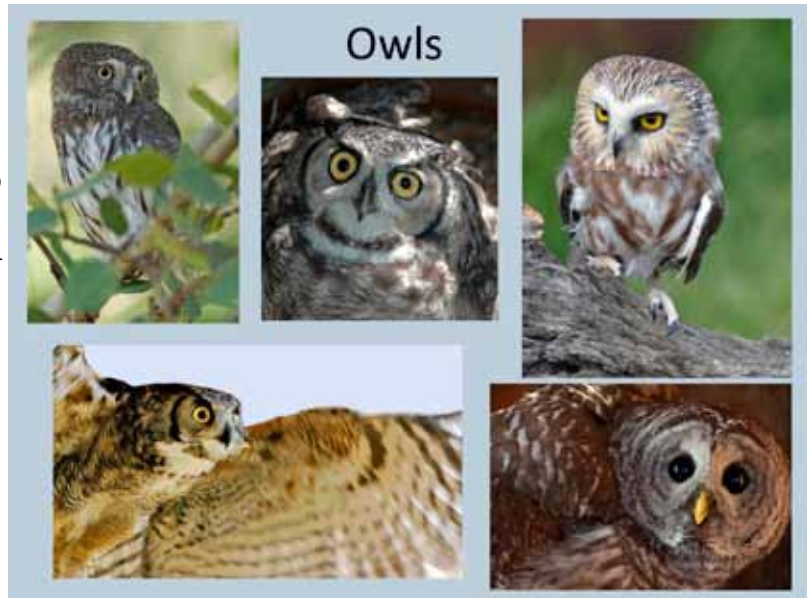


As we look back on our 25th year of educational programs, it's incredible that these birds have been such superstars. Riding in the Subaru to Pine Butte Guest Ranch on the Rocky Mountain Front, or posing for young artists like the kids from Sussex School (above) they are nearly always on their best behavior; performing with dignity and inspiring generations of admirers. The cliché term is "Ambassador Birds," and that's what they are - individuals that can't be returned to the wild, yet do well in captivity. Federal regulations say at least 12 programs a year, no sweat - with tours, Alisa the Red-tailed Hawk had 84 last year! Plus our special falconry birds that join in, a perfect combination.

We hosted two high schools from Taiwan with the U of M's English Language Institute, starting with a tour and have never seen so many cameras at once. Or peace signs! When meeting Miles (Davis) the owl, one girl shouted, "Jazz!" So she and everyone else got ROTR posters to take home. Top photo is Sonora on the window sill in the office looking out, about to go outside for her program. Then, we all headed to the beach and check out the poses. Very shy group, to be certain.



Kate Davis photos ©



Owls

Ever since our guest appearance at the Brookfield Zoo in Chicago three years ago, PowerPoint presentations have been a fun new way to convey exactly what we do and why- one hundred colorful slides on the screen. This year we spoke to groups from the Loon Festival in Seeley Lake, Lone Pine State Park Raptor Fest in Kalispell, Barleaders Retreat (not Barowners), State Pediatricians Conference, and the David Sibley Birding Workshop (our seventh year.) This slide of our owls is a favorite and I always finish with the frumpy Bald Eagle with a personal thanks tacked on.

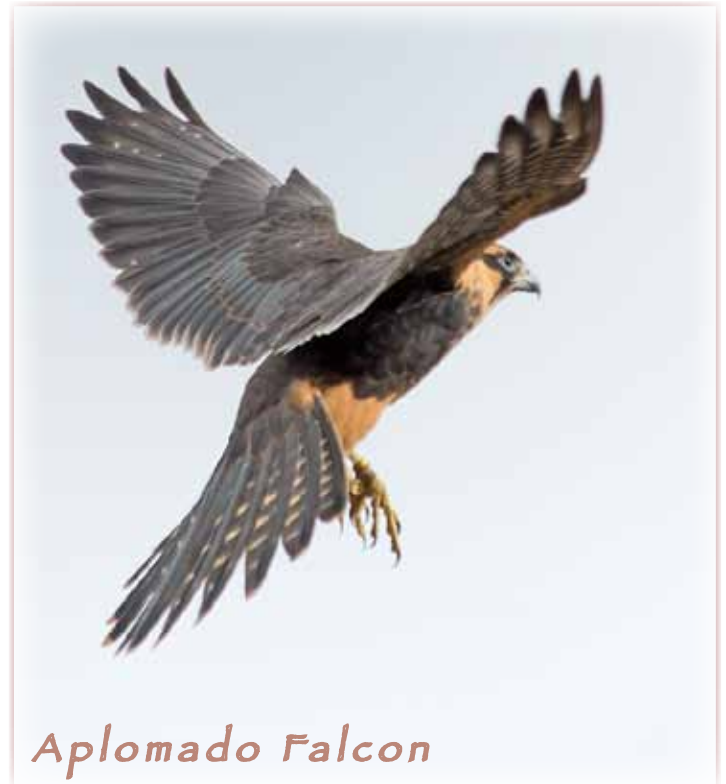


We Love Leadership Missoula!

Raptors Board Rocks!



This is the way to have a board meeting- at the Raptor Ranch in July. From left, Dale Manning, Custom Birdworks and the Big Game Connection (Best Taxidermist in the World, really.) John Heffernan of Heffernan Consulting, energy and power conservation. Kathy Heffernan, teacher at Sentinel High School, and she holds this whole thing together. On the right our longest-running board member Deborah Richie of The Sage Grouse Initiative and Deborah Richie Communications. What a fantastic group!



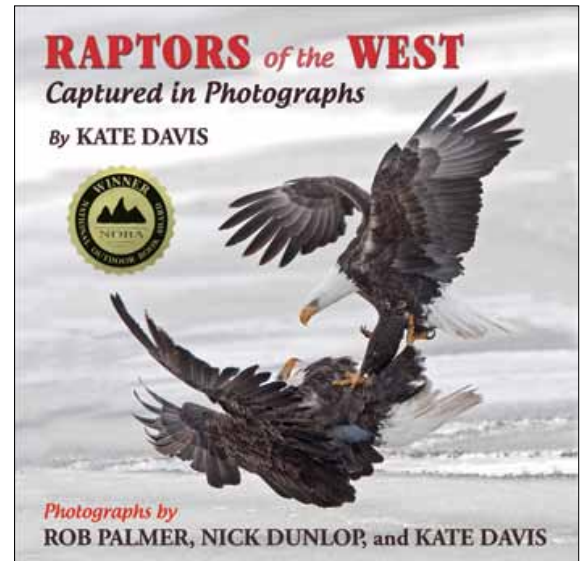
Aplomado Falcon

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American Kestrel	JayDub ~ \$ 75
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Aplomado Falcon	Sonora ~ \$ 200
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N. Saw-whet Owl	Owen ~ \$ 50
Barred Owl	Graham ~ \$ 300
Great Horned Owls	Jillian ~ \$ 150
	Miles ~ \$ 250

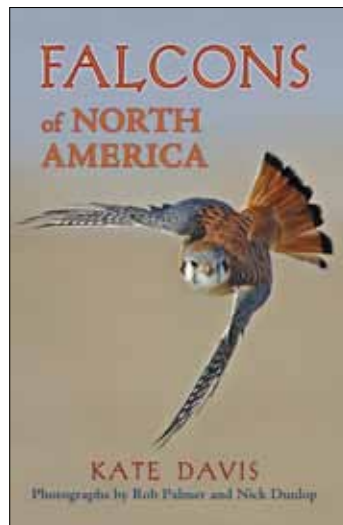
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WINNER! Montana Book of the Year Award

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Species: 45 Photographs: 430 in 6 habitats

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To answer a query by a reader, the exclamation point after a name means they have generously made more than one donation !

A special thanks to long-time friends, the Cinnabar Foundation for a generous 25th Year Bonus.



Kate Davis photos ©

Prints Available for the Holidays

and fantastic frames from Burnich Frame and Moulding.



Rob Palmer photo ©

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Raptors of the Rockies

Educational Programs since 1988

