

**Raptors of the Rockies**  
 P.O. BOX 250, FLORENCE, MT 59833  
*Celebrating 27 Years of Education*

# Raptor Round-Up

[www.raptorsoftherockies.org](http://www.raptorsoftherockies.org)  
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 Photography and Book web site

**NUMBER 47, MARCH 2015**

## TEDxUMontana!



An experience of a lifetime: months in planning, seventeen speakers in all, expert coaches on all fronts and the Big Night on February 20th at the Dennison Theater. TED means “technology, education, design” with the slogan “Ideas Worth Spreading.” The University of Montana was hosting the second such event, and it certainly will be annual now. I was slated to begin the second of three rounds of talks, right after a break and tasty dinner. With Jillian the Great Horned Owl literally on hand, I emerged to a dark stage, took my place on the red circle, and hooted like an owl. The whole talk went without a hitch, I think, and best of all, Jillian stayed put and was a star, her image projected on the huge screen behind me. *(cont. page 2)*



Kate Davis photos ©

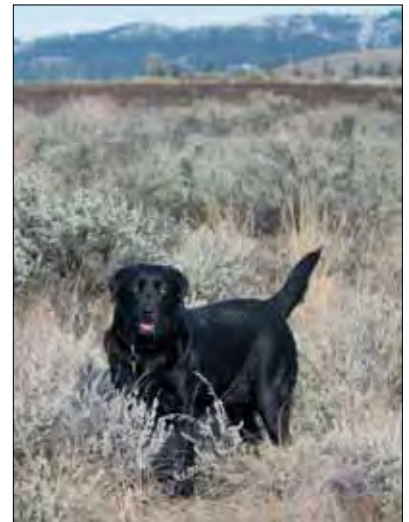


## What a Year, 2014

The year flew by, with incredible programs, support and the best birds ever. We visited Coeur d’Alene for an Audubon program (which broke records for attendance) and Pine Butte Guest Ranch on the Rocky Mountain Front for our annual program with bird icon David Sibley (our ninth year.) We had a fun keynote for the Skaggs School of Pharmacy Banquet at the UC Ballroom and Bannack State Park (ghost town.) The birds made the rounds for the school assemblies and even sneaked in a new school (Mountain View) to make a total of 126 we have visited since the beginning in 1988. We continue our bimonthly trip to the Pea Green Boat, Montana Public Radio Childrens’ programming, and were even the “entertainment” for MTPR’s 50th Anniversary Party in January, also in the Ballroom.

We had two film crews over, one for a television show and another for a video to be played in high schools across the country. Nigel the eagle and Sibley the Peregrine were the stars featured with the “talent.”

Two years of work culminated in the annual Raptor Research Foundation Conference held in Corpus Christi, Texas. I am the Conference Chair for RRF, and this year it’s in Sacramento, with a lot more local help. This will be my last year as Conference Chair and I plan on being a tourist at meetings in the future!



Sibley’s 12th year hunting, Mookie’s 2nd.

Silkati Missoula photos ©

## 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.

Kate Davis photos ©



Owen the Saw-whet Owl and Alisa the Red-tail are tied with 83 appearances in programs and tours each in 2014. An impressive discovery is that we were just one person short of the total audience for last year of 2663. Our record is 2003: 7643 people, 82 programs, 61 tours. Probably will never be that ambitious again, but maybe.

## More TEDx Talk

This whole adventure started with an invitation in October from Jace Laakso, IT Project Manager/TEDxUMontana Coordinator to audition with "a 5 minute pitch." In TEDx, the x means an independently organized event from the parent outfit TED that we hear on public radio and see on the internet. So I rambled on about a little girl that wrote to tell me, "It's fun to speak owl." The staff had me do some bird calls and I made the cut. The theme for this year was language, and I presented "Communication In the Dark," the script sort of like a ROTR program. But that's just the point, I had a *script*, and content coach Lisa Kerscher with her suggestions. Then I had speech coach extraordinaire Rafael Chacon with rehearsals on the stage. I have known all three of these people for years, and this was a pleasure! But this little "program" was timed at 7 minutes, scripted, no notes, and for me, a live owl. And Dennison Theater, 600 people, 5 cameras...no pressure. HA!

I had my speech with me all the time for weeks, words highlighted, circled, and writing in the margins. This one copy survived in the car, on the chair lift at SnowBowl, and in my falconry vest, reciting over and over. Plus working with Jillian on a big eagle glove, walks in the yard.

Feb. 20th, Show Time: Jillian on a perch in the corner and me pacing in the Green Room back stage. Then like a dream, my turn - laughs, a little applause when I said I'd been doing this for 27 years (Manning family?) Jillian was perfect, everyone hooted like an owl, and done! All the speakers agreed that watching themselves on Youtube will be tough the first time but who knows? We could get a million hits!

[www.umt.edu/tedx](http://www.umt.edu/tedx) and  
and search for TEDxUMontana on Youtube



Rafael Chacon photo ©



*Top:* Our Mayor John Engen, awaiting his trip to the stage as our final speaker. I took Jillian for a walk through the crowd at the break where we encountered a barrage of "selfies" with the bird.

*BELOW:* The whole gang for an informal grand finale shot, and there I was crouching behind the X. Photoshop magic and actually I was at home safe and sound, Jillian installed in her building with her roommate, Miles and a nice feast of mice. *Whew!*



# Sonora the Sweet Aplomado Falcon

Our star falcon will be two years old this spring, and is losing that juvenile plumage, upper parts changing from a rich orange to white. She fared well over the winter with her red lamp, heated perch, wind-breaks in her enclosure and she spent especially cold nights inside (along with several others on the Teaching Team.) Sonora has the routine down, and comes inside for a half quail breast every morning then perches on the bookshelf door, newspaper below. She reminds me of a parrot, which is appropriate as falcons have recently been placed in a superorder alongside parrots and perching birds. They are no longer considered to be related to hawks, with DNA showing a common ancestor with sparrows and swallows. There they are, just before parrots in the new *Sibley Guide to Birds!*

Sonora was given to us by The Peregrine Fund in Boise, Idaho at the age of 17 days, an imprint raised in the living room. I flew her for several months before Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks decided no more Aplomado falconry as she is an endangered species, or sub-species to be exact. That was fine with me as she had a few road trips, several hundred miles of flying around the Bitterroot and tracking her with telemetry. Never again. Since then she has had over 50 programs including the December Five Valley's Audubon meeting, where she wowed the bird-loving audience. She is a star, and thanks P Fund.



Bird Fest 2015

The Artists' Shop

Kate Davis photos ©

## Montana Peregrine Watch 2015

[peregrine@blackfoot.net](mailto:peregrine@blackfoot.net)  
<http://www.montanaperegrine.org>



Contact Jay Sumner to volunteer for the Montana Peregrine Institute and monitor falcon breeding on cliff sites. Basically you just need a good pair of binoculars but a spotting scope and lawn chair come in handy.

### ✧ Upcoming Public Raptor Programs:

**Friday, April 3** **The Artists' Shop: Bird Fest 2015** First Friday with Jillian the owl, plus a bunch of photographs up all month. Right in downtown Missoula at 127 North Higgins. Also Donald Jones and Artists' Shop members.

**Wednesday, April 8** **Spokane Audubon Society** Another road trip with some Teaching Teamers in tow, this time to Spokane, WA. Meeting begins at 7:00 pm at the Riverview Retirement Community Village Community Building, 2117 E. North Crescent Ave. Free and open to the public. PowerPoint, birds, and books!

**Thursday, Friday, May 14, 15** **Great Salt Lake Bird Festival, Salt Lake City, UT** I will be the guest of HawkWatch International in Salt Lake City, Utah in May. Thursday is Kestrel Night with a PowerPoint presentation by me. Friday has field trips exploring Kestrel Country, then an evening book signing with David Sibley, Jerry Liguori, and me. Thanks for the invitation by Raptor Research Foundation Conference pal, Joseph Dane and friends at HWI. Hop in that motorhome and trek over for an awesome festival featuring kestrels.

**Saturday, Oct 10** **Delaware Valley Ornithological Club Keynote Address:** The oldest running bird club in North America and a program at the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia, PA. Keynote for their 125th Anniversary Banquet. "The Year of the Kestrel" they are calling it.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 15, 2015

## Union Club

This is the way to meet fellow writers and photographers, a program at the Union Club in Missoula. Once a month the Outdoor Writers Association "Off the Record"



meets over a beer or two, and I provided a PowerPoint and Sibley the Peregrine. Organizer Paul Queneau of Bugle Magazine invites lots of college students, mostly from the environmental journalism program at the U.



We met a gal, Sam that saw our program when she was in high school in Stanford, MT, 2003! Pilot Jeanne MacPhearson from Helena picked me and 5 birds up in her airplane at the Stevensville Airport and flew 250 miles to "the middle of nowhere, Montana." All of the school children and community members from all around converged on the high school, what an event. Sam was surprised to learn that we still have Max the eagle! Seems like I just heard that last week...

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 2015

## Imping

No, this word "imp" doesn't refer to a street urchin, but instead is a verb meaning to repair a broken feather.

I just got this shot of Sib today and the arrow points to an important flight feather that was broken months ago. I hate to think of how such a central feather would be damaged and not its neighbors, and scares me to imagine her

flying through a barb-wire fence. I've seen her do it, and the stuff of heart attacks. This feather was replaced with the identical one molted last year and saved for this purpose (on our federal and state permits, otherwise illegal to possess.) Jay and I stuck a hood on her head, held her in my lap and used a sliver of bamboo from Good Cook Barbecue Skewers, 5 minute two-part epoxy, and voila! Fixed. An ancient trick of the trade, minus the epoxy.



TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 2015

## Temperatures?

Here is a photo from a month ago, a Prairie Falcon in the snow at Hidden Valley in Florence. This week we had 62 degrees and broke records. A 60 degree difference from the same day last year when we had the bitter cold, deep snow, and avalanche that hit Missoula. You never ever know around here.



FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 2015

## Good Ole Potomac

Potomac School has a Raptors of the Rockies visit every two years so we have to mix it up. Yesterday



I discussed a Red-tail breeding season, Saw-whet Owl's food caching, aerial Peregrine hunt, and finished with page 2 of my TEDx Talk Jillian the owl on hand! These rural kids of the Blackfoot Valley have a real love of their outdoor surroundings and we hope to get a kestrel nest box installed near the school this spring. And to answer a question from a vexing 8th grader - yes, we have a penguin, but its made of steel and 5 1/2 feet tall. No feeding required.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 4, 2015

## Chesty's Nest

Our Harris's Hawk Chesty flies around the yard most days, and probably hangs around because of the nest she has been building on the arbor. Sticks are added, they blow down and so on for about 10 years now. At 24 years of age, she laid 5 eggs last year, mostly in the winter, crazy bird.



Thursday, MARCH 5, 2015

## Studio A, MTPR

Here are the kids getting settled, Terry Conrad and Jazz Sessions in the background. We always go on the show Thursdays so we can listen to jazz on the way to town.



Wow, great kids-

Adaline and Westin Schick, great birds - Alisa, iPod and Ella, and great host Annie Garde on Montana Public Radio today. Photo by Josh Burnham in the studio. See you again in two months!







# Bald Eagles In the Backyard

Season four for the eagle family on the Bitterroot River, five if you include the first year for the nest but no young. By watching their behavior through a scope in the living room and evening trips to the beach, I think incubation began March 1st, young around April 5th, about ten days earlier than last year. Below is the nest on the far right, and both adults are sharing in incubation duties. The male will fly in and the female cruises around for a little while, stretches her wings, and comes back to preen. Or maybe nothing will happen for an hour or two...You never know. They seem to be scoring ground squirrels, just out after a winter's sleep in the fields off Eastside Highway and *whack!*

The action just gets better and better as the young are fed and the Ospreys return to stir things up, mortal enemies.



Kristi Dubois with the Bald Eagle Working group reports that perhaps the population increase has finally levelled off. Numbers were rising as much as 10% per year. In the 1980's Montana had just a dozen breeding Bald Eagle pairs. Today it's a minimum of 700, perhaps as high as 740 nests! Formally most had two or three young, and now nests with two or even one are more common. Also, these "modern" eagles are a bit more tolerant of humans. But still, give them their space. These eagles sure don't mind me standing across the river with camera and dogs.

## Ohrmann Museum and Gallery

We were all deeply saddened by the passing of Montana Treasure Bill Ohrmann in November at age 95. He was my art mentor, teaching me how to make steel birds starting in 2004. When I saw this 12 foot running Woolly Mammoth I was hooked for life. We became fast friends and I was welcomed into the family. Just three miles up the Scenic Highway 1 from Drummond you'll find a quaint couple of buildings and museum surrounded by giant metal mammals. That's it. A sign say's "Usually Open" and now they are again.

Phyllis Ohrmann would like admirers, friends and fans to see the sculptures and the over 70 paintings. They are gorgeous big, bright oils, telling a story, making a statement and "something to offend everyone." Also featured are his woodcarvings - now on exhibit are "The Twelve Moons," sculptures that have been tucked away and scattered about for more that 30 years. I got this photo just before his death, Open House 2014, Bill, son John and Phyllis and my favorite art piece in the world. When you visit make sure you climb up the step, open the little door and see the heart installed inside the mammoth. Bill put hearts in every one of his sculptures, both physically and spiritually. Prints and cards are available for sale, plus the stunning book by Joe Nickell "Tainted Revelations: the Art of Bill Ohrmann," a perfect tribute and must for every coffee-table. John has a beautiful calendar out now, and each month will make you smile - and maybe even purchase a frame somewhere and enjoy the artwork all year around! We miss you, Bill.



A Sharp-shinned Hawk perched on the penguin sculpture/January 7th clouds

Kate Davis photos ©



2nd Place winners: Sonora and Sibley for most appearances in 2014



# Kestrel Book Five Star Review

“What a beautiful book! You don’t have to be a bird watcher to appreciate the stunning photography in this publication, or the Killy Hawk’s (Kestrel’s) remarkable charm in the wild. If you are ‘into birds’ then you know that “Among the ranks of North American raptors, American Kestrels hold the top honor as most endearing,” says the author, Kate Davis. In both prose and a hundred superb illustrations, we learn a great deal about this amazing little bird.

Among the falcons, the American Kestrel is the smallest (about robin size). It is remarkably colored with vivid rufous and blue-gray plumage dashed with black and white. Despite its small size, the Kestrel is a skilled and savvy hunter with a wide variety of small prey. Those who have marveled at Kestrel hunting prowess know how it hovers in one place by flapping or flicking its wingtips or how it ‘kites’ into a strong wind by twitching its wingtips.

The book covers hunting behaviors and more, including the Kestrel life cycle, natural history, and challenges to its survival in the 21st century. As attractive as it is, American Kestrel is more than a coffee-table book. It’s an attention-grabbing, conversation-making good read.”

*Reviewed by Don Messerschmidt, Portland Book Review*



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[raptorsoftherockies.blogspot.com](http://raptorsoftherockies.blogspot.com)  
 And find us on Facebook  
[www.facebook.com/kate.davis.330](http://www.facebook.com/kate.davis.330)



Kate Davis photos ©



**Belted Kingfisher** Hey, where’s your belt? That’s because it’s a male, and the females wear the pants in the family, sporting the rufous colored belly band. He posed for 20 minutes across from the eagle nest, a rattling call to perhaps attract a mate. The sun only poked out for a few minutes, and this was an in-between sun and clouds shot. I find myself muttering, “Come on sun...” Or eagles.

## Raptor Research Foundation Conference 2015



Nov 4th-8th  
 Sacramento

Hosted by the  
 Golden Gate Raptor  
 Observatory



[www.raptorresearchfoundation.org](http://www.raptorresearchfoundation.org)



Nigel, Cover Boy-Ryan Hall Photo



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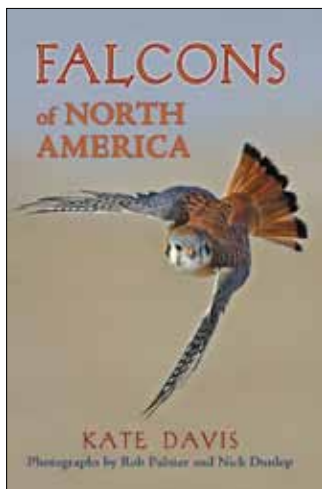
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*Suggested adoption rates, and receive a matted photo of your bird and tax-deduction receipt, plus be listed on our web site and next newsletter. Thanks adoptive parents for your support!*

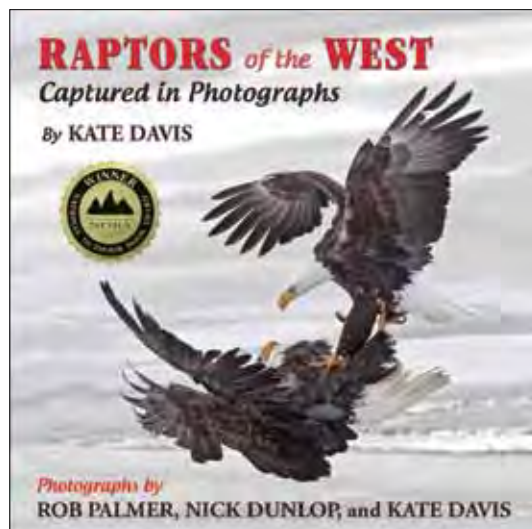
*A portion of all book proceeds goes back to help fund our program*

## Teaching Team:

Golden Eagles	Max ~ \$ 1000
	Nigel ~ \$ 500
Bald Eagle	Sonny ~ \$300
Rough-legged Hawk	Otto ~ \$ 100
Swainson's Hawk	Evita ~ \$ 150
Red-tailed Hawk	Alisa ~ \$ 200
Harris's Hawk	Chesty ~ \$ 150
Sharp-shinned Hawk	Margo ~ \$ 100
American Kestrel	JayDub ~ \$ 75
American Kestrel	Ella ~ \$ 50
American Kestrel	Wes ~ \$ 50
Peregrine Falcon	Sibley ~ \$ 400
Gyr/Peregrine hybrid	Ansel ~ \$ 150
Aplomado Falcon	Sonora ~ \$ 200



Pages: 240 Price: \$22  
Photos/illustrations 230



WINNER! National Outdoor Book Award  
WINNER! Montana Book of the Year Award

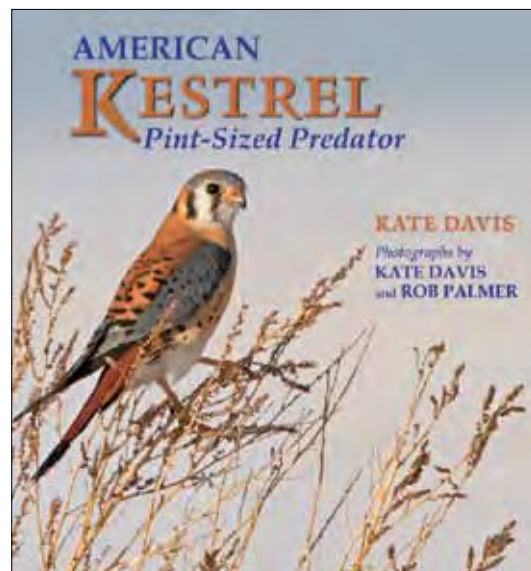
Pages: 250 Price: \$30/\$35 shipping  
Photographs: 430



Margo



Pages: 112 Price: \$16.95  
Photographs: 135



Pages: 104 Price: \$18/23 shipping  
Photographs: 100

Northern Pygmy-Owl	iPod ~ \$ 50
N. Saw-whet Owl	Owen ~ \$ 50
Great Horned Owls	Jillian ~ \$ 150
	Miles ~ \$ 250

YES, I want to sponsor the Raptors of the Rockies with this tax-deductible contribution, check written to Raptors of the Rockies, books to Kate Davis

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*sponsors since our last newsletter*

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with special thanks to Elizabeth McCubbin



Check out the Ohrmann Museum and Gallery, Drummond

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# Raptors of the Rockies

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## Raptors of the Rockies

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