

Raptors of the Rockies
 P.O. BOX 250, FLORENCE, MT 59833
 Celebrating 28 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 49, DEC. 2015

River Full of Raptors

Happily we have a jackpot of photographic opportunities within a five minute walk of the back door, namely that Bald Eagle nest on the banks of the Bitterroot River. Kristi Dubois of Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks reported the site to me in 2012, spotted in a fly-over by airplane. That first year was nest construction, then kids every year since and the fun began.

The subjects were not just the eagles, but an American Kestrel nest was located exactly between that tree and their favorite snag. The fearless little falcons did not put up with much guff from their neighbors and were in constant harassment.

The Ospreys didn't disappoint either after fish thefts from the eagles early in the season, then their retaliatory attacks all fall. And the Grand Prize - young Peregrine Falcons appearing from nowhere to interact with all the guilty parties, plus Merlins, Cooper's Hawks, magpies, Lewis's Woodpeckers, ravens and a Pileated Woodpecker nest behind me on the slough.



Kate Davis photos ©



Intense smoke from the wildfires in late summer made for some interesting light and challenging evenings trying to spot what was happening across the river. Dogs at my side, this was about the most entertainment and relaxation ever, seeing and recording the myriad of animal activity nearly every evening. A highlight was watching three young Peregrines chasing each other, the young eagles crashing into trees learning to land, Ospreys snagging fish and almost getting run over by a moose on the beach in August!

New Book in the Works

A "novel" idea - add some funny captions to the bird photos posted on the Blog and Facebook, then the new book began. What the birds are thinking or saying, or a comment on the action. It may be like New Yorker comics with avian sub-titles. A suggestion by our friend Cathy Scholtens, I started assembling the images in July, 60-plus species from woodpeckers to waterfowl and heavy on the raptors. I came up with the captions while at the river, scribbled on little pads of paper stuffed in my vest pockets, most modified over and over. I am working with Mountain Press Publishing and it's entitled *Birds Are People Too*, one of my favorite sayings when out looking for raptors.



Finding they had nothing in common, they decided to part ways and never again use that on-line dating service.



Jillian and Sibley tied with the most program appearances of the year, Jillian with her TEDx Talk and Sib in trips to Spokane, Bozeman, and Flathead Lake. We have enjoyed 50 total education programs in 2015 and hope the birds have as well. Another stellar year thanks to our fine teaching team and outstanding Raptor Backers everywhere!



Photography Show at Blacksmith Brewing, All December

All new (mostly) photos and nearly all taken within ten miles of the brewery.
Downtown Stevensville.



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 photo ©

This moose was lingering in the backyard on and off all summer between the slough and the river, very mysterious. Then one day she made a bold break right in front of me and I got this one shot full frame, *that* close! We have a big print in the living room, *a mamma!*

Rest In Peace, Chest

As many of you know, we lost our Harris's Hawk Chesty in July. She died suddenly, and was flying around the yard in the evening, on the floor in her enclosure the next morning. At 24 years of age she had very full life, loved by most, unless you were perhaps chased into the garage by playful swoops. Chest was a gift from our friend Ric Jinotti, his beloved falconry bird. A Vietnam veteran and wheel chair bound, Chesty would dash after pheasants and land on his arm or head hunting in the field. She was named for Chesty Puller, the Korean war hero. She even accompanied Ric to the Vietnam Wall of Remembrance in Washington D.C. for a very touching program twenty years ago. Ric had taken a bad turn health-wise and was moving to a new house, so his hawk joined us in 2003. He and his sister Toni paid us a visit to see Chesty in 2007, and she flew down and landed on his arm, the last time he would see her before he passed.

Chest flew around the property nearly every day for the last 12 years for which she won the award for "Best Behavior Enrichment" from the International Association of Avian Trainers and Educators. She rarely left the yard, and had an ongoing project of building a nest on the arbor, adding material year-round plus laying (infertile) eggs year after year. She delighted visitors such as the MCAT Young Filmmakers Class by catching tidbits of meat tossed in the air, then returning to her building for a meal, rain or shine and even snow. A member of the family, we sure miss her, and know Ric was proud of her life as an educator.



ABOVE: A very early photo when she first joined us entitled "Chesty says "Get Back to Work."

LOWER LEFT: Launching off the fence, a desert hawk in the snow.

BELOW: Ric and his lovely sister Toni in a visit to the Raptor Ranch. Chesty flew right down and they had some words together, a poignant reunion of three pals.



Kate Davis photos ©



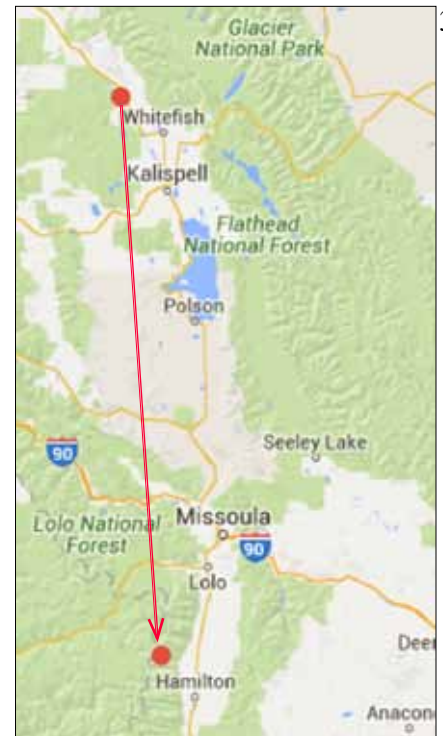
Saga of the Wayward Falcon

So tight and check out this unbelievable story! Jay Sumner was flying his Peregrine "Ki" on Hungarian Partridge Sup west of Kalispell, a Saturday morning in October. This is her second season and for some reason she just got up and split, the nightmare of all time for any falconer. With two transmitters beeping on the radio telemetry receiver he knew she was close twice, driving west and south for three days until after dark. On the fourth day I was enlisted to help, but then no signal at all. We drove all over the place for eight hours, including up the Thompson River and down the west side of Flathead Lake to Ninepipes Refuge and the Bison Range. I arrived home in Florence right at dark and just for fun I turned on my receiver in the driveway as I had done that morning in the dark. **BEEP BEEP!** She was up One Horse Creek across the road where I fly Sibley all the time! Ki had never been there, but there she stayed overnight day four.

Jay arrived before sunrise the following morning and we tracked her flight - she was heading south way back in the Bitterroot Mountains, probably in Idaho. This was so frustrating as she would have to see us to come to the swinging lure. Finally at about 3 p.m. we found a spot where she had retreated from high up in the mountains but still behind a hill at Bear Creek. I was tracking and Jay was throwing the lure when the signal got louder and louder. I don't know why but I looked over my shoulder and high up, a black speck in the sky. My binoculars revealed a falcon, telemetry antennae trailing, I'll bet 5-600 hundred feet overhead. Throwing the lure and a pigeon, she miraculously turned from her southern route and headed down in this position in the photo (from last year.) A stoop and seconds later flew straight up the dirt road, hit the lure and voila! Back on the glove and clipped in, she chowed on her quail with great gusto like nothing had happened. When we came to or senses, I asked Jay to check the odometer - distance driving around looking for the falcon over five days? Exactly 1799 miles. Distance between where she took off to her recovery? 159.7 miles. Distance she flew around Montana goofing off? Who knows.



Ki in 2014, and Dec. 2015 with ducks



From North of Kalispell to Bear Creek in the Bitterroot = 160 miles as the crow flies or falcon in this case.



Kate Davis photos ©



Jay Sumner, Director of Montana Peregrine Institute reports 2015:

We boast record highs in all population dynamics:

- The most active Peregrine Falcon territories ever recorded in a season: 129
- The most young recorded: 235
- The highest reproductive rate: 2.4 young/active territory
- The most annual new territories: 27

A Kestrel attack on the river, here the female but the male as well, and both would tag-team. I also saw them chasing magpies and even mobbing one big Peregrine that was perched in the foliage! The Fearless Falcons of Florence.



Dumpin' At the Bowl

Bridger Bowl that is, and that's Sibley at a program at the Bridger Raptor Festival in Bozeman. It was 499 miles round trip, and great audiences. Bummer about the weather as far as viewing migrating hawks and eagles, but the two lodges were packed with bird-lovers and anything Raptor. We started with the Keynote Address Friday night at the Museum of

the Rockies, and arrived just as they were locking the door to the dinosaur hall. It reminded me of the movie Vacation when the drive across country to visit Walley World to find it closed for renovation. Oh well. A BIG PowerPoint to start things, then Sib, iPod, Alisa the hawk and finished with Jillian the TEDX Talk Owl, a group hoot and a standing ovation! Just the second time we were awarded such an honor, the other in Boston and that may have been initiated by my father- and sister-in-law...

✦ Upcoming Public Raptor Programs:

Saturday, January 30 St. George Winter Bird Festival, Utah: Three days of field trips and presentations, including our friends at HawkWatch International and live birds and an evening Owl Prowl. I am the Keynote on Saturday evening at the Abbey Inn, banquet starts at 6 p.m. FUN and I get to go to Zion NP!

Saturday, June 4 17th Annual Montana Audubon Bird Festival in Missoula: Mark your 2016 calendars for three days of field trips and speakers, Friday evening Keynote the awesome Dr. Erick Greene, Saturday luncheon Keynote is Raptors of the Rockies. Holiday Inn Parkside, downtown.

SATURDAY, JULY 11, 2015

Blackfoot Peregrines

We had a full day of visiting Peregrine territories this week, Jay Sumner and his volunteers - me, Tyler Roady and his nephew from Minnesota, Vince. Our 12-year-old researcher diligently kept track of numbers, ages and sexes of the falcons. The grand total was 12 birds, and this nest at Chamberlain Creek had three downy chicks racing around the ledge at a different part of the cliff than past years. These Peregrines will keep you on your toes. This cliff is always a little later for fledging, but they are about two weeks early. My total for the day was 13 Peregrines as one stooped on a duck at the river that evening. Saw it with my eyes and not my camera. Way too fast.



SATURDAY, AUGUST 8, 2015

Hummingbirds Abound

With two feeders by my office all of the newly fledged hummingbirds are in constant chase mode, and I can't figure out who is winning - Rufous, Calliope, or Black-chinned. This is a young Rufous on his favorite perch on the fence 1/5000 second shutter speed to stop those wings. We had some friends from New Zealand here and one asked, "Hummingbirds? Aren't those are the ones that can fly forward and backward?" No hummers in NZ.



Friday, August 28, 2015

Smoke on the Water

This is the scene most every evening from 5:30 until dark - Peanut, Mookie and camera on the bank opposite the nest tree (right above the dogs) and favorite snag (left with ravens.) As you can tell, the smoke is so bad it's hardly worth it, until a Peregrine shows up and lands by two ravens! The big guy bluff charged the falcon and off he flew. The ravens and magpies are constantly sizing up whoever lands in those trees, curious corvids. A few nights ago a kestrel was dive bombing a Peregrine, four kestrels on the beach last night but in the dark. Still, fun to watch behavior even if I can't get a snapshot.



WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 16, 2015

Check Us Out On MTPR

Thursday is the day for our bi-monthly "appearance" on Montana Public Radio, the Pea Green Boat kid's show hosted by our pal Annie Garde. Tomorrow we have a special guest, ten year old Owen Manning with his internationally award-winning taxidermy piece, a Swamphen from New Zealand. Wait 'till you hear this story! He won the whole kit and kaboodle, just like his dad Dale has done for years. Check it out on the left of the FM dial (89.1 in Missoula) starting at 4 pm MST, or streaming at mtp.org and hit Listen Live. Plus we'll have a couple of our birds including Sonora the Aplomado Falcon and Owen the owl, of course. You can't miss this!



FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 18, 2015

Like Annie and I always say, "That was the best show ever." And it really was! Thanks Owen and Jennifer Manning, photos are his family in a Peregrine duck hunt with Sibley and taxidermy mount.



MONDAY, AUGUST 24, 2015

Flathead Lake Rendezvous

We were the surprise just before dinner at a gathering of 60 Montana History Foundation board members, sponsors and their families. A very generous Member-At-Large Penelope Wilson was stepping down and this was a party in her honor. CEO and President of MHF Charlene Porsild paid a visit to Penny's Pennsylvania home and discovered that she had a great passion for owls with a huge collection of anything-owl. So why not surprise her with the real thing? I had Owen, iPod and Jillian out one at a time and here's Penny meeting the tiniest, what an expression on her face, a sweet lady. I had Sibley in the Subaru, and finished with an animated description of a Peregrine hunt, the grand finale. The Montana History Foundation "seeks to preserve the legacy of Montana's past" an outstanding non-profit group and check them out!



TUESDAY,
SEPTEMBER
22, 2015
Raptor Ranch



Save Vietnam's Wildlife, Especially Pangolins

In October we had a visit from Thai Van Nguyen - the Director of a rehabilitation center far away, Save Vietnam's Wildlife. He was accompanied by Aor from Laos, spreading the word in America about the plight of the pangolin. If you are unfamiliar with this fantastic scaled anteater, join the crowd but you should know more about them. Most species are critically endangered now due to the huge black market in their scales and meat. I have known about these mammals since a kid at the Cincinnati Zoo and actually ate them (!) while in the Peace Corps in Cameroon, West Africa in the early 1980's, a fact I admitted to Thai right away.

We met the birds at the Raptor Ranch then came inside and he was absolutely delighted to spot my taxidermy armadillo (on the ground to the right) and see that I had a plastic pangolin which he is holding by my Penguin sculpture. As he left I asked if he was angry that I had dined on pangolins and he told me his mother had as well, so many in the yard in Vietnam that she would trip over them in the dark. Wow!

Here is Sonora the Aplomado standing on her pangolin toy (right foot) and wombat (left.)

www.savevietnamswildlife.org



Losses at the Raptor Ranch

Our Sharp-shinned Hawk Margo passed away in September, a program hero for 13 years. She made it through they worst of the yellow jacket season, particularly bad in her building as they were eating her food and bugging her. Then she was adopted by Raptor Backers from the Flathead. Her last appearances were on Montana Public Radio and at the Missoula Art Museum, a star performer. This photo was in the Bitterroot Audubon calendar. She was relatively calm and stood on the glove like a pro, very unusual for this high-strung species, so we used her in Dr. Erick Greene's alarm call study. Perched in the open she inspired a great deal of mobbing and vocalizations from freaked out songbirds, recorded and analyzed. "Look! A predator!" they were saying. She wasn't a typical bird to have in programs and yet had a great, long life.



Kate Davis photos ©



I wrote this to his namesake, Jack Walther, my high school art teacher: Sorry to report that JayDub has passed, fifteen years of age which is up there in longevity records for an American Kestrel. He had taken been unhealthy for a while and I finally decided on euthanasia. He just went to sleep on Thanksgiving morning. He will be missed, and had quite a few appearances on Montana Public Radio, chattering for the listeners. An excellent educator, like you, JayDub!

My former teacher Mr. Walther is a friend to this day, 35 years later.

Many have commented on our streak of bad luck lately, but these birds were aged and lived much longer than their counterparts in the wild would have, reaching thousands of people in their lifetimes. Plus, they both are named for Family Friends, and missed by us.



The three sisters of the eagle nest this year that fledged on June 27th (mistake on the date last newsletter, sorry) and a one of the last Osprey shots of the year, a youngster that a split second later caught a whitefish. Favorite photos of the season, and more to come.

An image from the past, 2003 to be exact. Here are Marna and John Abbott of Abbott's Glass, Missoula with their newly-installed Osprey platform, courtesy Ryan Gibbs of NorthWestern Energy. This was the same year we flew to Stanford, MT in a Bonanza airplane with pilot Jeanne McPhearson for a program for the whole town, had our last Pea Green Boat program on the radio with Marcia Dunn, and visited our 100th school in Sanders County. Plus my first book *Raptors of the Rockies* was selling well, Tom built 25 swallow/bluebird boxes, and we did a program for the National Freestyle Ski Championships and named our owl after the mogul champion, Jillian Vogtli. Then Mom and I drove to Big Sky for a presentation at the Ophthalmologists Convention, we had our 5th Annual Benefit Auction at the Elk's Club, and my professor and advisor Dr. Dick Hutto brought the whole family over for a falcon hunt and tour. Time flies, doesn't it?



Raptor Research Foundation Conference 2015, Sacramento



What a Raptor Research Foundation Conference in November! This will be a hard one to top, with over 400 attendees, 150 scientific papers and 50 posters. A slick event thanks to our hosts the Golden Gate Raptor Observatory, Allen Fish Director, and his incredible volunteers. We also enjoyed pre-conference workshops and Golden Eagle Meeting, a number of symposia, plenary by Pete Bloom, and three concurrent paper sessions. Sunday field trips weren't a bit hampered by the much-needed rain (it's California, remember.)

Top photo is the Madison Conference 50th anniversary panel - Jeep Pangel moderator with Tom Cade on the screen.

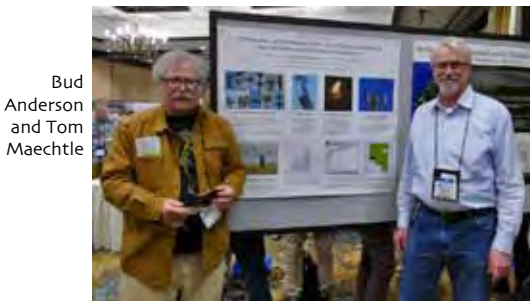
The Madison Conference in 1965 was organized by Professor Joseph Hickey of the University of Wisconsin, an assembly of 60 scientists from seven countries. This marked the beginning of the conservation biology movement, leading to the banning of pesticides that were killing off several species, namely the Peregrine. Thanks Jeep for the very memorable panel and presentation!



TOP LEFT: Dan Varland of Coastal Raptors shows his Early Career Raptor Researchers the correct way to handle a live Golden Eagle!

ABOVE: Artist/author Hans Peeters painted a wonderful falcon for the label of a special wine uncorked at the conference, Peregrine Pinot.

Saturday night banquet, complete with more Peregrine Pinot and a toast! Nick Dunlop had a running "slide show" on the big screen of raptor images submitted by attendees, plus we enjoyed awards and our President Clint Boal handing over the honors to new President, Miguel Saggese. See you in Cape May, New Jersey next year!



Bud Anderson and Tom Maechtle



Rainbow over the eagle building, and a theft high overhead - an adult Bald Eagle steals something from a hatch-year eagle, probably some nice roadkill.

ABOVE: A pair of Sandhill Cranes land on the beach near the eagle nest.

BELOW: A couple of young Peregrine Falcons frequented the beach starting in August.



Award Winner Tempe

Our friend Tempe Regan won the Anderson Award at the RRF Conference, the greatest of honors and should open doors for life! Her Master's degree project at Boise State is on Barn Owl mortality on an Idaho roadway, hundreds of winter and fall nighttime surveys last year which are heroics in itself if you ask me. Her paper presentation was fascinating and very well received, considered the best among the students applicants. The William C. Anderson Memorial Award was established in 1982 in memory of Bill Andersen. Remember Tempe from last year's Newsletter and blog? She told me this story at the RRF Conference in Corpus Christi:

"You came to my school in Superior, Montana when I was 9 years old. I remember you standing there with a bird on your arm and being in awe and thinking I want to do that!"

Yep, Feb. 21st 1996 we had that assembly. Way to go, Tempe!



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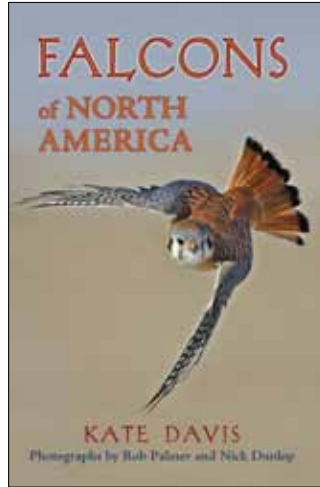
A portion of all book proceeds goes back to help fund our program

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
American Kestrel	Ella ~ \$ 50
American Kestrel	Wes ~ \$ 50
Peregrine Falcon	Sibley ~ \$ 400
Gyr/Peregrine hybrid	Ansel ~ \$ 150
Aplomado Falcon	Sonora ~ \$ 200



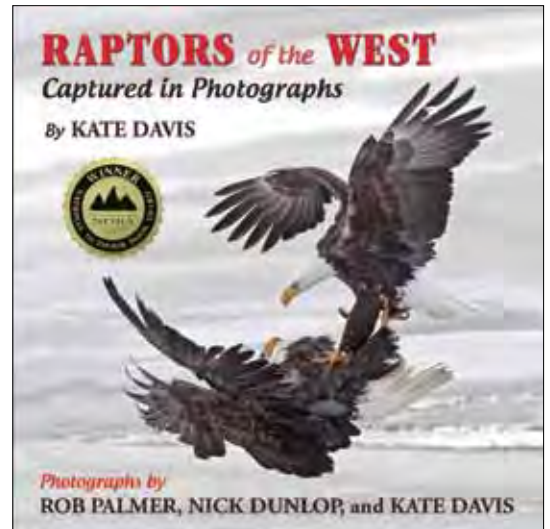
Max is 26, going on 27 years old!



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

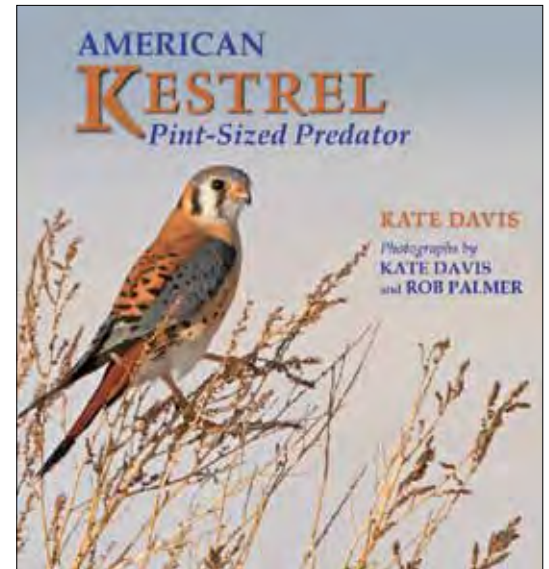


Pages: 112 Price: \$16.95
Photographs: 135



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

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



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

Name _____

Address _____

Contribution amount or Adopted Raptor _____

Thank you Raptor Backers!

sponsors since our last newsletter

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Raptors of the Rockies

Educational Programs since 1988

