



**RAPTORS OF THE ROCKIES**  
 P.O. BOX 250, FLORENCE, MONTANA  
*Education Programs since 1988*

# Raptor Round-Up

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

**NUMBER 61, NOVEMBER 2022**

email Kate - [raptors@montana.com](mailto:raptors@montana.com)

*New Friends at the Ranch*

## Tragic Year, and Bright Spots

This has been an especially difficult Raptor Round-Up to produce, a long battle with sad tales to recount. My best friends passed early in the year - Sally Mom died in late February just shy of her 88th birthday, then younger sister Betsy just 40 days later of a brain disease. Both spent their last days with comfort care at Riverside Health Care in Missoula and we so much appreciate their kindness. The three of us spent spring and summer afternoons together chatting and laughing, watching Peregrine nests. Not this year.

I have struggled to keep a positive attitude, yet have had a full program schedule, 35 years since our humble beginnings at a rental property in Clinton. Wonderful recent and vintage friends, tours galore, and excitement for what the future will hold. Thanks Raptors and Raptor Backers alike.



Sibley the Peregrine on a bright February day, across the road from the house at Mike's.



Mose the Labrador joined us in mid-September. From Leesa Jones, this one was her favorite of the litter of all boys! He's pals with Nico and perfect, mostly.



Kate Davis photos ©



Sibley's half-cousin Mischa started her career here in June, name meaning "a girl most people can only dream about"  
 More on page 6

# R.I.P. iPod the Pygmy-Owl Pal

## MISSION STATEMENT

Raptors of the Rockies is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) raptor education project located in Western Montana. Four Federal and State Permits are required. Since 1988, our mission has been:

- \* To educate schools and the public through the use of live birds - the falcons, hawks, eagles 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;
- \* To encourage everyone to go outdoors - "Nature Therapy!"



Steve Palmer photo ©



We are heartbroken to report that our lovely and enigmatic Northern Pygmy-Owl iPod is no longer. He had his last months back and forth in a kennel in the house at night and outdoors during nice weather. We knew he wasn't feeling well with a poor appetite. He finally quit in February after 12 years here at the Raptor Ranch. A wing injury prevented his release as a youngster and what a favorite friend. His image is featured on 120 Frontier airplane tail sections thanks to owner Bill Franke. Plus, he was a star in 2011 on the University Theater stage for the Chickadee Symphony with Dr. Erick Greene. iPod is much missed.

## Press and TV "Airplay"



Thanksgiving story about a different bird than a turkey, here reporter Jill Valley Allard of television KPAX MTN News did a piece about the ranch with Maizee the Peregrine. Our youngster was especially vocal with a nice cack after Jill's opening remarks, me so proud. Maizee has since molted into adult plumage, the orangish cast of a Continental or *anatum* Peregrine. And she has also developed a little "attitude" and will hopefully mellow out.



Maizee with grown-up plumage



Mischa with Perry:

Our dear friend, reporter/photographer for Missoulian and Ravalli Republic Newspapers, Perry Backus had a great visit in June. We had an interview for a cover story about our program, photos of Maizee and Mischa. He retired that Friday with 40 years of reporting under his belt, no more deadlines! Perry wanted to cover the healing process here with these birds after our human losses, our bright future with Peregrines and the rest of the Teaching Team. A very nice piece, and one of many, many he has produced about the Raptor Ranch over the years. We love you Perry, best wishes, and extra fun on our hikes, so deserving!

# Programs, Galore, Tours A-Plenty



Cold Springs Elementary of Stevensville with Maizee, and teacher Julie on her last day, retiring after 30-something years.



Roxy Theater with a falconry program for Patagonia and the International Wildlife Film Festival. *We'll be back!*



The Remington Assisted Living Center in Hamilton, and on the table in front of us was my Mom's obituary in the Missoulian that day, very ironic and sad.

Our 137th school, Willard High School of Missoula, excellent students and teachers. What fun, and some memorable thank-you cards in the mail. "You are very swag and very important to our wildlife" - Bryn



We also enjoyed programs for Pea Green Boat MT Public Radio, Montana Natural History Center, Missoula Art Museum Birds and Art for Grown-Ups and Kids Camp, Missoula Public Library, Watson's Children's Shelter, Arlee Rehabilitation Center, STEEM, the Book Exchange, Drummond and Florence Elementary, Hamilton High School, and The Bird of Prey Festival in Kalispell. Plus art shows at ZACC and Artist's Shop *whew...*



Paxson Elementary School 5th graders, thanks Bev Glueckert and teacher Kim Olson. A big spring art project, bird tiles displayed at the school garden in June.



Queensryche Band Returns



Kate Davis photo ©



Ospreys had a difficult spring with the high water, and many familiar nests failed including our near-by Huckleberry Lane platform. They only eat live fish, that's it. This male was bringing in a fish to the nest in a Florence cell phone tower in September - still occupied a month (or more) later than normal.

Many of the adult females were already migrating south, usually first to depart. Males next then finally young will follow. Here the female and one should-be-fledged await delivery of this big rainbow trout. Weird. Wonder if it is from all of the rays and flickers of cell phone energy? Not very scientific, sorry.



Arrowleaf Balsamroot patch near the house, and Nico and Mose play tug 'o war with a turkey feather.



# Raptor Blogs

Entries several times a week posted on our web site.

Add this as a bookmark on your tool bar: [raptorsoftherockies.blogspot.com](http://raptorsoftherockies.blogspot.com) plus facebook, Kate Davis

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 4, 2021

## Raptor Ranch Yesterday

I was up on the rooftop (click-click-click) cleaning out the wood stove chimney, and had to get some snapshots. The whole facility from the Simon/Aplomado building on the far left to the eagle enclosure by the river on the right, taken right over my office. I planted all those trees, a dozen fitting in my car 20 years ago. We got our first sort-of snow the next day and took me 2 hours and 20 minutes to drive home from Mom's, 23 miles. I listened to two and a half jazz CD's - Freddy Hubbard, Joe Zawinul, and half of an Ahmad Jamal before I pulled in the driveway. Thank goodness for CD's, a little sanity on an insane trip.



SUNDAY, MAY 1, 2022

## Friday Night Beach Party

Watching the Bald Eagle nest through the scope from the house, I knew they were feeding young this week. It's just about the end of that view, with the cottonwood leaves starting to pop. Down at the beach seen from the riverbank, imagine my delight when two young showed their faces, then a third! This is the fourth time for three chicks since the nest was built in 2011. What fun this will be.



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SATURDAY, JUNE 4, 2022

## Bad Idea, Mr. Ground Squirrel

Not the best place to pop up or venture forth, Mr. ex-Columbian Ground Squirrel. This photo is from a few years ago but just happened again. Simone the Red-tailed Hawk hadn't eaten her mice in a few days when I spotted a half eaten squirrel in the corner. The (Rodent) Darwin Award. Simone was very proud, it seemed.



SUNDAY, JULY 17, 2022

## Aviation Adventure

Out at the Missoula airport's Museum of Mountain Flying are two gems right now, a B-25 bomber and this B-17 "Sentimental Journey." I was delighted to meet the pilot and assistant, admitted I never made it through ground school to be a pilot myself. So I just enjoy watching falcons fly! Climbing through the interior brought goose bumps, the bombardier/gunner nose cone with the cockpit. Walking through the bomb section I made a comment to myself about the movie "Dr. Strangelove."

Totally amazing and what history! (and flew right over my house the next morning, not coincidentally I am thinking...)



SUNDAY, AUGUST 14, 2022

## What Is A Barn Owl Doing Here?

Saturday's drama, a Barn Owl was trapped in the basement at the Fort Missoula Military Museum, reported to me yesterday by Tate Jones, curator.

We climbed around down there with flashlights and found it 30 feet back in an impossible spot to retrieve. Tate decided to just open the door to the stairs, light pouring in, and an hour later, out flew the bird, did a few laps over the museum and flew away! We were discussing military history for a half hour, thank goodness, so witnessed the escape. Barn Owls are quite rare in these parts, especially underground in basements.



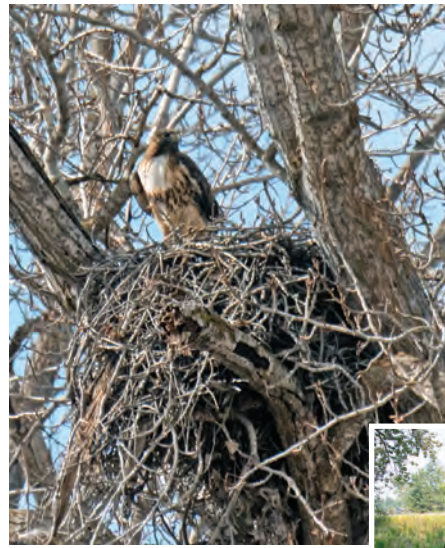
AUGUST 2022

Various hummingbirds, and have never seen so many, especially fledglings. But alas just one House Wren and never spotted a Bobolink.



# Back to Cincinnati in April!

Director of the Cincinnati Zoo Thane Maynard dropped by with his wife Kathleen and friends in July. What a wonderful visit and man. I know I talked their ears off, reminiscing about the 1970's at the Cincinnati Zoo, where I started this life of birds with the Junior Zoologists Club. And lo and behold, I have been asked to join the Zoo's 2023 Barrows Speakers roster. This will make 50 years exactly since it all began. **At the ZOO!**



Our neighborhood Red-tail nest has been the destination for innumerable hikes with Nico the dog and camera. I'm not certain how many years total they have added to it, but HUGE! I took Washington Coast friends Dan and Sue Varland over there this summer only to find it crushed under the cottonwood tree, probably blown down in the last storm. At least two young fledged, chasing their parents all around. I sure hope they nest again.



Better days, beginning of the season. They were the most vocal hawks I have ever encountered and the folks living in the house sometimes complained.



## Know Your Dark Winter Hawks



Harlan's Hawk from the far north. Lots winter in the Bitterroot.



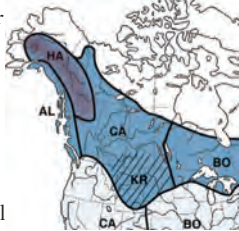
Kate Davis photos ©

Dark morph Rough-leg with feathered legs, large head, small beak plus the striped tail of an adult male, another winter bird.



The big bird standing on a little limb or stick is a Rough-leg. David Sibley reports in the must-have *Sibley Guide to Birds*, "Rough-legged Hawks often perch on small twigs at the top of trees and shrubs." Watch for them all winter here, females and young birds with a dark belly band, all have a big black wrist patch in flight. The little tiny feet are feathered to the toes hence the "rough leg." And wouldn't you know, dark morphs to confuse us all.

Every winter I am amazed at the number of dark hawks that hang out here in the Bitterroot. Harlan's Hawks are a black and white subspecies of Red-tail that breeds in Alaska and NW Canada (*HA* on the Red-tail distribution map.) "Our" hawks here are Western or *calurus* subspecies, *CA* on the map. Harlan's was considered a separate species in the past (and some feel still should be.) The adult Harlan's tail may be white, usually a terminal dark band and to further complicate things, sometimes a faint red tint as well. Rough-legged Hawks are also migrating and overwintering here, similarly with a dark phase to further complicate identification while driving at 60 mph on Eastside Highway. Watch for the occasional Prairie Falcons, too. *Hurray*



Dark-morph Red-tailed Hawk, here all year, warm brown colors of our resident Western subspecies. All three here are adults, notice the telltale dark eyes.

# 6 Sibley Celebrates, Sort Of

Our October engagement at Missoula Clay Studios was a big day for all of us, especially Sib the professional model. **Her 700th program!** I keep track of all this stuff, partly for our permits but here for bragging rights. Four TV shows, lots of ducks and pheasants hunted up, and an iconic instructor for more than 19 years. In November 2019 we had our first engagement at Clay Studios and now we are hooked. Artists jumped right in, falcons and owls with Simon as the other supermodel, neither bird at all shy. I was given a block of clay for a wood-fired kiln project coming up and am excited to go 3-D again. I used to make little clay raptors, but can't for the life of me remember who fired them. Probably ceramist Stephanie Stephenson, as we did kids' clay sculpting classes for the Montana Natural History Center way back when.



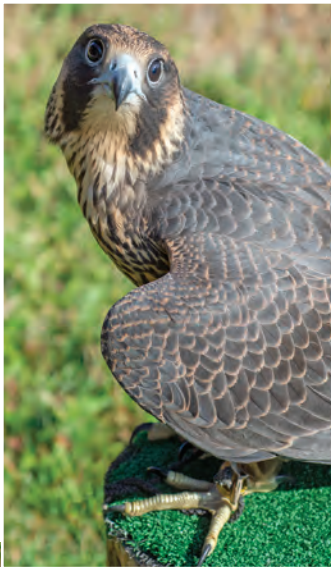
Sib caught a Coot in the Bitterroot last winter!



Simon!

## Mischa Joins Us in June

Skip at Springhill Falcons in Bozeman offered us a baby Peregrine that turned out was related to Sibley. Their mothers are half-sisters, so cousins I guess. Tom encouraged me to give her a try, and so glad he did. That and glad the flip of a quarter came up tails, no kidding. I couldn't decide and resorted to a coin toss. So back to the imprinting, baby play-pen in the office, down feathers all over the house and ground quail in the refrigerator. *Man*, I love doing this and Tom was right. A great idea and love Misch, cheering me up and taking my time in training.



Kate Davis photos ©



Bitterroot Porcupine & Trumpeter Swans  
California Quail- one of about 30 in our yard lately, plus Eurasian Collared Doves!



Nico kept dropping a ball at my feet to throw, and after she gave up on me she tried the young falcon. I swear Nico waited ten minutes or more for a toss, smart dog.



My Logo Design! I got the idea from my sculpture hanging on the deck.



# Our Teaching Team

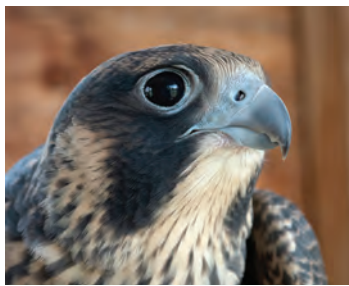
And the years they joined us



Sonora the Aplomado Falcon 2013



Owen the Northern Saw-whet Owl 2012



Mischa the Peregrine Falcon 2022



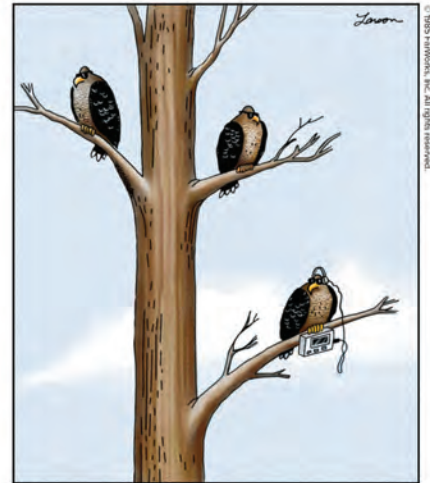
Sonny the Bald Eagle 2011



Jillian the Great Horned Owl 2003

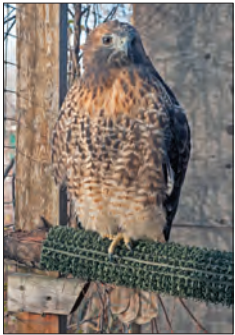


A Favorite Far Side, Gary Larson



Birds of prey know they're cool.

KT and Jon Phillips, found photo- 1965



Simone the Red-tailed Hawk 2017



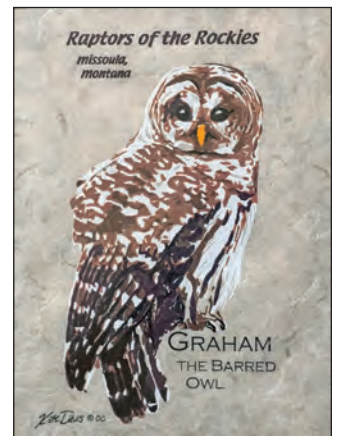
Sibley the Peregrine Falcon 2003



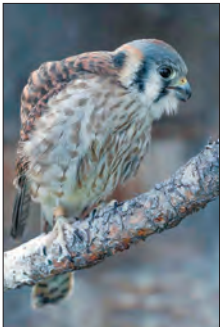
Nigel the Golden Eagle 1999



Some of our pigeons! 2001



Graham, Franklin Elementary School Mascot t-shirts circa 2000. Yep, need to make another t-shirt soon, many requests.



Ella and Wes the American Kestrels 2013 sister & brother



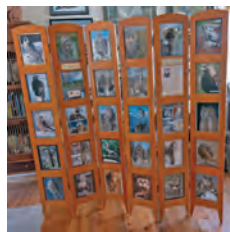
Simon the Great Horned Owl 2017



Maizee the Peregrine Falcon 2021



A trip down Memory Lane, courtesy The Book Exchange in Missoula - photos of program birds past and present. These panels were once displayed at the airport, check 'em out today, and grab a book or two -the BEST!



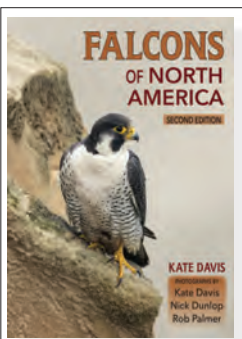
**Got Cards!** From us and also available at Rockin Rudy's the coolest place in town. All proceeds to benefit our education outfit. Thanks Minuteman Press, Missoula.



\$19

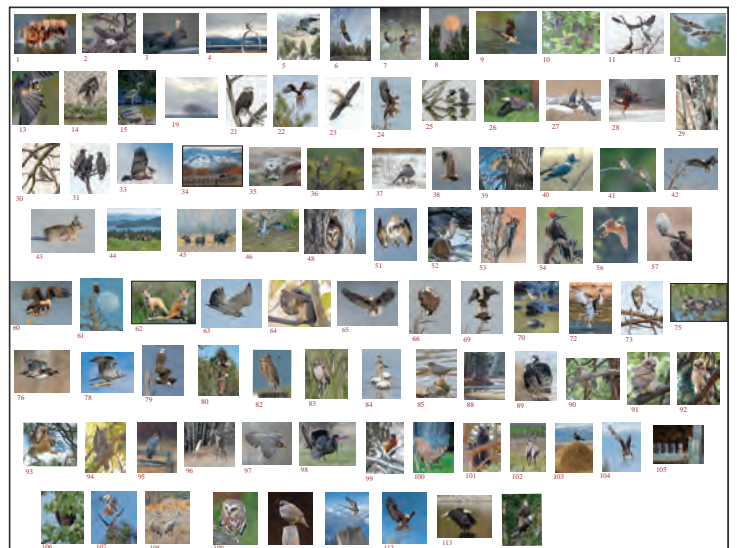
\$18

\$28



**Books available** Signed and just add \$5 postage  
Checks work nicely, to Kate Davis, please.  
A portion of proceeds to benefit our education program.

(Others are out-of-print or reprinting)



## Thank you Raptor Backers!

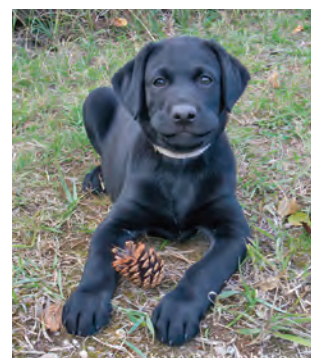
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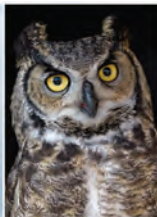
*Minuteman Press in Missoula, their generosity for RRU's in living color!*

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# Raptors of the Rockies

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