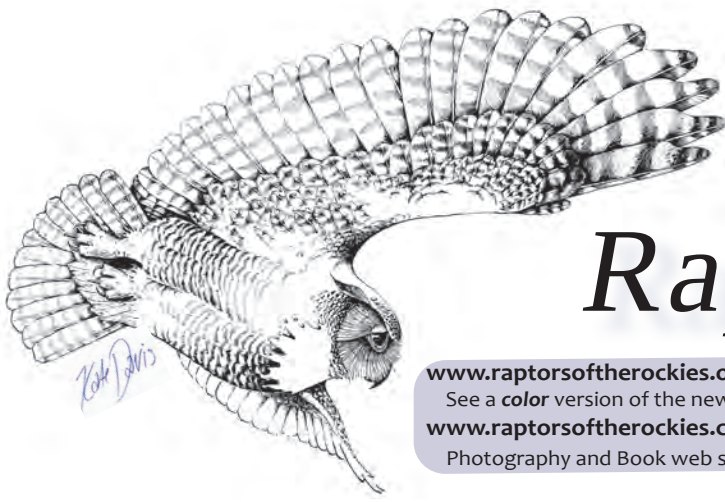




RAPTORS OF THE ROCKIES
P.O. BOX 250, FLORENCE, MONTANA
Education Programs since 1988

Raptor Round-Up

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

NUMBER 64, NOVEMBER 2025

email Kate Davis - raptors@montana.com

R.I.P. Sibley the Peregrine



*April 2003 - Sept 2025 764 programs
Superstar*

Kate Davis photos©

I've written 63 of these Raptor Round-Up newsletters starting with a cut-and-paste Kinko's run in 1998, 4 pages in black and white, 3 issues a year. Now just one biggie a year and in color.

Never have I had a more difficult and distressful year to report than this. We have lost raptor family members, had a huge transformation and challenge at the Raptor Ranch, and changes in programs for the future. We have also had some fun engagements, new schools, and creative endeavors like never before with the photography and art.

We'll start by blessing Sibley the Greatest Pal that ever lived, and thanks to the hundreds that have sent condolences, her friends and admirers. We are so privileged to have had her as a constant companion for more than 22 years. I always loved so see her staring out window of the Suburu on her way to a program or duck hunt, surprising anyone driving nearby. My favorite was high-speed traffic in Spokane and the guy motioned me to roll down my window. "There's a bird in your car!" No, four actually.

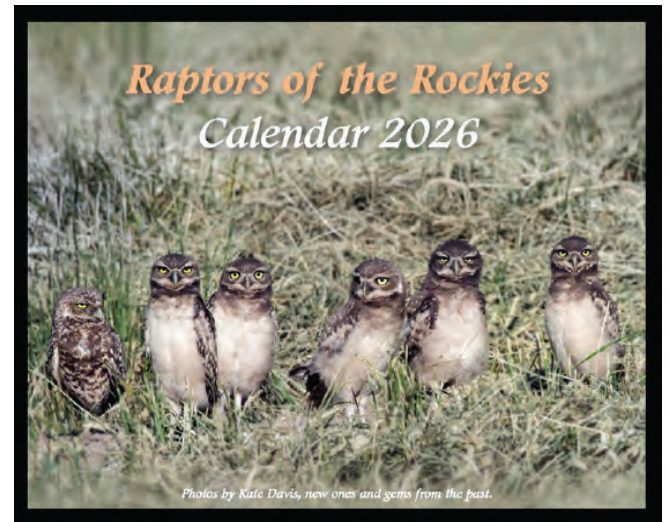


We are lucky to have our Bald Eagles here year 'round and started incubating on March 9th, fledged two on July 1st, a bit early this year.



30 education programs this year, just like 2024 and each one a favorite, kids and adults alike. In our Five Valleys Audubon gig in October we had the honor of being labeled as "The Legendary Kate Davis" Too much, but one attendee did say "awesome." I remember someone at the 1000th education program at Lee Metcalf Refuge shouting, "See you at number 2000!" That seemed inconceivable at the time, but we are getting close. In every program, we'll all promise to venture outside and hoot up an owl as a finale. Happily, some wild birds are cooperating with poses like this Great Blue Heron most days at the river by the house, daily walk with the dogs. My therapy, Nico and Mose and camera then come back for some Art Inertia, drypoint etchings and nine this year. Two of herons, one more on the way. Let's welcome 2026 and the out-of-doors. We live in a wonderful natural environment around here, wouldn't you say?

*Raptors of the Rockies
Calendar 2026*



Photos by Kate Davis, new ones and gems from the past.

New Calendars thanks Minuteman Press
12 months of favorite photos, and even mammals this time!
Available from us and Rockin Rudy's, our favorite store.

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!"

Our Brief Buddy Bird, Bodie

It is always heartbreaking to report the demise of a family member and here a whole page and issue, practically. Bodie the American Kestrel was handed off as a downy baby after her nest tree was sawed down in late June 2023. We have had a brother and sister team of kestrels here for ten years, and sadly the female Ella had died over the winter. The siblings shared hundreds of programs over that decade with us.

We thought that this female would make a nice companion for Wes the male. With the high mortality of raptors in general, and the fact that this young female was habituated to humans, we thought she would make a great addition to our Teaching Team. She was Wes' roommate and sadly, Bodie died in June, right in my hand. She had laid one intact egg two days prior and this second one was in fragments. Somehow this was a reproductive tragedy, and poor Wes is again alone in the enclosure after females for 12 years. We miss you, little girl.



Named for Bodie, California, a ghost town from Gold Rush Days, and the birthplace of our grandmother on my father's side. She was a tough little falcon, and quite vocal *chittering*.

Passing of an Icon: Sibley dies at age 22, long-lived and loved

Our Hero Bird, Sibley has died. The evening before she was fine, and next afternoon I was cradling her for a half hour with her labored breathing as I sat on the edge of the Falconhouse. Every morning I would tell her "Five more years." Well, it worked for a long time Thankfully. I was reminding her of all her amazing stories and conquests. She opened her eyes and died at 2:30, in my arms. Buried by the building, wrapped in a Sibley t-shirt from 22 years ago.

Every morning since we got the Falconhouse I would walk over there first thing and see if she was still with us, half the time barefoot on the gravel in the driveway. I added it all up- 764 formal education programs and 962 tours over here, for 72,000 audience members, young and old alike. Then there were the 4 TV shows, Animal Planet and PBS, one BBC. And for exercise and hunting I figured she flew about 2500 times (most days, 7 months a year, 20 years.) She only spent one night out. Now THAT was a night I didn't sleep. I followed the "beep" telemetry signal all the way to Stevensville, and turned out it was a kennel full of mountain lion hunting dogs with transmitters on their collars, the same frequency. The owner turned them all off and silence. Then I found her standing in a fence at Lee Metcalf Refuge, begging. Whew.

Sibley could have been electrocuted or shot, hit a fence or killed by an eagle or owl. She did catch game like ducks and pheasants. Not enough to keep us fed (an old joke by John Craighead) but kept me on my toes. We were so fortunate to fly every Sunday at a ranch in Corvallis, the absolute highlight of the week, or of all time, for the two of us.

More importantly, Sib was the star educator for my favorite topic- *Falcons*. Few stories are as dramatic as Peregrine reintroduction and recovery, or their hunting tactics, breeding strategies, everything about them. We know that she excited more than one eager youngster (or grown-up) into sitting at a nest cliff with binoculars... and maybe a camera. I counted the physical numbers at programs but she touched thousands. And we counted lots of you more than once. R.I.P. and Love, Sibley!



Mookie, Peanut and Sib - a few Subarus ago



In the house, and cover girls



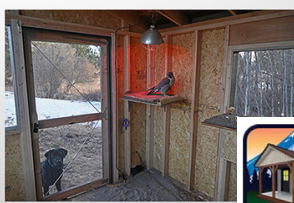
Sibley meets her namesake, hero David Sibley, at Pine Butte Guest Ranch near Choteau. He is the guru of field guides and a dear friend. We were so lucky to have had eight years of programs together with The Nature Conservancy, and we met up at conferences and even shared a book-signing spot in Salt Lake City.

He wrote this email: "I just heard about Sibley's passing and wanted to let you know how sorry I am. She was a great bird and I was honored to share her name."

Transformation : Before/After



The neighbors suggested that I move my buildings, but they are all attached to the ground with a 2 foot of trench all around, hardware cloth sunk down and curving out as weasel-proofing. Plus vegetation is growing on the buildings for shade. Impossible. I was told this structure is for storage of "construction equipment and hot-rod collection."



**MILLER
BARNS**



I knew we had to move a bunch of birds and thought of Miller Barns. I was standing front of a gorgeous greenhouse at their lot in Stevensville talking to owner Tim Schrock on the phone. "Can you make it 16 feet long, slanted roof, divided in half, doors on either end?" SURE and two weeks later, the new Falconhouse was delivered/installed south of the driveway. It was to house Sibley and Mischa, BEAUTIFUL building, Miller Barns. I wrote a 5-star review.



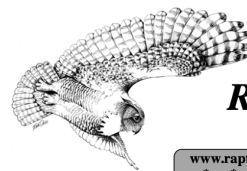
There is no shade here, so I installed 3-inch insulation under the roof, fans running all day, and little pine trees planted all around, and 100 degrees in the sun. I had to move Sibley inside every day at 2 p.m. all summer, unless it was cloudy and cool. Next spring Dave Plummer is painting reflective white material on the roof. It's rumored to work wonders, and this is probably where we will have to move Sonora the Aplomado Falcon when the neighbors move in.

In our 24th year at the Raptor Ranch in the Bitterroot Valley, we were subjected to a huge face-lift in March. New neighbors and changes in the neighborhood required us to relocate half our birds. They built an 80' x 40', 30 foot tall warehouse next to the fence and the first three buildings, six actual enclosures, were emptied.

Our birds have happily never been disturbed - the previous owner Bob Tavares would alert me when he was mowing the field so I could move them. Simon went out to the pigeon loft (for a while), Little Billie moved to an enclosure by the garage, Sonora down to the rehab spot. Then the big buy - the Falconhouse. Our pal Andy Snowden built a perfect pad, just in time for installation and the warehouse construction next door.



Sibley's 3 year-old cousin Mischa has had a major behavior change. (Their mothers are half-sisters from the same breeder.) She is terrified when leaving the new building. Looking into the sky she leaps off the glove screaming and spinning and nailing me. I have tried plans A, B, and C to get her calmed down. Plan D is placing a hood on her head to move her as she is fine in the house where she was raised since a baby. Mischa was the sweetest bird we have ever met, and only hope she will come around for programs and flying. Sibley's twin and so disconcerting.



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Educational Programs since 1988

Raptor Round-Up

Number 8 June 2001

www.raptorsoftherockies.org
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Check out our web site

Raptors Relocates !



Cover Story in 2001! We bought 10 acres on the Bitterroot River in Florence after 13 years at a rental in Clinton. I designed and carpenters Dave Plummer and Mike Hupe built all new enclosures, thanks to a generous donation and help from Boyce Lumber, Grizzly Fence, Cenex... everyone. We had 20 raptors on the Teaching Team at the time. Enclosures were placed on the north side of our place at the suggestion of the guys.

The harshest sun rays of the summer would strike the back and roofs of the buildings and not the birds directly. Plus I planted dozens of relocated pine trees, and Bitterroot Restoration brought native shrubs. Shade cloth was stapled up, and in one case, water misters and a fan for the white Gyrfalcon. Voila! Shade and quiet solitude they enjoyed their entire lives.



Dave Plummer and the Bitterroots in the background.

Raptor Blogs

Entries several times a week
posted on our web site

Add this as a bookmark on your tool bar:
raptorsoftherockies.blogspot.com
plus facebook, Kate Davis

WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 5, 2025

FLOW DAY

It is possible to get trapped over here with deep snow blown in the driveway and has happened several times. So thanks wonderful neighbor Mike DeNeve (and also Steve Palmer in past years). Mike's skid steer saved the day again. The snow blower helped, and here "12 inches to a foot." Staying home with lots to do, raptor care and correspondences, and running etching prints in the office.



TUESDAY SEPTEMBER 16, 2025

LOWEST FLOW EVER

Top photo is the bridge across the slough in the back, taken in May. Second photo is now at the beaver dam. Barely any water flowing now, and always happy to have the rain. This is actually Childs Creek, and nearly every year that bridge is floating in the spring runoff and we have to re-install it, somehow. We have always had eager volunteers (yea, right) but it stayed in place for 2025, raised up thanks to some cinder blocks.



MARCH 29 and JULY 13, 2025

SANDHILL CRANE FAMILY

Another favorite feathered family and heard their rattling bugle at a great distance early March, sound that travels over a mile. First photo the parents, a long-term pair bond, then with two offspring in a hay field nearby. Young might enjoy parental care for as long as 10 months, regal residents all summer.



THURSDAY AUGUST 7, 2025

NEST QUEST

I was delighted to accompany Rebecca Mowry with Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks to search for some hawk nests yesterday. Two Goshawk and one Cooper's hawk nest were marked with telemetry and we hiked up Larry Creek near Florence to see if they had been occupied this season. Turns out they were in an area back-burned by the Forest Service to combat the Lolo Peak fire in 2017. I was just happy that my bad knee worked as I opted to not have another total knee replacement this year. Still a problem but better now.



WEDNESDAY JULY 9, 2025

TREE SWALLOWS

This nest box is right in the yard, a snapshot just now when I was hanging the laundry on the line. Tom built dozens of these and installed all over the property, plus some kestrel boxes at spots in the Bitterroot.



TUESDAY
JANUARY 21,
2025

RIVER BANK

Four swans, two Bald Eagles and two spoiled dogs. Haven't missed a day at the beach and that's the eagle nest tree across the river, adults perched above.



Elk In The Backyard

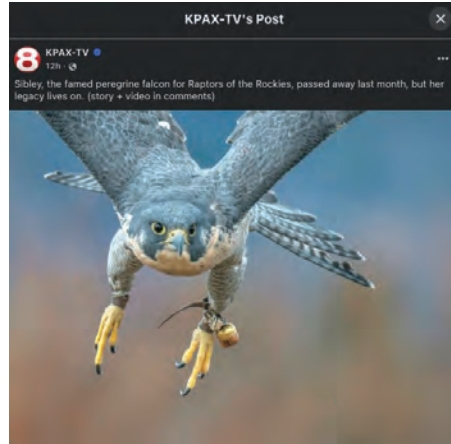
A fun view on Memorial Day Evening of elk, a surprise. We have had a moose, some coyotes and foxes, raccoons and of course skunks in the yard. This is a first for photos of elk, but have seen their "sign", and some trophy white-tailed deer. I'll bet there are bears and mountain lions out there too, in the dark.



Birds Are People, Too (and other stories) Kate Davis Raptors of the Rockies

By MARY WALLACE
Photos provided by KATE DAVIS

What makes Kate Davis's heart sing is watching Sibley (her most famous falcon) fly high and return to her falconry glove. It is one of the most rewarding things she gets to do. Sibley is smart and playful and has been her companion on much of her raptor journey, perching by her side for years, a lively but very well-behaved raptor as a part of the educational programs Kate has done for school children and the public in Montana and around the country. Kate has presented nearly 2,000 educational programs for over 141,000 children and adults since she founded Raptors of the Rockies in 1988.



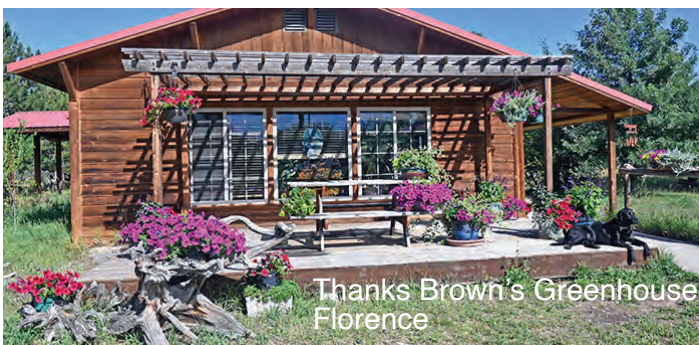
Big Press: 406 Magazine, KPAX and Newspaper



Kate Davis photos ©



This Great Blue Heron makes me so happy. Often down at the slough, she's a real poser. The one time I didn't have my camera she flew up from the beach, perched on a scenic snag, jumped into the river and caught a big fish. The scene was plaguing me, so camera every time, rain or shine. She may be perched on that lovely limb on the far right, and the first few times I would sneak in shooting away. Now often she won't even fly when I walk by. Very inspirational, thanks.



Thanks Brown's Greenhouse
Florence

By the way, we could sure use some game meat for eagle food. Non-ground and whole chunks are appreciated and can pick up, or deliver to the Raptor Ranch in Florence.



Spirit At Play and TEACH



Spirit At Play Early Childhood Program in Missoula, our first visit in 15 years. We talked about what a raptor eats and they decided *meat*, and when I asked the kids what a falcon like Sibley here would fly down out of the sky to grab, they told me *meat*!



We had a sketching session for the older kids at TEACH with Simon, and a big computer "blackboard" that I couldn't figure out. I told them I used to live in Cameroon, West Africa and one little clap for that.



Over at the old Jefferson School, 67 students aged 5-10 enrolled in TEACH. And a unique audience as half of them are refugees from all over and I referred to my handy globe in the office: Syria, Lebanon, Yemen, Jordan, Afghanistan, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Uganda, Tanzania, and Myanmar. First was a program with Sib, Simon, Billie and Taiga the Rough-leg. Here is our teacher showing the students my etching "GHOwl," next to our model for the day Simon. What a ham (the bird I mean.)

Mission Valley Amish Christian School



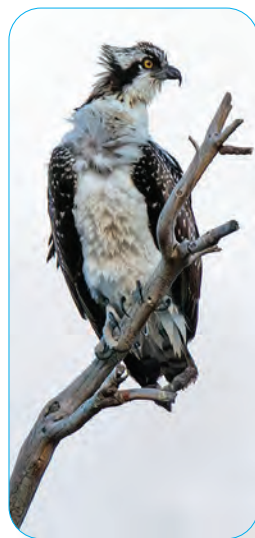
Kate Davis photos ©

What an amazing March day in St. Ignatius, Amish kids grades 1-8, two teachers, and some family members. We were invited by Tim Schrock of Miller Barns, the builders of our awesome new Falconhouse. I drove right by the school as I thought it was empty - no cars, then noticed the fleet of bicycles leaning up on one wall. I offered to do a Powerpoint (I called it a "slide show") but no electricity. For lights, hand-lit mantles on lines from the ceiling, all wood heat, amazing. These were the sweetest kids, shy and reluctant to hoot up an owl at the end. But I covered my eyes so they wouldn't be embarrassed and they eventually all joined me in a hoot, after a bunch of attempts. Plus this was Taiga the Rough-legged Hawk's first off-site program, a NATURAL (that time). I really needed a good day, trust me. Thanks Amish Community, with Sibley for a pose in their back yard, what a view.

We are up to programs in 145 schools now across the west. The record was set in 2003 with 82 programs that year, the olden days. Wow.



A fun program in March for the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute, or MOLLI, U of M. Nigel the eagle with Sib, Billie and Portia. They gave me a little round of applause when I announced I just got my Medicare card - they are all over 50!



OctoberOsprey



Missoula Community Access Television Kids, and started this Filmmaking Camp with the International Wildlife Film Festival in 1989, today the kids on the beach and at the van, major fun. Thanks MCAT and Scott Ranf! Our birds filmed for fun, all afternoon.

Best Wishes From Our Teaching Team

plus the years
they joined us



Sonora the Aplomado Falcon 2013



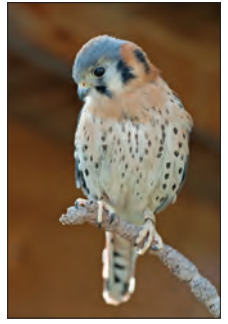
Little Billie the Northern Saw-whet Owl 2023



Mischa the Peregrine Falcon 2022



Portia the Barred Owl 2023



Wes the American Kestrel 2013



Nigel the Golden Eagle 1999



Sonny the Bald Eagle 2011



Jillian the Great Horned Owl 2003



Simon the Great Horned Owl 2017



Taiga the Rough-legged Hawk 2024
I call her Tiger



GreatBlueHeron Trio

Just finished this big etching (for me-16 by 12 inches) and inspired by a scene from 2012 of three herons fleeing an incoming Bald Eagle at Tucker Crossing Ranch, lots of photos combined and made up the rest. Then flew Sibley who caught a hen mallard right near-by. Drypoint etching with gouache and pencils and pastels. Fun memories.

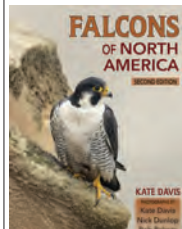
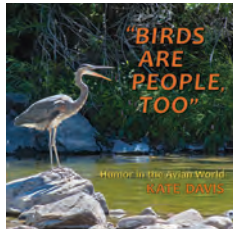
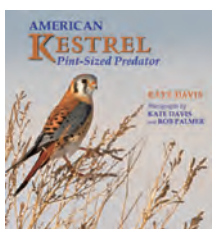


\$18

\$19

\$18

\$28



Raptors of the Rockies Calendar 2026



Pick them up at Rockin Rudy's or let us know - \$30 with postage. Plus I have a pile in my car! A variety of animals and some oldies but goodies. All proceeds to benefit our program (and buy mice for the owls, falcons and one hawk...)

Books available

Signed and just add \$5 postage
And a sweet little bookmark!

Checks work nicely, to Kate Davis, please.

Thank you Raptor Backers

Sponsors since last newsletter, several times - !

Steve & Mindy Palmer, Rock Stars!

McLaughlin Research Institute

U of M Laboratory Animal Resources

Christin Rzasa - every month on PayPal

Carol Goodsole - every month on PayPal

Candace Klein-Loetterle - every month on PayPal

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Jess Walter !

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Wendy & Greg Olson

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Noelle Naiden

Sarah, Luke, Liam, Eamon, Imogen, and Cormac Graham



*I lent my book "Tainted Revelations: The Art of Bill Ohrmann"
to a good friend that has forgotten to return it. Please do.*

Living River Farms, Stevensville!

*Thanks Computer Guys
for saving us many times!*

*Minuteman Press in Missoula
for their generosity of RRU's in
living color and cool calendars*

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Raptors of the Rockies

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Education

Photography



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