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 65, November 2026

email Kate Davis - raptors@montana.com

Dale Durfour photo©

Travelers' Rest State Park Art Expo

My greatest art honor *ever* and what started as some pieces at the Visitors Center in Lolo turned into four walls, up until the end of the year. In October I began painting/coloring etchings and framing in earnest as most (okay, none) of these editions of 5 were complete. I would run some plates, color the first and maybe second one, then start another etching. On a roll. This photo with Janie and Portia was from our first opening on Oct. 10th and another one scheduled for December 5th.

Welcome, Janie

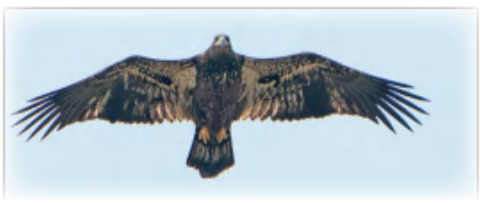
Our new family member joined us on her four-month birthday (or hatching day) a gift from breeder Mark Bolton in Livingston who I met at least 20 years ago. She was in the breeding chamber, had never seen a human, and came around naturally right away. I picked her up in Deer Lodge and she rode the whole way home standing on the back seat listening to jazz. She is small, and Mark thought that she might suffer from vision problems so not a falconry bird. Maybe, and we'll give it some time. She joins me for a walk down the driveway with the dogs every morning, is inside for hours on the big perch in the office, and rides in the car (with a hood for now.) A wonderful addition to the teaching team already.

The Synchronized Swagger of Sandhill Cranes...

I have the big art show at Travelers' Rest right down the road, our favorite park, and Lewis and Clark country. I was talking to Molly the director and told her that I might name her Sacagawea. Molly informed me that William Clark called her "Janie" as a nickname in 1805 during their expedition. So Janie.

She had her first program, here for 20 Japanese exchange students with the University of Montana, and a big hit. This will be easy I thought, hopefully not famous last words! Then, she starred in two programs at U of M for grad students, but the biggie was at Travelers' Rest, her namesake. We all love her, even the doggies!

Kate Davis photos©



... and fledgling Bald Eagle, backyard buddies

from us or at Rockin Rudy's

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;

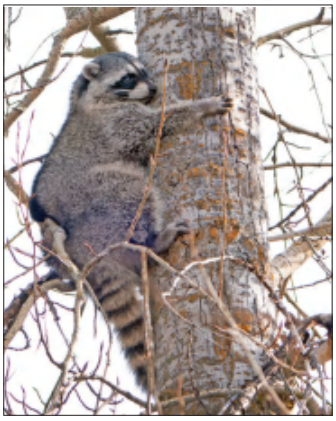
* To instill a sense of respect and admiration for these skilled hunters and to promote wildlife conservation and habitat preservation for our wild bird populations;

* To encourage everyone to go outdoors - "Nature Therapy!"

Sibley!

I had a partially completed painting of our late Peregrine that I started 15 years ago and decided to finish it in her honor. First she was standing on a duck, changed it to driftwood and busted out the acrylics. Ooops, the original was in oil, that doesn't work as very incompatible paints so started over. This is the new one, 24" x 20" acrylic on canvas. Back to etchings after that and started painting acrylic backgrounds on those, adding pastels. Quite a different look, and always experimenting.

Daily River Walk, Dogs and Camera



The wild residents have been very obliging this year, omnipresent eagles with two fledglings in July, and "tame as cats" to quote my friend Nick, even the raccoon and Merlin and bear.

Often the highlight of my day, the early afternoon peruse-the-beach can result in some fine snapshots, and always nice rocks. My habit of collecting pretty stones is obvious as they decorate everything around here - fences, garage, decks, our house and Falconhouse.

This Great Blue Heron has some favorite haunts, here sitting tight with the two adult eagles perched right overhead. She/he is recognizable with a right back toe tucked underneath and little split in the beak, and has been here for years.

My favorite was this Merlin in mid-August. He flew right to me from across the slough, 5 feet over my head, landed over my head and begged and begged. I thought he must be a falconry bird with that band, but turns out it's a research band from somewhere. Merlins are usually only around here in the winter (a bit in spring and fall) so a nice surprise. He was still there the next day, unafraid and still begging, curious when I threw a little falconry lure with a quail leg attached. I love this bird, and appears to be the black subspecies (*suckleyi*). Then he was gone as suddenly as he appeared. Glad I got photographic proof that he was *real*.

In June, this bear just waded out into the river and started swimming our way when pal Dave Plummer and I were observing the eagle nest, then he swam right by! A Black Bear yearling and some shedding of hair. Thanks dogs for not freaking out. Rumor has it he ended up at Chief Looking Glass campground a mile-plus downstream.

Travelers' Rest State Park, Lolo

50 years of Art by Kate Davis *drawings, paintings, etchings and sculptures*

Visitors Center Open
Wed - Sun 9am-5pm

Displayed through December

over 50 pieces!

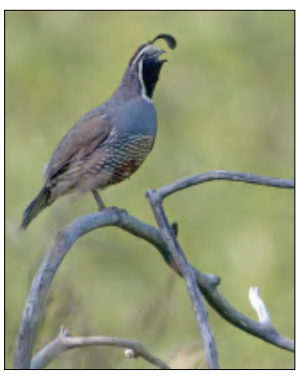
My metal Barn Owl sculpture secured by a seat belt for the 10 mile drive.

I came to my senses when transferring art to the show, realizing the big metal Penguin might be a bit too hard to assimilate into the Lewis and Clark life story. The Sandhill Crane sculpture, just fine.

Portia the Barred Owl at the October opening as she poses on her perch, before the big winter image of Travelers', optical illusion!

Grand Opening Number 2, December 5th

Join us Saturday, December 5th for another Grand Opening, and meet some raptors plus learn about the artwork. We'll have a formal program from 1 until 2 p.m., then we'll be hanging out for another hour. Nigel the Eagle, Janie the Falcon, and Simon and Little Billie the Owls, all on their best behavior, hopefully. We'll also have some offset prints for sale, and those calendars to benefit Travelers' Rest. School-aged children only please.



In our yard, record numbers of California Quail (illegally introduced), Ring-necked Pheasants and Wild Turkeys (legally introduced), Eurasion Collared Doves (unintentionally introduced) and native Black-billed Magpies (formally bounty-bird victims.) Sometimes we have 30-plus magpies all over the place including in the eagle building, eating their food and unfortunately all of Tom's tomatoes.

Early nesters and fledgers, we have six or eight magpie nests in the yard including one right up against the front of a Great Horned Owl enclosure.

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

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 28, 2025

KILLDEER

Is this winter? The Killdeer looked right at home without any snow to be found. “Birds of Montana” by Marks, Hendricks and Casey reports that the few winter residents here may be those that breed further north. Apparently Missoula and here in the Bitterroot is where winter Killdeer are more likely to be spotted, with bunch all summer

FRIDAY, MARCH 20, 2026

SNOWBOWL-IT WORKED

I’m coming up on 3 years since the botched total knee replacement surgery and I gave it a try yesterday, first time since. I met up with pals Tyler and Kim, thanks Brad for the complimentary ticket and kindness, and off we headed... for the groomers! Surprise and thank goodness, IT WORKED and I am now able to make right-hand turns, the left knee with problems and surgeries. No way I was going to go through that again, and have just been dealing with it. Photo here by Kim in a little side trip off the top. Singing a little song with Tyler in the background, and bought a season pass after this. *Pray for Snow.*

TUESDAY, MARCH 31, 2026

ANOTHER DISAPPOINTING SPRING

Our favorite Peregrine ledge up the Blackfoot occupied by two Canada Geese. No way the falcons would be sharing that nest spot, but hopefully some young from a few years ago will come back and kick them out. Empty for two years probably because of highly contagious avian influenza, so sad. Many populations have been cut in half.

Jay Sumner and I did spot a pair further upstream at Chamberlain Creek, a giant cliff and I found them before shutting off the car. Two years in a row and always a game, *Guess My Drainage*.

SATURDAY, JUNE 27, 2026

ON YOUR MARK...

...Get Set...FLEDGE! Seems like twice as many tree swallows flying around the yard on Thursday and lots of those were newly-fledged, chasing their parents. Here is the youngster in brown, mother, and dad on the fence in the light and soon to be heavy rain. 20 boxes built by Tom in the yard, mostly occupied.

THURSDAY JUNE 25, 2026

TAXIDERMY DAYS

I was just reminded of my former job as a taxidermist, and this rooster that I mounted for Hugh at Spencer’s Hackles in Plains. Hackles are chicken feathers (necks and saddles) highly prized by fly fishermen and fly tiers, died different colors. So we pretended that the chickens themselves were bright blue, green, yellow, red and pink! Bet we fooled someone out there.

WEDNESDAY JULY 22 2026

EAGLE FRIENDS?

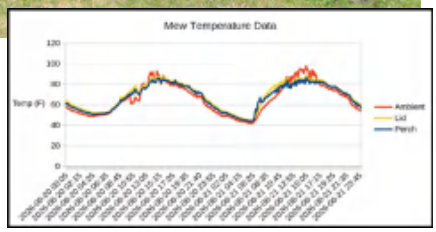
Man O Man, the female fledgling Bald Eagle wanted some food from our eagles today, Nigel the Golden Eagle did not care bit, a few feet apart. And was there for an hour!

Dave to the Rescue

Pal Dave Plummer built all the bird enclosures here 25 years ago with Mike Hupe, and in June he spent two days on top of our new Falconhouse with a product designed to cut the summertime heat inside. His idea and temperature gauges were installed. On Saturday he scrubbed and one coat with a roller, Sunday a thick brush coat and fingers crossed. I had to bring Sibley inside every day last summer despite insulation, shade cloth and a fan. No shade unlike the original buildings and 102 degrees. This white reflective product should do the trick, we hope.

A drone's-eye-view

Look at how white Dave looks up there as he finishes up with the last coat. And he assures me that this chart means something, from the three heat sensors he installed, but I have no idea what.



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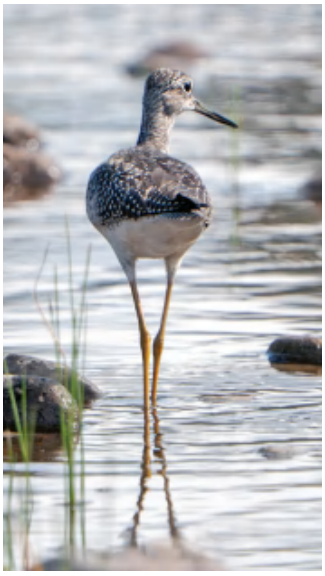


Our Japanese friends, October tour with plenty of selfies.

left: A Bald Eagle fledgling with a squaw fish gift from dad in July
and: A Yellowlegs at the river *and:* Hooded Merganser family

Hamilton High seniors science class In March, a ton of tours over the years thanks to teacher extraordinaire, Vanessa Haflich. These were the best ever, and when I asked who is a zoologist, artist, dog fan...all hands went up. Some tears when they met Billie and Portia, and all the birds. We got the greatest thank-you card, including "the highlight of my year." Good luck, seniors!

Missoula Art Museum Camp

June means Missoula Art Museum Raptors And Art Camp, our 23rd year in a row. Bev Beck Glueckert and I started this in 2003, and had a few more camps for the Montana Natural History Center before that. Day 1: Falcons Sonora and Wes posing for 2 hours. Day 2: Owls, with Simon, Little Billie and Portia (on different sides of the room, obviously.) Then Days 3 and 4 - paper mache birds! Day 5, printmaking with Bev. We have the camp right after school is out for the summer, and fills up fast! And speaking of numbers, we are up to 1980 programs and will hit that 2000 mark in 2027, unbelievable!

Kate Davis photos ©

What fun at the Missoula Public Library in July and turns out our "host" Xavier saw us at a program at Florence school when he was in 1st grade. Teacher Byron Weber had the kids vote on one bird to adopt. Peregrine? All hands went up. Great Horned Owl? All hands as well. Byron turned to me and said, "We will learn democracy tomorrow." HA! Fun at schools and libraries all over the place this year, Nigel the Golden Eagle here. Booking into 2027, our 40th year.

Two days back to back, addressing 330 grad students at the University of Montana, and Janie's first off-site trip - a PRO.

Missoula Art Museum Benefit Auction 2027

Feb. 6th UC Ballroom at the University of Montana
Exhibition at the MAM Dec. 17 (opening) – Feb. 3

Fledgling Kestrel at the beach, learning how to perch. Maybe a little horizontal limb would be easier.

LEFT: Big metal Sandhill Crane I welded in 2005, at Travelers' Rest with a couple steel owls, a Peregrine and raccoon.

My piece "Moose Splash" will be in the MAM silent auction, a privilege and pleasure! This is a drypoint etching on Rives BFK paper, with printing ink, then gouache paint, pencils, pens, pastels and acrylic paint. 16" x 12", a moose in the back yard 11 years ago. I ran a few prints on buff paper and when I began painting, the whole thing buckled up like an accordion, the wrong paper. I ran more on bright white, then got the idea to iron this one flat – with a clothes iron. About 8 times, then finally acrylic paint for the splash. *Whew.*

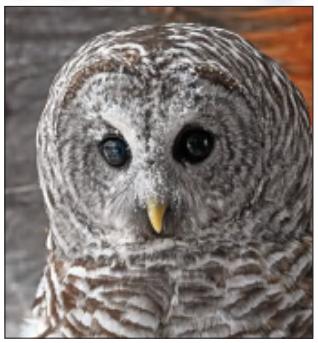
Best Wishes From Our Teaching Team

including the year they joined us

Sonora the Aplomado Falcon 2013

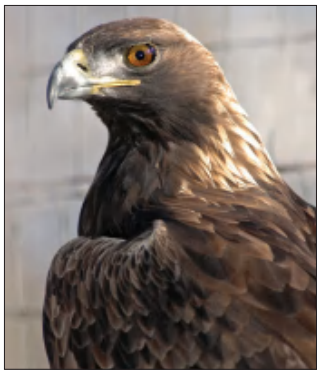
Little Billie the Northern Saw-whet Owl 2023

Mischa the Peregrine Falcon 2022



Portia the Barred Owl 2023

Wes the American Kestrel 2013



Nigel the Golden Eagle 1999

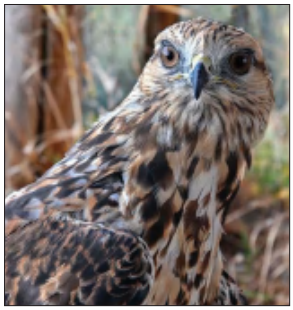
Sonny the Bald Eagle 2011

Jillian the Great Horned Owl 2003

Janie the Peregrine Falcon 2026

Her first day inside and at ease with all the activity and tunes on the stereo. And quite an appetite, she learned to eat a quail all by herself (after a month!)

Simon the Great Horned Owl 2017



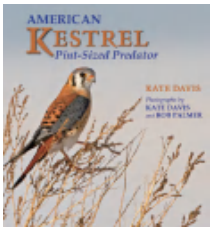
Taiga the Rough-legged Hawk 2024
(I call her Tiger)

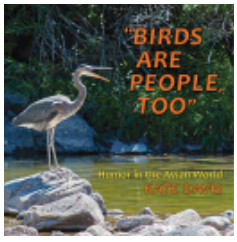
Red-tail pair from just downstream

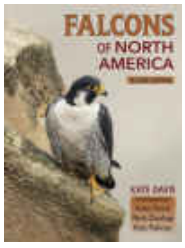
2027 Raptors of the Rockies Calendars

$25 plus $5 postage Also at Rockin Rudy's in Missoula

$18 $19 $18 $28







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Just add $5 postage
Signed and a sweet little bookmark.
Checks work nicely, to Kate Davis, please.

Thank you Raptor Backers

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Calendars, Cards and RRU's in living color!

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