WINGSPAN
Volume 23, Number 1 March 2014

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Every year we have elections for term positions of officers and board members of the Raptor Research Foundation. These people volunteer their time to keep things working smoothly in governance of our Foundation, and I appreciate the learning experience I have had working with these individuals over the past 7 years as a board member and president elect. But, every year brings change, and the end of 2013 brought about several changes in leadership for RRF. I'd like to welcome Ara Monadjem and Lloyd Kiff as new members of the RRF Board of Directors, thank Miguel Saggesse and Munir Virani for returning for another term, and thank the outgoing board members for their service to our organization. Additionally, after many years of dedicated service, Angela Matz decided to take a break from serving as the RRF treasurer at the end of 2013. I can't understate how important this position is to our foundation and how much service Angela has provided in this role. Fortunately, we found a great replacement in Jessi Brown who has stepped up to fill the vacancy; I couldn't be more pleased. In addition, the board has brought on Karen Kile as a Business Manager to assist the treasurer. We think this will facilitate continued smooth financial operations of RRF. Another big change for us was that Petra Wood, after serving for so many years as the editor of this newsletter, has also decided to take a break. Petra did an outstanding job in compiling news updates, items of interest, and soliciting contributions from members; this is no easy task and Petra did a great job of it. Again, we were fortunate in getting Brian Washburn to take over as our new editor of *Wingspan*. I've corresponded with Brian and look forward to his service in this role, and implementing some of the ideas he has as an editor. Laurie Goodrich, our nominations committee chair, also decided to take a break after several years in the position, but we were able to draw Dan Varland back into service to fill that position. I sincerely appreciate the service of these members who are stepping down from their positions, and those that are stepping up to make sure everything keeps running smoothly with governance and operations of RRF.

However, with so many departures from important positions, I started to get worried about other possible departures. I was quite relieved when Cheryl Dykstra, our outstanding editor or the *Journal of Raptor Research*, let me know she planned on remaining in her position for at least the duration of my term (BIG SIGH OF RELIEF!). Mike Kochert, whose term as chair of the Finance Committee was ending? YES, he agreed to stay on in this very important position. Next, I contacted Kate Davis, our dynamo of a Conference Committee Chair and was again relieved when told she was staying on for the next couple years. Our secretary, Greg George, whose

term was ending? He too agreed to another term. Okay, my trepidation started fading knowing I wasn't going to have to start right off trying to fill these important positions. My thanks to you all for keeping your position for another term.

That is not to say that there won't be changes and transitions down the road as terms end, but maintaining a core of stability is always comforting, especially for a rookie president like me. For example, membership is a big issue, with many biological research organizations facing declining memberships. Although RRF has maintained a fairly stable level of membership, it is an issue that we need to monitor closely. Libby Mojica, our Website maven, has been doing a great job in keeping the website updated, but technology moves fast and things get outdated, so we will be looking into this challenge as well. Our Conservation Committee, co-chaired by Rick Watson and Joan Morrison, keep busy with an eye on conservation issues as they develop, and evaluate when and what type of a response or input from RRF is warranted. Gary Santolo, Jennifer Coulson, Carol McIntyre, and Mike Collopy have been working hard at restructuring components of our awards and the awards committee. Additionally, we need to focus some attention on our education committee, what we envision it being, and how it can best be used as a gateway to promoting conservation of birds of prey. There are also other issues on the horizon. One that is relevant to researchers in the US is concern over tighter restrictions for bird banding permits.

Our annual conference is always a fun event for RRF members, and I think 2014 will be no exception. This year, Kate Davis has gotten things lined up for what promises to be a great meeting in Corpus Christi, Texas. This is a great time and place for our conference, and I am certain James Dwyer (who is chairing our Scientific Program Committee) will organize a great program. I certainly hope you are able to make it, because I think this will be a great meeting.

As I start this first year of my term as President, I look forward to continuing the relationships I have had over the years with board members, officers, and committees to keep RRF strong and vital as the preeminent organization for research and conservation for birds of prey. I would never have been prepared to take on this role without the encouragement and mentorship or our outgoing President, Ruth Tingay. I sincerely thank her for the great service she provided to RRF during her tenure, and for her friendship.

Clint with a new species of owl?

Finally, I will close with an open invitation to membership to contact me directly at any time. The success of our foundation is contingent upon an active and engaged membership. Please, if you have questions, complaints, or suggestions, contact me at clint.boal@ttu.edu. Although we all get busy with work obligations, I will try to respond in a timely manner to any correspondence.

Best,
Clint Boal

RAPTOR RESEARCH FOUNDATION, INC
(Founded in 1966)

For more information about the Raptor Research Foundation, Inc. (founded in 1966), please visit the RRF website at: **http://www.raptorresearchfoundation.org/.**

Persons interested in birds of prey are invited to join the Raptor Research Foundation (RRF). *Wingspan* is emailed twice each year to all members of RRF and is available on the RRF website. Members also receive *The Journal of Raptor Research* (ISSN 0892-1016), which is published quarterly. For membership and subscription information, please contact: **Ornithological Societies of North America**, 5400 Bosque Boulevard, Suite 680, Waco, TX 76710, USA; 1-254-399-9636 (phone); 1-254-776-3767 (fax); business@osnabirds.org (email); **http://www.osnabirds.org** (web).

Editor's Note – Thanks to the following contributors for this issue of the *Wingspan*: **Karla Bloem, Clint Boal, Dau Lal Bohra, Karla Bloem, Mike Collopy, Kate Davis, James Dwyer, Mike Kochert, Joan Morrison, Jemima Parry-Jones, Helen Snyder, Sradha Vyas, and Rick Watson.**

Wingspan welcomes contributions from RRF members and others interested in raptor biology and management. Please submit contributions via email to Brian Washburn, *Wingspan* Editor, at rrfwingspan@gmail.com. For long contributions, please send as a MS Word attachment. If you are submitting photos, please include them within the Word doc with a caption and photo credit. Contribution deadline for the next issue is **15 August 2014**.

All issues of *Wingspan* and content guidelines are available at: http://www.raptorresearchfoundation.org/publications/wingspan-newsletter/online-newsletters-pdfs

"Hatchlings and Fledglings"

Jessi with a Swainson's Hawk.

RRF Treasurer

The officers and Board of Directors of the Raptor Research Foundation are pleased to announce that on 1 January 2014 Jessi Brown assumed the duties as Treasurer of RRF. She will serve a three year term. Jessi replaces Angela Matz who has served as Treasurer since 2007. Angela has graciously agreed to serve as an interim adviser during the transition. Jessi will also work with Karen Kile who began as the RRF Business Manager last year.

Jessi has been a member of RRF since 2003. She recently served as co-chair of the Membership Committee and as a committee member for the Early Career Raptor Researcher (ECRR) committee. She received her MS and PhD degrees at the University of Nevada Reno (UNR) and has worked on American Kestrels, Aplomado Falcons, and numerous other raptor species. She currently is an assistant research professor at UNR working on behalf of the US Fish and Wildlife Service as the conservation coordinator for Golden Eagles in the Mojave and Sonoran Desert.

Wingspan

After 8 years of service, Petra Bohall Wood has stepped down as Editor of *Wingspan*. Like those before her (Karen Steenhof and Lenny Young), she worked hard to produce an outstanding newsletter for RRF. Thank you Petra for the excellent work!

The new Editor of *Wingspan*, Brian Washburn, is taking over editorial duties starting with this issue (Spring 2014). He hopes to continue the tradition of producing a high quality newsletter.

Brian has been a member of RRF since 2009. He earned a Ph.D. in Animal Sciences from the University of Kentucky in 2000. He has been a researcher with the USDA, Wildlife Services, National Wildlife Research Center since 2003. Brian is also an adjunct professor at Michigan State University,

Brian with a Short-eared Owl.

North Carolina State University, and the University of Missouri. His research interests include wildlife stress and reproductive physiology, reducing human-wildlife conflicts, movement ecology, and habitat management. Currently, he has research projects involving Bald Eagles, Osprey, Red-tailed Hawks, American Kestrels, and Short-eared Owls.

Please contact Brian with ideas, input, and feedback, he can be reached at:

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Editor's Note – You will notice a few new things in this issue of *Wingspan*, perhaps most importantly (in my humble opinion) is a Member Profile. I think it is very very important for new members to understand history, especially within a field or group, so I would like to start with some of the folks that I consider to be "foundational" within RRF and raptor ecology. These are people that inspire us, produce guidance, and increase our understanding of raptors and science. There are so many amazing people in RRF, but one came to mind that exemplifies what it means to be a "Life Member of RRF". Mike, we are indebted to you for all that you have done and continue to do for RRF, the science of raptor ecology, and the professionalism of raptor biologists. Thank you!

Along with new things, there are still the great updates (e.g., from The International Centre for Birds of Prey and The Peregrine Fund) and news items that are essential to *Wingspan*. I encourage you to send in information on raptor news, updates from your agency/organization/group, and notes about RRF members. And most I hope to see you at the 2014 RRF Meeting in Corpus Christi!

Member Profile (*NEW*)

Mike Kochert is currently an Emeritus Scientist with the U.S. Geological Survey, Forest and Rangeland Ecosystem Science Center in Boise, ID; prior to which he had a long and productive career with the Center as a Research Scientist. He has conducted research on Golden Eagles and many other raptor species in the Morley Nelson Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area (NCA) for nearly half a century. He began his raptor career as a University of Idaho graduate student studying Golden Eagles in what is now the NCA. This year he will complete his

45th consecutive field season with these eagles. He has authored numerous scientific articles on Golden Eagles and other raptors, including the species account on Golden Eagles for the Birds of North America series. He also serves an adjunct faculty member in the Department of Biology, Boise State University.

Mike became a RRF member in 1971 as a graduate student and grew up with the organization. In his words "*I joined RRF, essentially as a wet-eared kid when RRF was a fledgling organization with a newsletter as its publication (Raptor Research News) and a North American focus. Now, as a gray-beard, RRF is a highly respected ornithological organization with a prestigious scientific journal*." He joined the RRF board as Vice President in 1994 (1994–1996), and then served as President-elect (1996–1997), President (1998–2001), Past-President (2001–2006), and Director (2009–2011). He served as chair of the RRF Conference Committee (1987 to 1997) and continues to serve on the RRF Finance Committee (2010 to present). He also served on the local organizing committee for the 1975, 1987, and 1996 RRF annual meetings. Chuck Henny says "Mike can tell you where every RRF meeting was held….all of them…and he was there adding to our knowledge and understanding of raptors".

Mike watching a Golden Eagle.

"Mike Kochert has been a fixture at RRF meetings for decades (sorry, Mike), but equally important has been his behind-the-scenes contributions to the growth and professionalization of the organization. Not only has Mike contributed in the past as our President, Vice President and Director, but he continues to work as Chair of the Finance Committee. His commitment to the financial well-being of the organization has helped ensure that RRF continues to be financially stable, even during difficult economic times. Mike also is remarkably committed to sharing his experience and professional expertise with other raptor biologists. I do not believe there is anyone in RRF that has approached Mike for help that has not experienced his willingness to assist in whatever way he can. Certainly, those of that have worked with Golden Eagles over the years (me included) have benefitted from his advice and assistance. He is a very special individual and one that RRF can be proud to call a Life Member." - Mike Collopy

RAPTOR RESEARCH FOUNDATION
2014 ANNUAL CONFERENCE

24–28 September 2014
Corpus Christi, Texas USA

Mark your calendars for this international gathering of top raptor researchers and educators, meeting on the Texas Gulf Coast and one of the top birding locations in the U.S.! This event will be held at the Emerald Beach Hotel, right on Corpus Christi Bay and downtown. The host organization, the Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute at Texas A&M University – Kingsville, provides the science behind wildlife conservation and management in South Texas and related environments. HawkWatch International is also hosting, an organization that has been researching raptors and their habitats since 1986.

The conference features keynote speakers, paper and poster sessions, and workshops. Planned symposia include: (1) raptors and energy development and (2) the unique ecology of coastal raptors, including coastal migrants. The Kleberg Institute will host the Friday evening social at their campus in Kingsville, a state-of-the-art facility. HawkWatch will conduct a Sunday field trip to the Hazel Bazemore Park, capital of migrating Broad-winged Hawks and at the peak of hawk migration. Near-by Corpus Christi are the King Ranch, Welder Wildlife Refuge, Aransas National Wildlife Refuge, Smith Point HawkWatch-Gulf Coast Bird Observatory, and a bit further, Matagorda and South Padre Islands. ***Raptor Meccas!***

Conference information may be viewed at:
http://www.raptorresearchfoundation.org/conferences/current-conference

For further details or to volunteer your expertise, please contact RRF Conference Committee Chair Kate Davis (raptors@montana.com)

RRF 2014 CALL FOR PAPERS

The Raptor Research Foundation invites oral and poster abstracts for our annual scientific conference. The conference will co-hosted by the Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute at Texas A&M University – Kingsville, and HawkWatch International 24–28 September, 2014, in Corpus Christi, Texas. Presentations on any aspect of raptor biology, ecology, research techniques, conservation, and management are invited. The deadline for submission of papers is **24 May 2014.**

Abstract submission: Submit all abstracts via the conference website at: http://www.raptorresearchfoundation.org/conferences/current-conference. Cover letters are not required. Follow the format explained and exemplified in the Sample Abstract on the RRF website. Failure to properly format abstracts may result in rejection or return to authors for reformatting. Authors of accepted abstracts will be notified via email by 24 June 2014. Prior to the conference, all authors will be provided with a follow-up email specifying the room, date, and time of their presentations.

Questions regarding symposia and general abstracts should be directed to James Dwyer (jdwyer@edmlink.com).

Anderson Awards: The deadline for submission extended abstracts for Andersen Award candidates is **24 May 2014**. Andersen Award candidates will be further notified via email by 24 July 2014 whether their papers will be included in a general session or in the Andersen Award competitive special session. http://www.raptorresearchfoundation.org/grants-and-awards/awards/william-c-andersen-memorial-award.

Questions regarding Andersen Awards should be directed to Clint Boal (clint.boal@ttu.edu).

RRF 2014 CALL FOR SYMPOSIA

The Raptor Research Foundation invites symposia proposals for our annual scientific conference. Successful symposia at previous RRF meetings have included species-specific and genera-specific foci, interactions of raptors with anthropogenic influences, and topics of general interest to raptor ecologists. The 2014 meeting will include symposia on: (1) raptors and energy development, and (2) the unique ecology of coastal raptors, including coastal migrants. All proposals related to the science of raptors will be considered.

Symposia proposals should include:

1. **Symposium title.**
2. **A 2-3 sentence rationale for the symposium's topic.**
3. **Requested length of the symposium (1/2-day or full day; symposium presentations will be 20 minutes and will run concurrent with general scientific sessions).**
4. **Name and contact information for symposium chair (typically the same as the proposal author).**
5. **Names of authors the symposium chair has recruited to participate in the symposium, and general title or description of each author's oral presentation.**

The deadline for submission of symposium proposals is **24 May 2014**. Chairs of symposia selected for inclusion in the conference will be notified by 24 June 2014.

Successful symposia will likely include at least 6 related papers, or enough papers to fill at least a half-day session. Prospective symposia chairs are encouraged to suggest symposia even if they have recruited fewer than the ideal number of speakers because related abstracts received through the general submission process can be used to complete symposia.

Questions and symposia proposals should be directed to James Dwyer (jdwyer@edmlink.com).

News from the RRF

Notes from the Conservation Committee

Submitted by Joan L. Morrison and Rick Watson,
Conservation Committee Co-chairs

Over the past few years the Conservation Committee of RRF has prepared comments on several important issues relevant to raptor conservation, globally. Examples include information provided to Congress outlining what is known about the effects of lead from spent ammunition on wildlife, especially birds of prey. Comments on the US Fish and Wildlife Service's proposal to allow incidental take of golden eagles at a proposed wind project in Oregon focused on how proposed study designs to predict mortality and effectiveness of mitigation measures should be modified and made statistically more robust. The CC also prepared and sent a letter to Shrimati Mrs. Jayanthi Natarajan, Minister of Environment and Forests, Paryavaran Bhawan, India, thanking her and her staff for the Ministry's swift action to curtail the mass slaughter of Amur Falcons in North-eastern India and for the Indian Government's sincere commitment towards conserving biological diversity.

While these efforts have been laudable, the RRF Board recognizes that the regionally-focused structure of the CC has not necessarily been the most effective in bringing relevant conservation issues to the committee. Thus, moving forward, the Board and the CC chairs will be reevaluating the current CC structure and will entertain discussion about how to make the CC more active and effective. At this time, we encourage all RRF members to bring potential issues relevant to raptor conservation to the attention of this Committee. Hopefully these efforts will highlight a broader range of issues from around the globe that may be appropriate for the Committee to address. Some important points must be noted, however:

1. The main purpose of the Conservation Committee is to provide objective, high-quality scientific information to decision makers. The CC chairperson(s) will review and assess the nature of information submitted about an issue, or request for response, and determine if a response by RRF is appropriate. RRF will base any communications about an issue upon expert evaluation of relevant scientific information, never upon values or any philosophy of risk management.
2. The RRF will prepare its own communications rather than endorsing or signing communications developed by others, and all communications prepared by the CC must be approved by the RRF Board. At no time will RRF members act upon or respond to an issue on behalf of, or representing, the RRF without approval by the RRF Board.
3. The RRF will always acknowledge when scientific information is insufficient to inform a decision involving birds of prey and may choose to identify research needed to fill information gaps.

4. In its communications, the RRF may choose to compare or state the likely outcome(s) of different courses of action, based on an evaluation of relevant scientific information. However, the RRF will not recommend or condemn any specific course of action that may be under consideration by decision makers or proposed by others. The RRF will never take or communicate a position on any proposed law, rule or regulation.

A list of conservation issues for which the RRF prepares a communication will be added to the website with a short summary of information and a link to appropriate external websites for readers who want further information. More information about the CC and its policies and activities can be found at http://www.raptorresearchfoundation.org/conservation/conservation-committee.

We hope broadening the opportunity for members to submit conservation issues will encourage more active participation by RRF members in raptor conservation and more action by the CC in responding appropriately to these issues.

Raptor News

Year of the Snowy Owl

Submitted by Brian Washburn

We will likely remember the winter of 2013–2014 for many reasons, but without question (at least in North America), it will be due to the presence of a "raptor from the far north". Snowy Owls typically spend their breeding season in the high Arctic. Each year some birds come down to the very northern states within the US to winter. Every few years, for reasons that are not fully understood by scientists, a virtual wave of Snowy Owls comes flooding down from the north in a phenomenon known as an 'irruption'. Smaller irruptions happen every few years, but once or twice in a lifetime a 'mega-irruption' occurs. During these 'mega-irruptions', Snowy Owls appear in vastly higher numbers and much farther south than usual. This winter is one such extraordinary event, the largest irruption in the Northeast and Great Lakes regions in half a century. Snowy Owls have been reported as far south as Florida and Arkansas, and even on the island of Bermuda, where 2 to 3 were spotted this year!

Based on the wide-spread sightings and reports, it would appear many of the Snowy Owls that have invaded the

Northeast, Mid-Atlantic, and Great Lakes regions are juvenile birds; however, adult males and females have been identified and are participating in this year's mega-irruption as well. The latest hypothesis regarding the reason for the mega-irruption is based, not surprisingly, on prey abundance – especially lemmings. However, the Snowy Owls likely did not move south to winter due to prey shortage; rather, high prey abundance during the 2013 breeding season likely resulted in very high productivity and juvenile survival for Snowy Owls. High populations of lemmings, voles, ptarmigan, and other prey lead to large clutches. Thus, there are now lots of Snowy Owls who pressed southward and are much more visible to the bird watchers due to their higher numbers. And, of course, their recent fame in the media.

Interestingly, in addition to the farm and grasslands, beach dunes, airports, and other open habitats where Snowy Owls are typically found, several birds have settled into much more urban habitats. They have been reportedly seen of road signs, cars and other vehicles, buildings, and other locations where their presence was unexpected. One Snowy Owl found much local fame and many fans when it was repeated observed using an area in downtown Washington DC! Perhaps it was there seeing the sights….or hoping to meet with its local Senator…hhhoo knows!?!!? [Ok, no more really bad puns…..I promise.]

Birding websites, listserves, social media, local newspapers, and even the national news have been ablaze with sightings, information, and photos of Snowy Owls. Several of my birding friends and colleagues had the chance to add this species to their 'life list'. The rare chance to see a Snowy Owl has brought out birders by the masses, which I believe represents a great opportunity to increase the public understanding and appreciation of raptors in general. And if you have the opportunity, I highly recommend you do the same! E-bird (www.eBird.org) is a great resource, and the maps of Snowy Owl sightings are very impressive.

Photo credits: Jenny Washburn

With this irruption year came opportunity for increasing our understanding of these birds. Most notable is the fast-forming efforts of Project SNOWstorm (www.projectsnowstorm.com). Taking advantage of such high numbers of Snowy Owls and with some creative social media-based fundraising, their efforts came together very quickly and this project is providing new insights into the wintering season movements of Snowy Owls in several Northeastern and Midwestern states. I highly recommend you check out the really nice maps of owl activity that get updated very frequently.

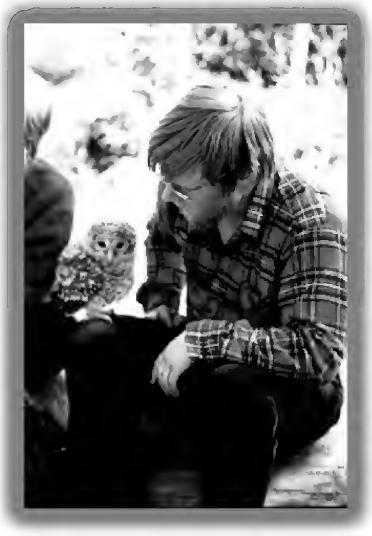
Owl Experts Cross Political Boundaries to Receive Awards

Submitted by Karla Bloem

A retired U.N. diplomat who studied and wrote about owls in his spare time for more than 40 years and an Israeli scientist leading a program to use barn owls instead of poison to control rodents in Israel, Jordan, and Palestine will be inducted into the World Owl Hall of Fame on Saturday, March 8, 2014 at the International Festival of Owls in Houston, Minnesota.

The Champion of Owls Award will be presented to Dr. Heimo Mikkola, a native of Finland. An avid birdwatcher since age 11, he retired in 2007 from a lifelong career in the United Nations. At the end of that career he was "Ambassador of Food," the resident representative of the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization. As head of a diplomatic mission, he led Food and Agriculture Organization activities in countries in Africa and South America. He visited 127 countries during his foreign assignments -- at the same time publishing more than 150 owl papers and books.

Dr. Mikkola, who holds a Ph.D. in Applied Zoology and Limnology from the University of Kuopio, Finland, has 40 years of experience in fisheries and aquaculture development. He said he realized early on in his career that he couldn't support his family by studying owls, "so I switched my career toward fish and food." "Luckily I always kept owls as my main hobby instead of golf or something like that," he said. "So when I retired from 'food business,' I had an easy way to go back to my owls."



Heimo with a young Ural Owl.

The second edition of Dr. Mikkola's latest book, "*Owls of the World: A Photographic Guide*," is just being released. The 528-page book, published by Firefly Books, includes photos, range maps and detailed descriptions of 268 owl species.

Dr. Motti Charter, who is doing postdoctoral work at the University of Haifa, will receive the World Owl Hall of Fame's Special Achievement Award. Dr. Charter has been scientific coordinator of the Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel's Barn Owl nesting box project since 2007. The national research project, which receives funds from three governmental ministries and a private fund, involves a team of bird banders, naturalists, and ornithologists who monitor breeding and other aspects of Barn Owl biology.

Motti holding a nestling Barn Owl.

The project promotes using owls, instead of poison, to control rats and other pests. It has resulted in placement of nearly 3,000 barn owl nesting boxes in seven regions within Israel, says Alan Sieradzki, who nominated Charter for the award. "Even though Barn Owls are accepted by Jewish farmers in Israel, some Arab farmers continue to fear and persecute them," Charter said. "We therefore want to bring Arab minorities and Jewish farmers together in Israel."

A panel of five owl experts from four countries selected Dr. Mikkola and Dr. Charter from a pool of nominees from around the world to receive these awards. The World Owl Hall of Fame is sponsored by the International Festival of Owls, Global Owl Project, Bob Kierlin, and Mary Burrichter.

More information is available online at www.festivalofowls.com/halloffame.

The International Centre for Birds of Prey – Spring 2014

Submitted by Jemima Parry-Jones

Another year gone, yet another record broken: the wettest winter for 250 years, well hooray. Luckily, because our enclosures are fully roofed, the birds are dry and comfortable, although the staff members are wet and miserable!!!

Our first bird of the year hatched as week ago, a young Eurasian Griffon Vulture, we have just put it back with mum and dad and they are doing very well. The Verreaux's Eagles have laid and we have taken their eggs to double clutch them, and the Hooded Vulture thinks she is on her egg, but as she broke two last year, she is actually sitting on a goose egg and hers is safely in the incubator. It's

always more difficult to hatch eggs from day 1 with artificial incubation, but hopefully we will succeed. The Steller's Sea Eagles are on 2 eggs. We now have CCTV on some birds and it makes for wonderful and compelling watching once they have eggs close to hatching and chicks (at least it would if the gales hadn't toppled a tree and taken out the broadband line). The vultures were literally putting their heads to the egg and listening!!!

We were lucky enough to get a grant last year to build a new hospital for the injured wild birds that we take in. It's more of a hospital room, for dealing with housing and caring for the birds, but it is a joy to have and makes looking after birds ten times easier.

It is interesting to note that with the huge increase in the wild buzzard (*Buteo buteo*) population in the UK, we get in many more injured wild ones, and see a large proportion of them with Trichomoniasis. Similarly Tawny Owls have an increasing instance of it, although their population is not on the increase. Previously we would see it in wild Sparrowhawks but not a lot else. Still thanks to the pigeon racing fraternity, pigeons being very prone to it, there is now a one pill treatment that cures the birds. So as long as the birds have not been infected for too long, they recover and can go back to the wild.

This time last year we had an Artic wind over the whole of the UK for about 6 weeks, it was bitter and not pleasant to be outside. The only ones of our birds who enjoyed it were the Steller's and the Snowy Owl that we used to fly. However because the wind was so cold and so lasting it affected the rate of growth in the grass (this meant we did not have to mow at all) but the knock on effects were interesting, no grass meant the mice and voles did not start to breed when they normally would. One of my staff is a bird ringer and he and a couple of other groups checked 500 Barn Owl nest boxes in the breeding season and only one had chicks! No grass, no voles, no voles, no breeding Barn Owls. Finally a few boxes had chicks as late as October, but their chances of survival would have been slim.

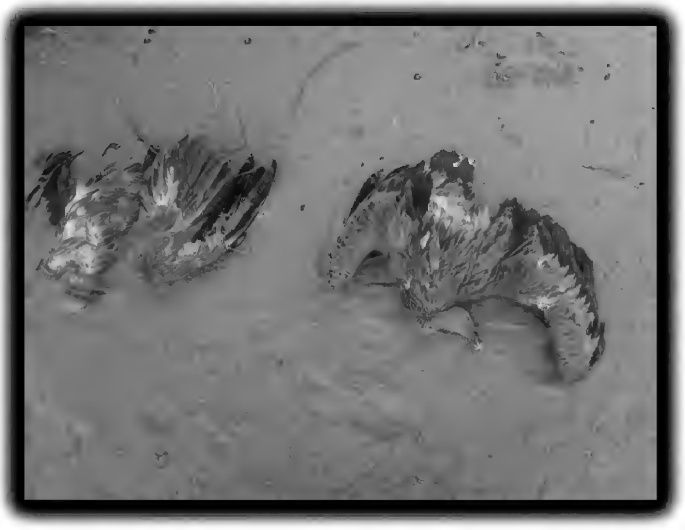
It will be interesting to see what happens this year because we are getting very early flowers and bird song, but the ground everywhere is sodden and one presumes that this would probably deter mice and voles in the same way that the lack of grass did last year. I guess only time will tell.

I was to India in February, on the Gyps vulture project SAVE. This time we are going to be putting the first clutch (one chick) back with parents so that we can work with the second clutches to check on fertility, viability, hatchability and so on. It should be an interesting trip, although one that I would rather not do in our breeding season here. The joys of conservation work!!!

Mortality of vulnerable migratory and local vulture's species including (Gyps) in Jorbeer, Bikaner, Rajasthan, India

Submitted by Dau Lal Bohra and Sradha Vyas

Throughout South Asia Gyps vultures have shown declines, *G. bengalensis* disappeared from Burma and Southeast Asia by the 1970s, it became very rare in Malaysia, Laos, Cambodia, and South Vietnam. However, a more recent catastrophic decline began in 1996. Gyps vulture populations across the Indian subcontinent collapsed in the 1990s and continue to decline. Parkash in 1999 reported a massive decline in India, Keoladeo National Park, Rajasthan. The number of vultures in this park was reported to go down from 1,800 individuals to just 86. This startling situation depicted a 96% decline in the population. *Gyps bengalensis* has declined all over Pakistan and research has indicated that the livestock drug Diclofenac, a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID), is the major cause of this decline. Studies conducted between 2000 and 2001 at two sites in the Punjab Province of Pakistan showed high adult mortality rates of 11.4% and 18.6%. The necropsy of dead vultures showed that 80% of adults, 63% of sub-adults, 19% of juveniles, and 13% of nestlings had visceral gout; this finding was consistent with earlier reports from India. Subsequently, tissues collected from dead vultures in India and Nepal have also been shown to contain Diclofenac residues and a simulation model has demonstrated that Diclofenac is likely the primary cause of the vulture decline across the region. In 2003, post mortem examinations showed that the majority of dead vultures had visceral gout, due to kidney damage. After testing, it was found that diclofenac is potentially nephrotoxic to birds.



Some reports suggest the same company that manufactures or markets veterinary diclofenac is also producing the drug with an unlabeled name for uses or human use multi-use vials. Diclofenac is now widely recognized as the main driving force behind the rapid decline in India's vulture populations over recent times, and consequently evidence for a decline both in the prevalence and concentration of diclofenac residues in ungulate carcasses is important for India's threatened vulture populations. A small proportion (< 0.8%) of ungulate carcasses containing lethal levels of diclofenac is sufficient to cause the observed rapid population declines. In India, after 2006, a ban on the manufacture of diclofenac for veterinary use was instituted. But its use has not stopped. As a solution, this situation was confined to areas with a similar disposal method as India for domestic ungulates and/or level of treatment of sickly/old cattle with NSAIDs. For further action, we need to reduce the number of animals which are treated with painkillers, as well as identified (human use) Diclofenac, or a combination of the two.

In winter, (about 5 months; mid of October to late February), Gyps and other vulture species were seen feeding on dead animals at a dump site and were roosting in trees adjacent to the dump throughout the season. Lower numbers were recorded in summer and spring (< 100 birds) whereas higher populations were recorded during autumn migration (5 months) and during the wintering season (censuses of 3,500 to 5,000 birds). The total population of vultures included 30 and 40% juvenile birds. A dead animal dumping site, Jorbeer is an adequate feeding site and provides high food availability to scavengers. While carcass availability was higher in the study area, young vultures may have learned to feed at the dump site because food taken from this particular source was easier to obtain and more profitable than searching for dead animals and fighting with adults for food. Wintering and feeding at the Jorbeer animal dump site would increase the chances of survival during other critical periods, such as migration. However, we believe that the population of Eurasian Griffons (*Gyps fulvus*) wintering in this area is at risk. This small place concentrates a large number of *Gyps fulvus*, *Gyps himalyensis,* and a good number of Cenerious Vultures. As a consequence of feeding in this area, the risk of transmission of disease or poisoning by toxic compounds may eventually ramify itself in the reproductive population of migrant vultures. Thus, a large problem in a migratory bottleneck could cause a serious conservation problem effecting the larger vulture populations.

Dau rescuing a juvenile Egyptian Vulture.

During 2013–2014 (September, 2013 to Mid of February, 2014), the total of dead bird incidences (local and migratory) due to poisons or veterinary drugs were 73, including: 5 *Gyps fulvus*, 38 Steppe Eagles, 25 Egyptian Vultures (*Neophron percnopterus*), and 5 Black Eye Kites at Jorbeer dump, Bikaner. The recent conservation studies and some ecological research have strongly recommended complete withdrawal of diclofenac from the local market. All the multi-use injectable formulations of diclofenac offered for sale were for human use. In India, concern for carcasses is very low and there is no maintenance of records regarding animal types, death case, death durability, proper place, and utilization level. Thus, a vulture conservation system must be put into place with help of local municipal offices. It is very important to protect several species of vultures in India by avoiding any kind decline of vultures due to poisoning.

The Peregrine Fund

Submitted by Susan Whaley

Study reveals that vultures travel huge distances in Africa to seek food where there is low rainfall, high prey mortality

Dr. Corinne Kendall of Columbia University and African Vulture Technical Advisor with the Wildlife Conservation Society and her colleagues have discovered that vultures – rather than aggregating where animals are most abundant as previously thought – instead focus on areas and conditions where animals are most likely to die. Co-author Munir Virani, director of Africa programs for The Peregrine Fund, said that because the vultures travel far and spend so much time outside of protected areas, they are extremely susceptible to poisoning, which often occurs when ranchers put pesticides on the carcasses of cows and other animals killed by lions or hyenas. Protecting these critical scavengers, which help to keep the African savannas clean and reduce the risk of rabies and other diseases, is now the focus of a new effort by the Wildlife Conservation Society, The Peregrine Fund, and Hawk Mountain Sanctuary.

New Tundra Conservation Network held its first meeting in February at the World Center for Birds of Prey

The Peregrine Fund hosted the first meeting of the new Tundra Conservation Network in February to address increasing concerns about how climate change could affect life in the Arctic, from vegetation to top predators like the Gyrfalcon. Nineteen scientists representing the 8 nations in the Arctic region and diverse scientific disciplines and skills attended the meeting at the World Center for Birds of Prey.

The Tundra Conservation Network was established by The Peregrine Fund in 2013 as a key component of a new project to address threats to the Gyrfalcon. This raptor is not yet endangered, but there are already indications that the changing climate is presenting many challenges to the species, as well as the plants and animals it needs to survive. The goal of the Network is to foster coordinated research across biological disciplines and international

boundaries to examine effects of climate change on the structure and functioning of Arctic tundra ecosystems and potential consequences for Gyrfalcons. A highlight of the meeting included the drafting of research hypotheses and protocol to shape upcoming activities.

David Anderson joined The Peregrine Fund staff in 2012 to help launch the Gyrfalcon Conservation Project and Tundra Conservation Network. He earned a Master's degree in raptor biology from Boise State University and a doctorate from Louisiana State University.

New director is hired for project to study American Kestrels

After finishing his postdoctoral research at Boise State University, Chris McClure became director of the American Kestrel Partnership in January. The project, which began in 2011, is focused on collecting data and conducting research to understand and reverse the decline in American Kestrel populations. The Partnership's interactive website allows citizen scientists to enter data collected from nest box observations. That information is then used in a process of adaptive monitoring professional research on the topic.

Chris has worked in several field positions, including with the California Condor reintroduction program and at a hack site for Aplomado Falcons. He received a doctorate from Auburn University, conducting graduate work on testing and improving methods to monitor birds and determine their habitat needs. His postdoctoral research studied the effects of noise pollution on wildlife, and he pioneered development of the Phantom Road – a method to study the effects of traffic noise by projecting road noise into roadless areas. His webpage: http://chrimcc.wix.com/cjwm

New video by The Peregrine Fund details process of artificially inseminating birds of prey in captivity

A new online video details the process of artificially inseminating birds of prey, a technique that The Peregrine Fund has used successfully for more than 40 years to recover Peregrine Falcons and other rare and endangered raptors. The 12–minute video is intended for bird breeders who want to be successful at producing fertile eggs and chicks in captivity. Over four decades, The Peregrine Fund has employed artificial insemination to raise thousands of birds of prey that were then released to the wild.

The video features biologist Cal Sandfort, who worked for The Peregrine Fund for 33 years before retiring in December 2013. He is assisted in the video by Heather Springsteed, who worked with Sandfort in the propagation program for Aplomado Falcons. Sandfort was involved in nearly all of The Peregrine Fund's captive breeding programs. The organization has successfully raised many raptor species, including Gyrfalcon, Orange-breasted Falcon, Prairie Falcon, Mauritius Kestrel, and Teita Falcon. The link to the video is on the Aplomado Falcon Restoration page on The Peregrine Fund website: http://www.peregrinefund.org/aplomado

Proposed Cave Creek Canyon Bird of Prey Zoological Botanical Area

Submitted by Helen Snyder

The (proposed) Cave Creek Canyon Bird of Prey Zoological Botanical Area (ZBA), and area of approximately 130 km^2, would overlie the Cave Creek watershed, including its tributary Silver Creek, in southeastern Arizona. Located in the northeast corner of the Chiricahua Mountains, Cave Creek Canyon lies in eastern Cochise County in southeast Arizona, approximately 16 km west of the New Mexico line and 80 km north of the Mexican border. The Cave Creek drainage is one of the longest in the Chiricahuas. It is world famous for its biodiversity and as a birding area is renowned for the abundance and variety of its bird life.

The area includes some designated Wilderness and the existing South Fork Zoological Botanical area. Apart from a 65-ha private inholding divided between 9 owners, including the American Museum's Southwest Research Station, the proposed area lies within the Coronado's Chiricahua Ecosystem Management Area in the Douglas Ranger District of the U.S. Forest Service.

In recent years, information and surveys done in the areas suggest the Cave Creek area might support the densest known population of nesting raptors in the US. Owls are particularly abundant in this refugium. Five species of small owl comprise 80% of the nesting pairs of raptors, some nesting as close as 30 m from conspecifics. A total of 24 species of birds of prey breed in the Cave Creek area and 6 more species have nested within 16 km of the proposed Cave Creek ZBA. An additional 6 species winter or regularly pass by during migration. Arizona's first nesting record for Short-tailed Hawks was documented just off the proposed Cave Creek ZBA in 2007.

The Coronado National Forest (of the U.S. Forest Service) is currently revising its forest plan and the designation of the (proposed) Cave Creek Canyon Bird of Prey Zoological Botanical Area is under consideration.

ANNOUNCEMENTS and BRIEF NEWS ITEMS

For Sale

RRF Publications, Pins, and Decals – Hard copies of The Journal of Raptor Research (Vol. 1-30), most Raptor Research Reports, and RRF pins and decals may be purchased directly from RRF (Angela Matz, 101 12th Ave., Room 110, Fairbanks, AK 99701, USA; email: angela_matz@fws.gov). See http://raptorresearchfoundation.org/back_issues_jrr.htm for details and prices. Orders for 4 or more issues receive a 30% discount. Hard copies of The Journal of Raptor Research (Vol. 31+) may be purchased from Ornithological Societies of North America (5400 Bosque Blvd, Suite 680, Waco, TX 76710, USA; phone: 1-254-399-9636; email: business@osnabirds.org; web: http://www.osnabirds.org). Some older issues are not available in hardcopy; but all issues from Vol. 1-39 are available on SORA (http://elibrary.unm.edu/sora/jrr/) for free download.

Announcements

Raptor Workshop: Accredited through University of Wisconsin - Stevens Point
Attend this 5-day introductory level field course designed to instruct students in a full-range of the latest field techniques used in the study of raptors. "Introduction to Raptor Field Techniques" will be held in Stevens Point, WI by Eugene Jacobs of the Linwood Springs Research Station. Receive first-hand experience working with: live raptors, capturing, handling, banding techniques, broadcast call surveys, tree climbing, rappelling, blood sampling and more Cost is $450 and space is limited, so register early. For more information and a registration form visit http://www.raptorresearch.com/workshop.htm .

Spring Session: 31 March – 4 April 2014.
Summer Sessions: 2 – 6 June, 2014, and 23 – 27 June 2014.

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