



The Raptor Chapter

Volume #20
1st Quarter Edition

Issue # 1
April 2011

A Publication of Three Rivers Avian Center



*Whitey comes in for his shift at the nest.
Photo courtesy of Chris Dorst, Charleston Gazette*

Bald Eagle Nest At Brooks Island Has 2 Chicks Again

Whitey and Streaky are proud parents for the second year in a row! In December and early January they spent time adding more sticks and grasses to the nest, raising up the sides significantly and making the padding even more plush. They laid 3 eggs, all of which hatched around March 4th, but the larger chick is aggressive and the smallest chick did not survive more than a few days. The remaining two are doing great and should be fledging around the beginning of June.

New River Gorge Peregrine Falcon Restoration Project

The PEFA Project, as it has come to be called here at TRAC, is going to continue in 2011 at the Grandview section of the New River Gorge National River. ("PEFA" is the standardized acronym that bird banders assign to peregrine falcons.) Pre-season monitoring at Grandview has been ongoing, using a "game camera" mounted in such a way that it focuses out over the main hacksite area and out into the Gorge. This camera picked up our first sighting of an adult peregrine on March 7th, 2011. Monitoring of the New River Gorge Bridge and the cliffs between Lansing (Fayette County) and Grandview (Raleigh County), began that same week. Since the 7th, there have been intermittent sightings, then two adult peregrines were seen on the south side of the New River Gorge Bridge at the beginning of April. Monitoring efforts continue.

Budget cuts within the New River Gorge National River and the WV Division of Natural Resources for this fiscal year created short-term commitment difficulties at first, but dedication by both agencies to this unique cooperative effort means that another set of young peregrines can take to the skies in the New River Gorge. We'll be ready and waiting for their arrival. Check out the TRAC Blog!

It's The Time of Nest Building

Birds make many kinds of nests ranging from simple scrapes on the ground to structures of monumental size in trees. But no matter how roughly constructed, birds will almost always do a little decoration. Even Turkey Vultures who nest by simply finding a patch of dirt and calling it a nest will spend a bit of time scraping a slight depression and often will elaborate their digs with a few wood chips, stones or a bit of grass. Hawks will occasionally bring in found objects which appear to have no functional purpose at the nest other than decoration. Crows are famous for collecting all sorts of shiny things for their nests. Some woodpeckers do it as well. We once had an American Kestrel who was fond of shiny objects. She would carry them around chirping to herself. When she was done, she would stash them and return later to pick them up and play with them. There really does seem to be an aesthetic instinct at work in many birds. Maybe feeling happy, pretty and frisky inside triggers some kind of externalization of the emotion. Certainly we people do it. Maybe birds do too. *Ya think?*

This Spring I have been watching a White Breasted Nuthatch do his nest preparation. He decided to use a previously owned bluebird box mounted about 12 feet off the ground in a Poplar Tree in our yard. The original owner had not shown up yet, so "first come, first served". Right away he spent time removing debris from the box that didn't suit him and discarded it. Then I observed him going into the box and exiting with huge mouthfuls of old nesting material which he did not discard. Instead, he moved around to the side of the nest box and crammed it into the crack between the box and the tree. This



procedure was repeated over and over until all the cracks between the box on the sides and top were bristling with grass, twigs and lichen. Then he took more mouthfuls of stuff and hopped over to the tree trunk beside, above, and below the box and wedged the tufts of grass into the bark. After 2 days if this the box was utterly surrounded by hairy tufts conspicuously announcing that some kind of serious remodeling was going on in that box.

Then something new was added to the routine. He would grab a big mouthful of nest material and instead of immediately arranging it, he hopped in a little circle around and around his box carrying it. Periodically he would stop and swipe his fluffy mouthful back and forth, kind of like he was using it like a broom - swinging his head back and forth, sweeping the tree trunk or the top of the nest box. But the mouthful was not deposited somewhere until after he had made several conspicuous circuits around the nest displaying his bounty which by now made the bird box and the tree look like it was sprouting grass everywhere within a foot of the box.

That was 4 days ago. The weather has been funky, and I have been wondering if he had attracted a mate yet and yesterday I saw her. She hopped into the box while he stood guard directly beneath it. Once, he chased off an inquisitive male who happened by to check out the box. Upon returning, our boy grabbed a chunk of his decoration and circuited the box displaying by "sweeping" the box and all around the tree trunk. He then settled in to his guard position below the box. The female has occasionally poked her head out for a look see but it appears she has settled in for the task at hand. Spring has sprung, Nuthatch style.

-Ron Perrone, TRAC Education Director

Welcome Regis

In late December, TRAC received word that a second year male bald eagle needed a new home. Carolina Raptor Center near Charlotte North Carolina had suddenly been hit with huge budget cuts from a major funding source and needed to find new homes for a percentage of their non-releaseable raptors.

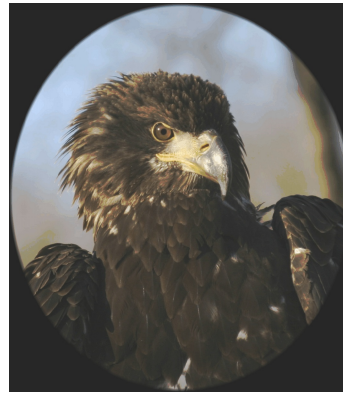
After talking with the US Fish and Wildlife Service and with the WV Division of Natural Resources, we offered to accept the young eagle here at TRAC.

Regis comes from Anson County, North Carolina. He was hatched in March of 2008 but was found injured in June of 2009. His badly broken then healed left wing left him flightless and he was taken to Carolina Raptor Center. A permanent home was found for him here at Three Rivers Avian Center in late January 2011.

Since that time, Regis has had to learn a lot. He did not have much handling experience so we've had to start with the basics such as getting up onto the perch on command, step up or off the glove when asked, take food gently from the bare hand, and learn to ride the glove - a trick when one wing's alignment tends to throw balance off. Sometimes he doesn't fall off - he jumps off. That means we've had to teach him how to get back up on it again with help, now he's also learning how to do it on his own like our other educational birds. So far he's doing well though and is riding the glove for half-mile-long walks.

Bald Eagles are dark birds in appearance for the first 3 - 4 years, then gradually molt in the more-recognized white head and tail by the time they are 4 - 5 years old. Their diet consists of mostly of fish, waterfowl, birds, rodents, small mammals and fresh carrion. They mate for life and can live to be 28 - 36 years old. Bald Eagles were removed from the Endangered Species List in June of 2007.

Regis is featured on this year's Migration Celebration flier.



Migration Celebration 2011

May 14,
2011

9 am - 5 pm

Little Beaver State Park Grandview Road, Beaver WV

A Family Festival Celebrating West Virginia's Birds & Our Natural Heritage

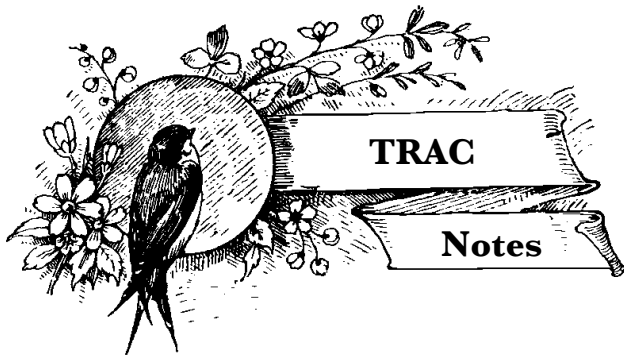
Three Rivers Avian Center is hosting our 10th annual Migration Celebration on May 14 at Little Beaver State Park!

Come join in a Springtime festival saluting the return of our migratory birds and exploring the habitats that sustain them. Of course there will be birding walks and nature walks through the Park, but there will also be bug hunts for the kids, interactive displays and exhibits, storytelling, a juggling and magic show, a raptor photography workshop for photographers of all abilities, arts and crafts, plus there will be animal shapes to paint, animal tracks to make, and so much more.

This year Kirby the Recycling Robot with his message of "Reduce, Reuse, Recycle" will make his first ever appearance at the Festival. Kids of all ages enjoy Kirby's humor and antics!

Besides an exhibit of live raptors from Three Rivers Avian Center, there will also be exhibits from the WV DNR's Wildlife Diversity Program, the National Park Service - New River Gorge, the WV Dept. Of Agriculture's Insect Survey Program, and the Raleigh County Solid Waste Authority. The museum housed at Little Beaver State Park will also be open.

The event is free and open to the public.



Our first intern of 2011 began her work here January 10th. Christine Shirey, a graduate of Marshall University and a zookeeper at the Saint Augustine Zoo in Florida, decided that Florida was not for her and returned home to the Mountain State. Although she had been working with a diverse group of animals at the Zoo, she wanted to improve her raptor handling and training skills. "I believe that you have a wealth of knowledge and experience which would be invaluable for me and what I want for my career down the road. Plus, I am a crazy hard worker, and totally devoted to my tasks and the cause," she wrote in her application. How could we refuse?

Christine has volunteered here at TRAC in late 2007 and early 2008. In her internship this year she took on the task of updating and expanding our procedures manual, helped with treatments and did indeed hone her raptor handling and training skills.

Her internship finished at the end of February, and the Virginia Safari Park near Harrisonburg Virginia snapped her up. She is now working as a Safari keeper at the Park. Congratulations, Christine, and thanks for all the help!

We are currently assessing applications for the Summer Internship position.

When, on October 9th 2010, TRAC's Golden Eagle, Spirit, escaped during an on-site photography workshop an extensive effort was made to locate him and lure him back. We thought there was a reasonable chance that he

might return on his own because on the evening of the 9th, he flew in and landed near his cage before flying off. Because of this, it was suggested by WV DNR wildlife officials that TRAC could join the Golden Eagle Tracking study program and open a camera station on Brooks Mountain. This study involves using road-killed deer carcasses as bait and a camera to record the animals that come in to feed throughout the winter. Since Golden Eagles use Eastern WV as a wintering area, a number of such stations are monitored by the WV DNR as part of the study. A station at TRAC would then serve the dual purpose of gathering data for the study and provide an opportunity to recapture Spirit should he show up. From November through the end of March, our camera recorded a number of animals using the station to get them through the Winter, but Spirit was not one of them.

The information gave us a glimpse of the resident predatory bird population on Brooks Mountain and did provide useful data to the Tracking Study. We photographed Ravens, Crows, Red-tailed Hawks, Red-shouldered Hawks, Turkey Vultures, Black Vultures, and Blue jays all using the site regularly. Even though there are Bald Eagles nesting not 2 miles away, they never were observed at our site. The study sites to the east in Greenbrier County produced numerous eagle sightings. Apparently we are just off to the West of the wintering grounds used by Golden Eagles. In addition to the daylight predators and scavengers that visited us, we got to know the nocturnal foxes, coyotes, opossums, and racoons that regularly visit. Once, when trekking through deep snow to the camera to retrieve photographs, I found tracks of an opossum. These tracks ended abruptly in a splash of owl wing prints in the snow. The camera somehow missed the ambush.

So Spring is now upon us, and the hard Winter is giving way to the pleasures and drama of a new season despite our loss. And our effort has given us a renewed appreciation for the ecology of our mountain which we had never seen before.

Flight Barn Construction Update

Just before Thanksgiving we were able to assemble a construction crew at the same time that we had good weather to work in! Rafters were finished, sheathing boards went up on the mesh top sections, and we started on the roofing itself. One whole side is now complete: the West side now has a full mesh top and we've lined ourselves up to finish the other mesh section on the East side as soon as we can assemble a work crew this Spring. Thanks go out to Jeremy Hurst and Carol Jackson for their hard work!

Dave Lambert came in and used his painting skills to paint the outside run a lovely dark green. It matches the paint on the building part of the eagle cage, and looks great. The building blends into the landscape very nicely, except for the very white Tuftex roof!

We are very close to finishing this project. Here's what's left: putting the wire mesh on the East side of the building, then the sheathing boards for the Tuftex roofing need to be placed on the rafters, then the Tuftex roofing can be applied (on the North and South ends). That encloses the flyway. Then a small 4 x 8 antechamber needs to be constructed at the entrance. That will give us what we call a double door entry, where we come into the antechamber, close the outside door, then open the door to the flyway. This ensures that a bird flying in the flyway doesn't have a means to fly out an open door until we're sure that bird is ready to go. There are also some parts of the flyway that we need paint for. The paint we are using is very good, but expensive. We estimate that we need about 12 more gallons, and each gallon costs \$33.00. There are also a few electrical outlets and lights to install. All materials, be it for the roof or electrics, are here waiting on site, except the paint.

All in all, excluding painting time (Dave Lambert is in charge of that) we think if we can get a semi-experienced work crew together we have approximately 20 hours of work left.

Reward!

An adult bald eagle was shot and killed with a high power rifle in the Bull Falls area of Bluestone State Park (Summers County, WV) between November 22nd and 24th, 2010. TRAC was notified of the tragedy by WV Division of Natural Resources, and along with many others, we kept our ears open hoping for a lead to find the killer.

The WV Division of Natural Resources is offering a reward of up to \$2,500 for information leading to the arrest and successful prosecution of the person or persons who have committed this terrible crime. There are many people who would personally like to do something towards helping to prosecute the killer. On March 12th Bibbee Nature Club members and Three Rivers Avian Center joined together to start up a special fund for an additional reward that will be given to the person who turns in the perpetrator.

The Eagle Reward Fund has been established at Three Rivers Avian Center and is now accepting donations of any amount. Donations are tax-deductible, and will be kept in the fund until November 25th, 2011. At that time, if the killer hasn't been found, donors will be given the choice to continue to leave their money in the Reward Fund or donate it to Three Rivers Avian Center's General Fund to assist in caring for wild birds.

If you would like to donate to the fund by check, make it payable to Three Rivers Avian Center (or "TRAC"), and mail it to : TRAC, Brooks Mtn Rd, HC 74 Box 279, Brooks, WV 25951. If you prefer, you may make a payment online via Paypal, or use your Mastercard, Visa or Discover credit card by going to our website and clicking on the "Paypal" button on the front page. The Three Rivers Avian Center's website is www.tracwv.org. **Please be sure to indicate on your payment that you are making a contribution to the Eagle Reward Fund.** As of 4/7/2011, the Fund has raised \$1,090.00.



It's Time To Mark Your 2011 Calendar!

TRAC's education outreach program has a busy several months coming up, and you're invited to join in the fun! Here are some of the highlights, more are listed on our web page under "upcoming events":

May 7	Open House @ TRAC	1 pm - 5 pm
May 17	Migration Celebration @ Little Beaver State Park	9 am - 5 pm
May 28	Vandalia Festival @ Capitol Complex in Charleston	11 am - 5 pm
May 29	Vandalia Festival @ Capitol Complex in Charleston	12 pm - 5 pm
June 4	Public Tour Day @ TRAC	1 pm - 5 pm
June 11	Beech Fork Lake State Park	7 pm
June 18	Tygart Lake Resort State Park	2 pm
June 24	Bluestone Lake State Park	7 pm
June 25	Watoga State Park	3 pm
July 2	Public Tour Day @ TRAC	1 pm - 5 pm
July 14	Pipestem Resort State Park	7 pm
July 16	Babcock State Park	7 pm
July 22	Twin Falls Resort State Park	7 pm
July 26	Blackwater Falls State Park	7 pm
July 29	Holly River State Park	4 pm
August 4	Appalachian String Band Festival	12 pm
August 6	Public Tour Day @ TRAC	1 pm - 5 pm
August 13	North Bend State Park	7 pm
August 14	Tomlinson Run State Park	1 pm
August 18	Cacapon State Resort Park	7:30 pm
August 20	East Lynn Lake	1 pm
August 26	Greenbrier State Forest	7 pm
September 3	& October 1 Public Tour Day @ TRAC	1 pm - 5 pm

Become a new member or renew your membership and you'll help TRAC continue to care for West Virginia's wild birds. Feathered Friend Sponsors are members who also receive a certificate of sponsorship with a photograph of their chosen raptor from our educational raptor stables. Members at the \$150 or higher level have the option of being listed on the back of the newsletter. All donations and memberships are tax-deductible under IRS code 501(c)3. Memberships and Feathered Friend Sponsorships can also be purchased directly from the TRAC website if you would prefer to pay using a credit card or Paypal account.

Memberships

Eagle	\$1,000+
Falcon	\$500+
Owl	\$250+
Sponsor	\$150+
Patron	\$100+
Benefactor	\$75+
Supporting	\$50+
Family	\$25+
Individual	\$10+
Feathered Friend	See other box

Feathered Friend Sponsorships

Regis	Bald Eagle	\$60
Perry	Peregrine Falcon	\$30
Robbie	Barred Owl	\$30
Twister	Barn Owl	\$30
Ginger	Long Eared Owl	\$30
Rudy	Eastern Screech Owl -red	\$30
Thomas	Eastern Screech Owl - gray	\$30
Hoolie	Great Horned Owl	\$30
Nick	Red Tailed Hawk	\$30
Harlan	Red Tailed Hawk -dark morph	\$30
Kendra	Red Shouldered Hawk	\$30
Chip	Broad Winged Hawk	\$30

Remember to check your newsletter mailing label for your current membership level and expiration date!

Your name: _____

Address: _____

E-mail: _____ **Phone #:** _____

We are working to reduce our carbon footprint, conserve TRAC resources, and save precious funds by using e-mail instead of the US Postal Service as much as possible. If you provide us with your e-mail address, we will use it to acknowledge donations and to send important notices once in a while (we promise not to cram your inbox!). TRAC has a long-standing policy of not selling or sharing member's addresses or other contact data, so your information is safe with us.

Your support is vital to our ability to continue caring for wild birds. Thank you!

We are often asked what "in-kind" items we need donated to the cause. These things are always needed: Paper towels Simple Green cleaner stamps And wild bird seed -high quality mixes containing lots of black sunflower seeds, fruits and nuts are best since we can feed it to more species.

Keeping in touch with TRAC on-line is easy. We're on Twitter (@TRACWV) on Facebook (Three Rivers Avian Center) and there's the TRAC Blog, available at (www.tracwv.org/wordpress). Or you can e-mail us! trac@tracwv.org

Many Thanks to our Sponsors!

*Your name, a loved one's name or your group or company's name can be listed here for an annual donation of \$150 or more.
Your donation is fully tax-deductible & will help advance the work of Three Rivers Avian Center.*

All Creatures Veterinary Clinic
Animal Care Associates
Anne & Warren Ballard
Pat Barker
Charles & Nancy Brabec
Evelyn Bradley & Fred Gilkey
Joyce Broyles
Brooks Bird Club - Handlan Chap.
Terry & Evan Buck
Connie Campanella & Kevin Casey
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Kanawha Co. Animal Emergency Clinic
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Allen & Mindy Waldron
James & Mona Wiseman
Charles & Beverly Wright
Andrew & Janet Zettle
(Your name could be here.....)

In memory of Robert Tolliver

A Special Thank You to:

The Acker Foundation

The H. P. & Anne S. Hunnicutt Foundation

The One Foundation



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