



The Raptor Chapter

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2008 Summer Residency Student: Mike Segars

“So, what’s next?” We became very used to this question at the completion of every task, and what a joy it was to hear! The questioner was our 2008 Summer Resident, Mike Segars, a Wildlife Management major entering his senior year at West Virginia University.

By day he is a student, at night and other un-scholarly time, a volunteer firefighter with a strong interest in rock climbing, kayaking, hiking, fishing, hunting, caving and just about anything else with an out-door orientation.

Three Rivers Avian Center maintains both a Summer Internship and a Summer Residency program. The Internship takes all Summer and is designed to immerse the Intern in all the aspects of a wild bird center, including public outreach, avian rehabilitation, species restoration, and wild bird research. A Summer Residency is designed for those who are more interested in pursuing one or so particular topics in that list, and is shorter in duration. In Mike’s case, the focus of his 3 week Residency was the peregrine falcon restoration in the New



River Gorge National River, wild bird veterinary care and physical therapy, and long term care for 13 our resident raptors, including a golden eagle. During his time here, he learned and honed his skills in understanding young peregrine behavior, kept records of what he observed, learned raptor handling skills, proper feeding and veterinary care of wild bird patients and long term raptor residents, public speaking, species identification, capture and proper transportation of non-game wild birds.

When he was off-duty, he was always looking around for another project to take on and help out with. Thanks to his hard work and sweat equity, we now have a beautifully prepped and painted ceiling in the Hospital hallway and bathroom, and several maintenance jobs for the Intern cabin’s upkeep were finished up. Thanks a bunch, Mike!!

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Peregrine Restoration: Year Three A Numbers Game

The one question that people always ask concerning the Peregrine Restoration Project is “How will you know when you have succeeded in bringing the Peregrine Falcon back to the New River Gorge?” The answer is simple, “When they start nesting and successfully raising young in the gorge.”

Getting to that point is not so simple. Consider the numbers concerning mortality. From previous studies, it is not unreasonable to expect 90% of our birds to die from predation and starvation before they start breeding at age 2 or 3. This means that we could expect between 4 and 6 survivors after 3 years. It seems like a long shot to expect any of these birds to set up shop in the New River Gorge after wandering thousands of miles around the western hemisphere (or even farther)? A measly 10%? To get Peregrines back to the gorge, we are going to have to do better than that. And it looks like we are . . . so far.

Last year we tracked some of our birds with satellite transmitters to see how we were doing. It looks like two thirds of that release made it back this Spring, which is stupendous for the first year of life! Extrapolating this survival rate over three years to all three groups, we could have 5 to 12 breeding age birds this next Spring. How much of this success can be attributed to our hard work vs. blind luck is hard to tell. With a population this small, any singular event, such as a bad storm, a squabble over food, a hungry Great Horned Owl, or an idiot with a gun, can change the numbers overnight.

We feed and observe the birds through July and keep daily logs of who comes in and how often. We take notes on behavior to give us a clue on how they are progressing. As they learn to fly, to chase, to hunt, to dodge and dive, it is logical to assume that keeping them safe and fed as long as possible will buy them time on the front end of their ordeal in the Fall

when they leave us on their first migration. We want them to leave with fat and muscle on their bones, the required flying skills, and fond memories of the place that raised them.

This Spring we know that there was a breeding pair of Peregrines on the Parkersburg/Belpre bridge, one of which is ours from 2006. They raised 3 young. Another pair was found nesting on North Fork Mountain in Grant County, but neither appears to be from the New River Gorge Restoration Program. What appears to be a non-breeding pair has set up shop in Charleston and one of them is ours from 2007. Other Peregrine sightings have been made at many other places. The problem is that non-nesting Peregrines tend to travel a lot! Transmitter data from the 4 birds we released last year proved that multiple sightings of even a few birds can exaggerate the number of birds we think we are seeing. So, how many do we really have and where are they?

Everyone involved has agreed that we may have to release another batch next year, but what if next Spring brings Peregrines home to nest in the Gorge? Peregrines are territorial. Our efforts at producing a mob of juveniles in their space would not be appreciated. In this case we would have to move the hack boxes to a new location. But nesting birds or no, it would be good to know where the birds are at that critical 4th Spring when we should have birds ready, willing and old enough to start raising young. Since we have no funding as yet for transmitters this year, the only way find out where we stand next year will be to search for them the old fashioned way, by following up leads and then going there in person. Maybe the birds will make it easy for us and remember the ol' home place near Fayetteville.

So you can see how tricky it will be to determine our level of success. But it isn't hard to understand the importance of the effort. Quite a bit of hard work remains. This year was promising, but next year may be the telling.

-Ron Perrone, TRAC Education Director

Species Spotlight: Turkey Vulture

Scientific Name: *Cathartes aura*

Size & Appearance: Length: 27 inches, wing span: 69 inches. Black to very dark brown bird with short, unfeathered lower legs, no feathers on head. Head of adult is red, juvenile (less than 1 year old) has a black bald head. Long tail, underside of wings are two-toned light and dark when extended.

Range: Year round in southern US, migrates north in Spring to northern US and into Canada. Stays in most WV locales from early April through late November, into December if it stays warm enough.

Food Preferences: Carrion (either fresh or not) of all shapes and sizes. Young are fed a regurgitant.

Hunting Technique: Soaring over areas on thermal updrafts. Can have a home hunting range of up to 80 square air miles. Often hunt cooperatively, using their heightened sense of smell as well as their vision to find food.

Breeding & Habitat: found in both mountainous and open areas, turkey vultures are a common sight throughout the season in West Virginia. Males and females stay together all year, are very loving and devoted to each other, and are devoted parents. They are highly intelligent, and roost communally.

Nesting & Eggs: raise one brood per year, will not re-nest if the clutch is destroyed. Usually lay 2 eggs per clutch, they hatch at 38 - 41 days. When they hatch, the chicks are downy, immobile and the eyes are closed. Young are brooded constantly by both parents for 5 days post-hatch. After day 5, the parents may leave them for short periods of time.

Nest is minimal at best, sometimes in the mouth of a cave or hollow stump, may have raked stones, dry leaves or wood chips to mark the area.

Status: The Turkey Vulture population is considered to be stable.

Notes: Please see page 4.



Mark your Calendars!

Join us for these upcoming free events! A full schedule of activities is available on our website: www.tracwv.org

August 2 1pm - 5pm Public Tour Day at TRAC. Tours of the TRAC educational raptors and facility grounds. Call or e-mail for directions: 304-466-4683, www.tracwv.org. Fun for all ages!

August 8 7 pm "Wings of Wonder" Birds of Prey program at North Bend State Park Call the Park at 1-800-CALLWVA for more information.

August 9 3 pm "Wings of Wonder" Birds of Prey program at Cedar Creek State Park Call the Park at 1-800-CALLWVA for more information.

August 11 6 pm "Wings of Wonder" Birds of Prey program at Nitro Public Library. Call the Library for more details: 304-755-4432

August 15 7:30 pm "Wings of Wonder" Birds of Prey program at Cacapon State Park conference center. Call the Park for more details: 1-800-CALLWVA

August 16 3 pm "Wings of Wonder" Birds of Prey program at Lost River State Park. Call the Park for more details: 1-800-CALLWVA.

September 6 1pm - 5pm Public Tour Day at TRAC. Tours of the TRAC educational raptors and facility grounds. Call or e-mail for directions: 304-466-4683, www.tracwv.org. Fun for all ages!

September 28 12 - 4 pm TRAC display featuring live raptors including an owl, a golden eagle and a peregrine falcon at Tamarack, in Beckley. Contact Tamarack for more information: 304-256-6843.



TRAC Hospice Vets

These veterinarians listed below have kindly agreed to donate their talents and veterinary care to TRAC patients. We couldn't do our work without them. Please let them know that you value their assistance too!

TRAC Staff Veterinarian: Dr Bill Streit
All Creatures Veterinary Clinic 304-2-425-9944
Stafford Drive Plaza, Princeton

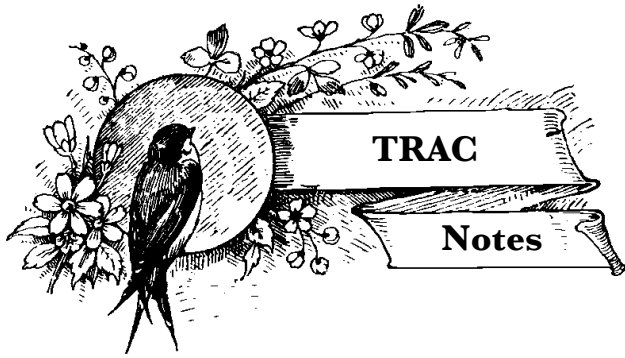
Animal Care Associates	304-344-2244
840 Oakwood Road, Charleston	
Beckley Veterinary Hospital	304-255-4159
215 Dry Hill Road, Charleston	
Cross Lanes Veterinary Hospital	304-776-4501
524 Old Geoff Mtn Road, Cross Lanes	
Ceredo-Kenova Animal Clinic	304-453-6384
750 "C" Street, Ceredo	
Country Roads Veterinary Clinic	304-586-0700
3420 Winfield Road, Winfield	
Elk Valley Veterinary Hospital	304-965-7675
113 Frame Road, Elkview	
Good Shepherd Veterinary Hospital	304-925-7387
3703 MacCorkle Ave. SE, Charleston	
Greenbrier Veterinary Hospital	304-645-1476
Rt 219 North, Lewisburg	
Hurricane Animal Hospital	304-562-3221
#1 Davis Court, Hurricane	
Kanawha Co. Animal Emergency Clinic	304-768-2911
5304 MacCorkle Ave SW, South Charleston	
Monroe Veterinary House Calls	304-667-2365
Union	
Oak Hill Animal Hospital	304-465-8267
Summerlee Road, Oak Hill	
Raleigh County Animal Hospital	304-253-4787
198 Ragland Road, Beckley	
Stonecrest Animal Hospital	304-525-1800
#1 Stonecrest Drive, Huntington	
Valley West Veterinary Hospital	304-343-6783
201 Virginia Street West, Charleston	

Baby Season Notes

— **B**aby season is still rolling along here in August with Chimney Swift babies, young cedar waxwings, juvenile broad winged and red tailed hawks, and more. One disturbing trend we've noted this year is a growing public reliance on the Internet for baby bird feeding and wildlife care advice, rather than calling TRAC or other licensed wildlife rehabilitators. This has resulted in several disasters for baby birds.

A case in point is a few days old vulture chick taken from its normal nest on the ground by a well meaning college student. Since he was heading for a pre-med degree, he figured that he should be able to care for it himself, and it would give him more experience in the medical field. Off he went to the Internet, where he read all sorts of things about both pet bird and wild bird diets. Unhappy with the idea that this chick would be fed regurgitated meat from the parents' crop, he decided to supplement the diet with broccoli (since he read that all birds need greens - they don't), pumpkin (since he read that a turkey vulture had been spotted playing with a pumpkin in a pumpkin patch somewhere) and a mixture of other oddities. A week later, when he finally did contact us, the bird was close to death. He very reluctantly turned it in, but it was too late for the chick. The crop was stuffed with days of rotting pumpkin and broccoli feedings that the bird could not digest, and the bird died of starvation and an overwhelmingly infected crop in less than 48 hours.

A horrifying case to be sure, but certainly not the only one this year. Caring for wild bird youngsters takes a lot of time, special diets specific to the species, anatomical, behavioral and societal accommodations, and much more. It cannot be learned on the fly from the Internet, although web sites from established wildlife rehabilitation centers can make good suggestions for short-term care. We ask all wild bird enthusiasts to remember the needless death of this young vulture, and to encourage finders of wild birds in need to get them into proper, licensed care rapidly.



Peregrine Restoration Project Update

The 2008 season is now at an end, with 21 birds, originally from Virginia, Pennsylvania and New Jersey, all released into the New River Gorge. This season's successful release rate is 81%, since 4 individuals went AWOL prior to the "two weeks of daily sightings" goal. One of those 4 birds was seen right up to the 11th day, but... The last day for feeding the peregrines at the hack site was July 29th, so they are out fending for themselves now. 26 volunteers donated over 300 hours to the effort, as well as a hack site attendant, staff from TRAC, WV Dept. Of Natural Resources, the National Park Service, and the Center for Conservation Biology at the College of William and Mary. Other support for the project came from the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, the Pennsylvania Game Commission, the New Jersey Department of Natural Resources, and TriState Bird Rescue.

Two young peregrines, a male from the Walt Whitman Bridge in Pennsylvania and a female from the James River Reserve Fleet in Virginia were presented with medical problems, are in rehabilitation still, and are not included in this year's project statistics. The male had the talon on one of his back toes ripped out prior to being brought to TRAC. He was in rehabilitation for about 2 weeks to allow the toe to heal, and is currently with a TRAC falconer for flight and killing training. So far the talon has not re-grown, which may prove to be a severe handicap for killing the peregrine's

preferred prey: birds. The female came in with trichomoniasis, a protozoan infestation of the mouth and sometimes the throat from eating pigeons who have been drinking out of contaminated puddles of water. It is most commonly seen in birds in urban areas, not so much in a rural state such as West Virginia. The infestation was very severe and has proved to be very hard to eradicate, but we think we may have gotten the last of it dealt with. If she remains protozoan-free for the rest of this week we can release her and she should do very well.

A full report of this season's work will be posted in pdf format in the peregrine restoration section on our website by the end of August.



Migration Celebration 2008: bigger and better than last year

This year's Migration Celebration at Little Beaver State Park near Beckley was larger and more varied than ever! 800+ attendees enjoyed a wide range of family activities ranging from birding and nature walks, bug hunts, kids activities including making individual balsa wood bird houses for the kids to take home and mount and painting huge wildlife shapes, paddle boat rides around Little Beaver Lake, and the ever popular photo workshop. When not involved in one of these activities, people milled around the live raptors from Three Rivers Avian Center including Spirit the Golden Eagle and Perry the Peregrine Falcon, displays from medieval reenactors and falconers, interactive displays from the WV Dept. Of Natural Resources, the National Park Service, the WV Dept of Agriculture, and the WV Division of Environmental Protection's Recycling program, and so much more. Food was provided by Flynn's Hot Dogs of Beckley.

Before we knew it, the day had flown by, leaving memories of birds, trees, sunshine and smiling faces. Mark your calendars for next year's Migration Celebration: Saturday May 9th at Little Beaver State Park!



**Raptor Photo
Workshop
scheduled for
Saturday,
October 11, 2008**

Calling all photographers, amateur to expert, who want that one, eye-catching photo of a specific raptor in its' natural habitat! Steven Rotsch of Positive Image Photography and Three Rivers Avian Center are teaming up once more for our annual October photo workshop at Three Rivers Avian Center's facility in Brooks, WV.

Thirteen raptors will be available in native settings: Eastern Screech Owls (both red and grey phased), a white breasted morph barn owl, a barred owl, a long eared owl, a great horned owl, red tailed hawks (both "regular" and dark morph) a red shouldered hawk, a broad winged hawk, an American kestrel (female), a peregrine falcon (anatum race) and a male golden eagle.

The workshop is divided into two sessions, each of which is held in a different area of the facility to enable photographers to vary the backgrounds for each bird. Staff and docents from Three Rivers Avian Center will be on hand helping position the birds for maximum effect as well as to give natural history and behavioral notes for each species. Since these birds are used to being around people they are excellent camera subjects. Handouts containing more information about each bird will also be available on site.

Steve Rotsch will lead the workshops, helping with technique tips, equipment suggestions and Adobe Photoshop skills among other things. Participants should bring a camera (either digital or film), flash, a telephoto lens if possible, extra batteries and lots of film or memory cards. If you have a monopod or tripod, participants in previous workshops have found these useful. All

photograph sessions will be outdoors, so dress appropriately.

The morning session runs from 9 am to noon, the afternoon session runs from 1pm to 4 pm, or participants can register for the entire day (which includes lunch). Half day sessions are \$50.00 each, the entire day including lunch is \$100.

Registration for this event is required, and can be done either by calling Steve Rotch at 304-541-7574 or 304-344-1395 or by e-mailing him at swrkab@aol.com. Registration can also be done directly on-line at Steve's secure website: www.stevenrotsch.com. Online registrants can use Paypal, Visa, Mastercard or Discover credit cards. Deadline for registration is noon on Wednesday, October 8, 2008.

Flight Barn Construction Update

The work to complete the flight barn was halted over the Summer by the Peregrine Project. Now that cooler weather is headed our way and there is more time for construction, we are getting back on it again. The last part of the Flight Barn to complete is the "race track" around the outside of the building. Measuring 12 feet wide and encompassing the entire 40'(L) x 28'(W) perimeter of the current structure, the race track will give continual flying space for conditioning and endurance training and will bring the building up to it's final footprint of 64'(L) x 52'(W).

As reported in the last newsletter, the Leon Wilson Bird Club donated \$1,800 towards completion of this vital part of the Flight Barn. A neighbor is donating the use of his large farm tractor to help dig the final drainage ditch, and several people are standing ready to volunteer on the construction itself, which helps stretch an already tight construction budget. We estimate that we still need to raise \$7,800 to purchase the remaining materials, sand, and specialized labor to complete the project.

Construction starts again the first week of September using materials already on hand. Hammers anyone?

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. Those who are 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.

For those who wish to purchase t-shirts, polo shirts, stickers, patches posters or CD's , we encourage you to please visit our website www.tracwv.org/generalstore **IT IS UP AND RUNNING!!** There you will find full color pictures of all the above and the opportunity to purchase them using Paypal or your credit card. *New item alert:* we have a limited supply of dark blue t-shirts with a drawing by Roger Tory Peterson of two peregrines; the TRAC triangle logo is in white on the sleeve.

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

Spirit	Golden Eagle	\$60
Ayla	American Kestrel (female)	\$30
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

Needs List

Bounty Paper Towels

Clorox Disinfecting Wipes
(generic is fine!)

Copper Scrubbers

"Simple Green" Cleaner

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

All donations are tax deductible under IRS code 501(c)3. Your support is vital to our success!

Thank you.

Your name: _____

Address: _____

E-mail address: _____

Phone #: _____

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 tax-deductible & will help advance the work of Three Rivers Avian Center.

All Creatures Veterinary Clinic	Carl & Sherry Chapman	Bill, Sherry & Katie Grimes	Ferdinand & Christine Perrone
Animal Care Associates	Sharon Cook	Roger Hardway	Diane Perrone - Silver
Anne & Warren Ballard	Crown Hill Equipment Co.	Mr. & Mrs. Bill Hitchman	Merilee Phelps
Margaret Ballard	Deb Darden & Richard Segars	Kanawha Co. Animal Emergency Clinic	Lewis & Matilda Purnell
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Brooks Bird Club - Handlan Chap.	Diana Everett	Glade Little & Jennifer Soule	James & Mona Wiseman
Joyce Broyles	The Forman & Frame Family	Dean & Gail Osgood	<i>(your name could be here too!)</i>
David & Martha Brumfield	Good Shepherd Veterinary Hospital	David & Sherry Patick	
Terry & Evan Buck	Dwight & Jane Griffith	Jeff & Monica Patton	

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The Acker Foundation The H. P. & Anne S. Hunnicutt Foundation The One Foundation

