



The Raptor Chapter

Volume #18
1st Quarter Edition

Issue # 1
February 2009

A Publication of Three Rivers Avian Center

2009 Internship Opportunity

Three Rivers Avian Center is gearing up for another busy Summer of educational programs, wild bird rehabilitation and peregrine falcon species restoration work. We are offering a full time Summer internship opportunity for a qualified applicant, beginning in mid-May and continuing through mid-August.

Qualified applicants will have the ability to complete tasks independently, be deadline oriented, have the flexibility to work with many different people and personalities, enjoy being outdoors, have excellent communication skills, be enthusiastic, be willing to work in a fast paced environment, have their own vehicle and be at least 18 years old.

Interns can expect to be handling wild birds of prey and other bird species, helping with rehabilitation treatments, participating in environmental education programs, helping release healed up patients back to the wild, answering telephones and providing information to callers, collect observation data on wild peregrine falcon behavior, and much more. The Internship is an unpaid position; however, TRAC provides on-site housing and utilities (except phone) and some meals.

For more information, contact Wendy Perrone, Executive Director, at 304-466-4683 or by e-mail at wendy@tracwv.org. Deadline for applications and resumes is April 1, 2009.

Flight Barn Flyway Receives Final Funding For Materials

The Leon Wilson Memorial Flyway construction project is back on top priority status after donors pitched in to raise the funds needed to purchase construction materials! We would like to take the opportunity to thank these folks in particular who have made special donations since last February: the Leon Wilson Bird Club of Huntington, WV, an anonymous donor from Charleston, WV, Constance Campanella and Kevin D. Casey of Alexandria, VA, Stateside Associates of Arlington, VA, Mr. & Mrs. William Hitchman of Charleston, WV and Greg Bernet of Milford, NJ.

Construction will begin as soon as the weather allows. We are looking for volunteer help on the project, scheduling may flex some due to weather. Follow construction updates on our web page (www.tracwv.org) and plan on joining the grand opening celebration here on July 4th from 1 - 5 pm. Let's get to work!

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A Burning Issue

Landfills often find themselves in the position of having to dispose of methane gas generated by decaying solid waste under the ground. To accomplish this, a simple mechanism very similar to a household gas heater (only much bigger) is installed. Some burn all the time. Others are intermittent - activated by timers or pressure.

Methane is a potentially marketable gas but the economics of selling it vary. When harvested, it can be used for generating electricity or it may be cleaned up and sold. If there is no economic incentive for these options, the landfill just burns it off. This is necessary because methane gas is an explosively flammable pollutant.

There are a number of designs for the burners. Their inherent safety pertaining to birds varies. Some shoot a jet of fire as high as 20 feet from their tops. When they are intermittent, their threat is intermittent and not necessarily apparent. Unfortunately, landfills are habitat for any number of seagulls, vultures and raptors as well. Tall structures like methane burners are attractive to them for perching. If they are sitting there or flying over it when the burner goes off, they get torched. Sometimes the bird is killed outright, or they suffer burns, but more often the problem is feather damage. I did not use the words "just feather damage" because the only treatment for burn-damaged primaries, secondaries and tail feathers is to wait for the bird to molt in new replacement ones. This takes several weeks, during which the bird must be kept in captivity. If stress or nutritional problems arise the new feathers can be damaged or weakened as they are produced.

As the problem with methane burners becomes more widely observed it is incumbent upon those of us who know about it to spread the word. There are effective and inexpensive ways to keep raptors and other bigger birds off the burners. The top of the torch is usually a simple open circular "coffee can" shape. To this, a ring with double serrated saw teeth can

be welded. The teeth don't have to be sharp, just uncomfortably uneven. Then another perch can be offered to the birds as an alternative. I know of 2 types. One is basically a tall 'T' perch set up at a distance. The other is a ring perch attached to the burner itself, welded around the stack and safely below the top. The theory here is that, prevented from perching on top, they move to the easy perch below and when the unit fires off they will spook from a safe vantage point and learn. At some sites there might be an issue with the T perches because poles sometimes cannot be erected where they would puncture the landfill lining.

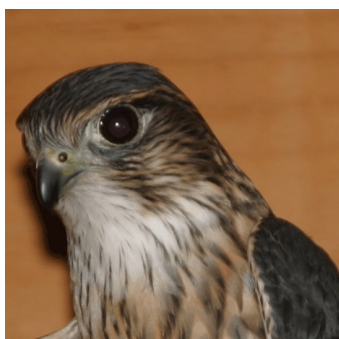
Of course, it would be best if the economics of methane gas conversion to a beneficial use were improved. This would remove almost all of the threat. By capturing the gas and selling it, the landfill could reduce carbon emissions and could market those reductions as carbon credits.

According to Ken Lathroum, a Senior Operations Manager with the Maryland Environmental Service, one such contract has recently been signed "that will replace 54 'candlestick flares' with just one central flare at an investment of between \$800 thousand and \$1 million dollars." "A follow up option in addition to the central flare," he continued, "is to either augment the local natural gas system and/or install generators that use converted diesel engines to generate electricity. But in addition to any of the above scenarios, a flare, preferably an enclosed central flare, has to be in operation to dissipate excess gas and to burn off gas during periods of maintenance or repair of other equipment."

This is a widespread issue. Next time you are at a landfill, look around and see if there any methane burners installed and then check them to see if they have been properly 'bird proofed'. If not, speak to the people there about it. To see full color photographs of what can happen to birds burned by methane burners and how to safety proof one for birds, visit our web page:

www.tracwv.org/links/methaneburners.

 Ron Perrone, TRAC Education Director



Species Spotlight

MERLIN

Scientific Name: *Falco columbarius*

Size & Appearance: males are smaller than the females. Males: overall length is 9 - 11 inches, with a wingspan of 21 - 23 inches; female: overall length is 11 - 12 inches, wingspan of 24 - 27 inches. There are three subspecies, all with slightly different coloration, with the darker ones being found in more humid environments and the lighter ones in more arid climates. Coloration is different between the sexes too. The Boreal, or eastern subspecies, seems to be the one that occasionally strays into West Virginia and is the one discussed in this article. Males have a dark blue-grey back with a dark tail that has alternating 2 to 3 slate blue-black bands visible from the top, the bottom of the tail is black with 3- 4 white bands when the tail is fanned out. Chest is off-white with thin brown vertical streaks, eyebrow crest is light colored, vertical stripe below eye is less noticeable and thin. Females and juveniles are similarly patterned to the male, but have dark brown backs and tail, the tail has dark brown and tawny brown stripes instead of the male's blue-grey and black ones.

Range: Three of the Merlin's nine subspecies occur in the US & Canada. The "Boreal" or *columbarius* breeds in northern Canadian boreal forests from Newfoundland to Alaska and winters in the Caribbean and Central America; the "Richardson's" or *richardsonii* breeds and resides in prairies of south-central Canada and the upper Midwest of the United States with some moving south to New Mexico; and the "Black" or *suckleyi*, is a resident in upper Pacific Coast forests from British Columbia to Alaska, occasionally straying to

New Mexico in winter.

Food Preferences: mostly songbirds and other small birds, will also supplement with mice.

Hunting Technique: low, fast horizontal chasing flight. Most often seen chasing prey or perching watching for prey in their vicinity. The majority of their hunting takes place at dusk and dawn, making this bird's habits fall into the "crepuscular" category.

Breeding & Habitat: breeds in open habitats, nests primarily in open woodland or grassy lightly wooded area, once in a while in cities. Raises one brood per year, and are monogamous.

Nesting & Eggs: The nest is often the abandoned nest of crows, hawks or magpies, once in a while freshened up with feathers and twigs. May also use a tree cavity, cliff or even a scrape on the ground in treeless country. On average, 4- 5 white eggs are laid, some have reddish-brown markings, and are incubated mostly by the female, with some help from the male, who does all the hunting. The chicks hatch out at 28-32 days, immobile, downy, & eyes closed. They are fed by both parents until they fledge at 30 - 35 days old. Yearlings, especially males, may return to the nesting area and help in territory defense.

Status: populations are stable, although not numerous. This species is very rarely seen in West Virginia.

Notes: Outside of breeding season, these birds are usually solitary, found perching on any good vantage point such as a tower, utility line, tree branch, etc. watching for prey. If conifer trees are available, merlins will shelter in them for the night or to avoid predators. Usually silent, they will vocalize to defend the nest area or when harassing larger raptors and birds. Low altitude migration flight (right at tree top level, sometimes through the trees) can lead to lower individual counts during migration observations. They rarely soar on thermals. Frequently seen on migration during morning and late afternoon, some seasoned watchers call 4 pm during Fall migrations "merlin time".



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 help too!

TRAC Staff Veterinarian: Dr Bill Streit
All Creatures Veterinary Clinic 304-425-9944
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 304-757-5937
2120 Mt Vernon Road, 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
- Stonecrest Animal Hospital 304-525-1800
#1 Stonecrest Drive, Huntington
- Valley West Veterinary Hospital 304-343-6783
201 Virginia Street West, Charleston



Who We Are at TRAC:

Board of Directors:

Dr. Cheryl Hickman, Chair
Terry Carter, Vice-Chair
Pat Barker, Secretary
Wendy Perrone, Executive Director
Ron Perrone, Education Director

Advisory Board:

Bill Grimes; falconer & pilot
Allen & Mindy Waldron; birders & bird banders
Drs. Craig & Sue Mohler; veterinarians
Jim Phillips; birder and naturalist
Bob Rusk; falconer, raised Twister
Tony Ligouri; naturalist
Carol Jackson; artist, community worker
Dr. Jeff Patton; veterinarian
Monica Patton; veterinary technician
John Sanders; neighbor and naturalist

Staff:

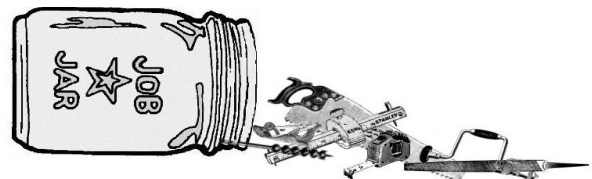
Wendy Perrone; Executive Director
Ron Perrone; Education Director
Bill Streit, DVM, MS; Staff Veterinarian
2009 Summer Intern: *to be determined*

Our quarterly newsletter is edited by:

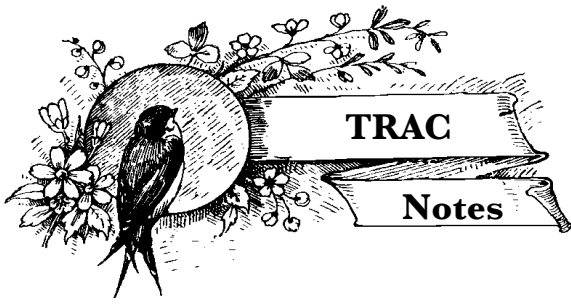
Wendy Perrone

Our web page is cared for by

Ron Perrone



There's a new addition to the Web page! If you, your friends or your group want to lend a hand here at TRAC, we have just started a new section on the TRAC web page: the Job Jar. It has a regularly updated list of tasks we need help with, along with information about what skills are needed, etc. There are lots of jobs to choose from: www.tracwv.org.



2008 Annual Report

The 2008 Peregrine Restoration Project finished at the end of August with 21 birds released to the skies of the New River Gorge, and an additional two others healing from pre-season problems. One female from a Virginia group had gotten a protozoan infection called Trichomoniasis, which caused huge cankers in her mouth and made it hard for her to eat. The infection came from eating an infected pigeon given to her by one of her parents when she was still in the nest. It took many weeks of work, but we were able to get her healed up and she took to the skies in mid-September at the foot of the Bluestone Dam in Summers County. A young male's back talon was ripped out by an over-enthusiastic bridge worker when that person removed him from his nest on a bridge abutment in Pennsylvania. When the injury was healed up as best as possible, the little male was given to falconer Bill Grimes to give him a chance to learn how to hunt well before releasing him. His freedom flight came in mid-December in front of the WV State Capitol Building, and he was spotted not long afterwards chasing a flock of pigeons around. A full report of the Restoration project is available at www.tracwv.org/restoration.html.

The Rehabilitation Department cared for 184 patients representing 45 different species from 25 counties in West Virginia. We still have a screech owl and a male merlin from the year's activities; we know we can release the screech owl, but it looks like the merlin's badly broken wing has not healed as we hoped it would. We are working with him now to see if he will be a good candidate to be an

educational bird. Counting the screech owl, we were able to release 100 birds back into their native haunts, which gives TRAC a 54% release rate for 2008. Collision injuries, especially with vehicles and windows ranked highest for cause of injury - far and away more than the next highest category: cat predations. For a full report, check our web site: www.tracwv.org/birdsin.html.

The big story for 2008 was the success of TRAC's Education Department. When the audience totals were added up, we had an outstanding year, breaking all attendance records by a wide margin: over 20,680 people saw us either at an educational program, public display, toured the facility, or participated in one of our events. This is a 25% increase in audience attendance over our next biggest year, which was 2007. The TRAC website (www.tracwv.org) received an average of 700 daily hits, and webmaster Ron is in the process of doing a substantial upgrade to the whole site to further enhance it's ease of use for viewers. If you can, check out his work and drop him a line letting him know what you think, and include any suggestions you may have: ron@tracwv.org.

Small advances were made on the Flight Barn construction, but since funds for materials were not available, much of the work was stalled. The last part of the building, the flyway, still awaits completion.(See front page).

Funding is always tight here at TRAC, as many who stay in close contact can attest. About 30% of our overall budget comes from "in-kind" donations such as veterinary care and medications, transport of patients, volunteer help with tasks, materials, etc. In addition, memberships and our public education programs each gave us over 22% of our cash income, the peregrine restoration project gave us a little over 21%, events gave us almost 16% and grants amounted to about 12.5%. Expenses from the overall budget were: peregrine project 16%, education department 28%, rehabilitation department 32%, payroll 21%, and research and fundraising made up the remaining 3% of the full 2008 budget.



Mark your Calendars!

March 14, 2009 10 am - 2pm Spring Eagle Watch in Summers County and surrounding areas. At the end of the Watch, participants usually ***gather to share experiences and reports at the Dairy Queen on the Hinton By-Pass at 2:30 pm.*** This past Watch, the group saw 9 Bald Eagles, 2 Golden Eagles, and 2 Osprey (who didn't seem to have gotten the winter migration memo). You don't have to be an expert birder to take part: people are split up into teams and assigned various positions within the Watch area. For more information, contact Jim Phillips at Pipestem State Park Nature Center: 304-466-1800, extension 344. Leave a message if the machine picks up and he'll call you back. Or you can drop him an e-mail at: cne01663@mail.wvnet.edu. Besides bringing your binoculars, a spotting scope if you have it, camera if you have one and bird books, remember to dress warmly in layers and pack a lunch. Fluids & a comfy folding chair help too!

March 26, 2009 9am - 2 pm TRAC display of our educational birds, including Spirit the Golden Eagle and three others, at Wildlife Diversity Day in the WV State Capitol's Rotunda. Bring your camera and come meet some of our State's wild critters and the people who care for them and work to care for their habitats. Lots of fun for all ages! For more information, contact Jim Fregonara at the WV Dept of Natural Resources' Wildlife Diversity Section: 304-637-0245 or you can drop him an e-mail at: jfregonara@wvdnr.gov.

April 22, 2009 10 am - 2 pm Earth Day at Coonskin Park, sponsored by the Governor's Make it Shine Program. TRAC will have a full display featuring several of our live educational raptors, including Perry the Peregrine and Spirit the Golden Eagle, among others. For

more information, contact the WV Dept of Environmental Protection's Travis Cooper at (304) 926-0499 extension 1117, or drop him an e-mail at: Travis.L.Cooper@wv.gov.

May 2, 2009 1pm - 5pm Spring opening of this year's Public Tour Days at TRAC. Tours of the TRAC educational raptors and facility grounds. Call or e-mail for directions: 304-466-4683, or trac@tracwv.org. Fun for all ages!

May 9, 2009 9 am - 5 pm Annual Migration Celebration at Little Beaver State Park! Check our website in April for a full schedule of the day's free activities and events: www.tracwv.org.

May 16, 2009 9 am - 4 pm Annual Spring Photo Workshop at TRAC, hosted by professional photographer Steve Rotsch. Come take photos of our 13 educational raptors in full natural settings, learn and share photo tips and have a great time! For more information, go to www.stevenrotsch.com, drop him an e-mail at swrkab@aol.com, or call him at 304-541-7574.

May 23, 2009 11am-5pm & May 24, 2009 12pm - 5pm Vandalia Festival on the grounds of the WV State Capitol. TRAC will have a full display featuring several of our live educational raptors, including Perry the Peregrine and Spirit the Golden Eagle, among others. Call or e-mail for directions: 304-466-4683, or trac@tracwv.org. Fun for all ages!



Steve Durrenberger of Hurricane, WV told us about a web site that is growing in popularity for those who wish to instantly post bird sightings: www.birdpost.com. It is also available as an iPhone application, where it uses the location of your phone at the time to map bird sightings.

A WV birding listservice that we've found tremendously helpful for finding out what birds are where & posting sightings, etc is: www.audubon.org/net/list/wv-bird/

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 Raptor Chapter 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 (www.tracwv.org) if you would prefer to pay using a credit card or Paypal account. 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.html. Thanks for your support!!

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

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

We do not share our mailing list and we do not engage in telemarketing activities.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone # _____

E-Mail: _____

We need the following items, can you help?

penlights	light bulbs (60 watt equivalent)	disinfecting wipes
Bounty paper towels	Simple Green cleaner	towels
copper scrubbers	batteries of all sizes	postage stamps
vetwrap	non-scented drier sheets	Dawn dish detergent (plain)
high quality bird seed	thistle seed	2" & 3" square plain gauze sponges
kitchen sized (13 gal) trash bags		heavy duty, contractor quality trash bags
gallon sized zip lock bags (freezer type)		quart sized zip lock bags (freezer type)
		small, medium & large sized "crock style" plastic water bowls

Many Thanks to our Sponsors!

We are very grateful to these individuals and businesses, who, through their sponsorship support, made a financial commitment to help Three Rivers Avian Center continue to care for wild birds:

All Creatures Veterinary Clinic	Becky & Charles Carter	Bill, Sherry & Katie Grimes	Ferdinand & Christine Perrone
Animal Care Associates	Carl & Sherry Chapman	Roger Hardway	Merilee Phelps
Anne & Warren Ballard	Sharon Cook	Dr. Cheryl Hickman	Lewis & Matilda Purnell
Margaret Ballard	Crown Hill Equipment Co.	Mr. & Mrs. Bill Hitchman	Gary Rankin
Charles & Nancy Brabec	Deb Darden & Richard Segars	Kanawha Co. Animal Emergency Clinic	Claudette Roberts
Evelyn Bradley & Fred Gilkey	Rodney Davis	Kathy & Brian Holloway	John & Cheryl Rowan
Brooks Bird Club	Violette Eash	Trisha Kerns	Allen & Mindy Waldron
Brooks Bird Club - Handlan Chap.	Gary & Betty Ellis	Leon Wilson Bird Club	Wild Birds Unlimited - Barboursville
Joyce Broyles	The Forman & Frame Family	Dean & Gail Osgood	Harlan Wilson
David & Martha Brumfield	Good Shepherd Veterinary Hospital	David & Sherry Patick	James & Mona Wiseman
Terry & Evan Buck	Dwight & Jane Griffith	Jeff & Monica Patton	<i>(your name could be here too!)</i>

**A Special Thank You to:
The Acker Foundation The One Foundation**



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(304)466 - 4683 www.tracwv.org

*Dedicated to wild bird conservation and to educating &
involving people in ecosystem stewardship*