



# The Raptor Chapter

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## Nancy R. Smith Family Fund Donates Programs To Four Rural Elementary Schools



*TRAC Education Director Ron Perrone with Twister the Barn Owl at Meadow Bridge Elementary School on May 20<sup>th</sup>, 2013*

Four small, rural elementary schools got an end-of-the-year gift this Spring from the newly established Nancy R. Smith Family Fund at the Beckley Area Foundation.

The Fund sponsored Three Rivers Avian Center's "Wings of Wonder: WV Birds of Prey" in four separate counties: Smoot Elementary in Greenbrier County, Meadow Bridge Elementary in Fayette County, Lester Elementary in Raleigh County and Jumping Branch Elementary in Summers County.

Combined, the programs reached 621 students as well as 49 teachers and staff.

Mrs. Smith has always been interested in animals as well as the ecosystem in which we live. She started the Fund this Spring at the Beckley Area Foundation, one of West Virginia's largest



*TRAC Executive Director Wendy Perrone with Regis the Bald Eagle at Lester Elementary School on May 29<sup>th</sup>, 2013*

community foundations. Established in 1985, the Foundation accepts donations of all sizes, using investment dividends to fund the community's charitable needs. Donors are encouraged to designate a specific interest or fund that their dollars are to support, or as in this case, start their own fund.

Three Rivers Avian Center is very proud and honored to be one of the first recipients of grants from the Nancy R. Smith Family Fund.

## Lead Ammo: The Need to Change

There is a 22 minute Internet film called "The Non Lead Hunter" featuring Anthony Prieto, a life-long hunter from a family with strong hunting traditions. In it he makes the case for hunters to switch from lead to non-lead ammunition. If you are a hunter, and especially if you have children, I advise you to take a few minutes to check it out on the web at <http://vimeo.com/37272263> before next hunting season rolls around. Pay close attention to the X-rays of animal carcasses shot with lead bullets. Hunters know that lead is bad and they carve out any damaged meat they see while butchering. But lead bullets spray fragments smaller than sand far from the wound site instantly upon contact with the body, spraying into regions showing little to no damage then wind up in the meat on the dinner table with no visible tell tale sign except on X-rays.

Lead is one of the most well-studied toxins loose in the environment. It affects *all* vertebrate organisms; fish, frogs, birds, dogs, cats, and us. It affects the nervous, renal, cardiovascular, reproductive, immune, and blood systems. There is no level of lead exposure known which does not have deleterious effects on children. Even slightly elevated levels can cause lasting deficits in intelligence and behavior according to the Center for Disease Control.

We banned it from gasoline because we breathed it. We banned it from paint because we absorbed it when painting the house and when children ate paint chips. Lead batteries, solder, sheet lead, lead pipe are all regulated as to use, discharge and disposal. Next to batteries, lead-based ammunition is the second largest consumer lead product, contributing 60,000 metric tons of lead into the environment in 2012, and it is largely unregulated.

Lead is bad for birds (and other wildlife) for many reasons. First, many species of ducks and geese wind up ingesting it while they forage along the bottom of waterways. Second, birds that scavenge like Hawks, Owls, and Eagles, are at risk when they feed off gut piles left in the woods after a hunt. Third, many so called "varmint" species hunted are left where they drop and their bodies are ultimately scavenged, still polluted with lead shot. Every year TRAC receives birds poisoned this way. The drugs to treat lead

poisoning are costly and treatments are extensive and can be quite painful. The female Golden Eagle we are currently working with required treatments every 2 hours from 7:00 am to 11:00 pm daily for the first 3 weeks. She's only now just beginning to stand and move around.

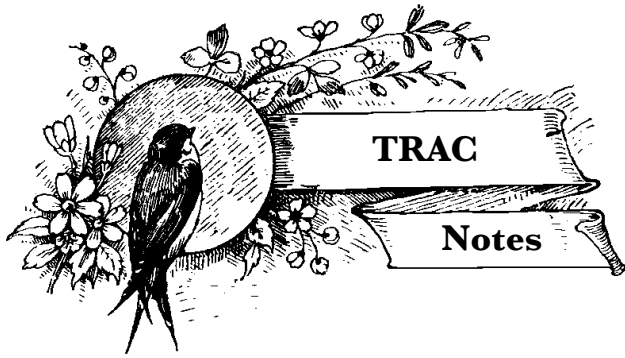
The solution to lead contamination due to hunting is non-lead ammunition. I have read through many hunting blogs and magazines to understand attitudes regarding the controversial switch to copper. While some arguments like "lead is traditional" are easy to ignore, the technical issues when switching from a familiar technology to a new one can be a problem, both from a manufacturing and end user perspective. Bullet design is not a cut and dried technology and there were rough spots as the industry ramped up its copper bullet lines. Some shotgunners experienced barrel damage when copper was first introduced. That problem has been addressed. Don't use pre 1999 copper shot in your shotgun. In rifles, there is evidence that copper fouls quicker than lead in some rifles. Big deal. When you are in the field, your gun barrel should be good and clean to start with or you won't be able to shoot straight, and with any luck you won't need but a few rounds for the whole season. Personally, I always check and/or clean the barrel before and after a hunt as part of my routine.

As for the expense issue, we shoot small prey with lead free .22 caliber bullets. In our use it doesn't break the bank, but if you are planning to blow through several boxes of high caliber ammo at the range, go ahead and use lead ammunition. A properly designed bullet trap collects the metal for recycling.

But when hunting, lead ammunition should be left behind. We use .243 Remington model 700 and Barnes TSX copper bullets. If anything, they shoot better than any other off-the-shelf lead round I can buy. The extra expense over the hunting season is essentially meaningless, especially when one factors in the value of the food harvested. Furthermore, the knowledge that lead poisoning from our hunt is no longer an issue for the people around our table and for the wild animals in the woods and surrounding areas is priceless.

Please watch the video and do your part to decrease lead in the environment.

- Ron Perrone, TRAC Education Director



**G**olden Boy, the young male Golden Eagle that TRAC released at Grandview Park in the New River Gorge near Beaver WV on March 5, 2013 is flying well! He is currently in the golden eagle sweet spot up in the upper part of Quebec sort of near the Saint Lawrence Seaway, between Hudson's Bay and Hudson's Straight. His travels are being tracked via satellite transmitter monitored by Dr Trish Miller, Dr Todd Katzner and the Golden Eagle Tracking Study Team at WVU. They have been sharing the maps of Golden Boy's movements with TRAC, and the most recent one are updated on the TRAC website: [www.tracwv.org/videos.html](http://www.tracwv.org/videos.html) Take a look - the boy can travel!!!

**N**o, you haven't missed a copy or two of the Raptor Chapter. It has been an usually hectic several months at TRAC and the newsletter has been on hiatus.

**B**ald Eagle nest at Brooks Island monitoring report: The male of the Brooks Island pair, "Whitey" was struck by a train on the morning of March 17<sup>th</sup>. Together with National Park Service Law Enforcement Ranger Mitchem, we walked the tracks between Sandstone and Brooks and could not find him anywhere. In the meantime, his mate Streaky was still sitting on her eggs in the nest and they were due to hatch out at any time. After walking the tracks again, we consulted with biologists at the WV Division of Natural Resources and National Park Service - New River Gorge and continued to monitor the

nest. Mrs. "C", the lady who owns the property across the River from Rt 20 agreed to let us put some food out for Streaky in hopes that she could come down quickly from the nest, grab some & get back up and on the eggs without harming the chick's chances of survival. WV Division of Natural Resources wildlife biologists provided fresh fish for the feeding station. And so we all waited and watched and hoped for the best.

Streaky never did come down to the feeding station. Eventually the vultures and others ate the fish. By Tuesday evening, as dark fell we could hear Streaky calling now and again. Wednesday morning, as dawn broke, there was Whitey, at the nest with Streaky, as if nothing had happened! They were both glad to be back together it seemed - there was a fantastic aerial display in the afternoon that was nothing short of spectacular: formation flying, lots of vocals, and the whole performance demonstrated beyond any doubt that they were a mated pair.

So what happened? When Whitey got hit, he landed up on a bank a little away from the tracks, according to the train's engineer. We think that he was stunned and got himself into some dense brush on the other side of the tracks to recover. The area there is highly vegetated and it's several acres between the New River and the train tracks at that location (it used to be called New Richmond on the old maps.) The Brooks eagles did not have any young this year - the nest failed. They did have 2 eggs in the nest but they didn't hatch. Whitey and Streaky are both still in the area however, and we have strong hopes for a successful nest next year. Monitoring will begin again in November.

Many thanks to WV DNR and NPS-New River Gorge and thanks too to Mindy Waldron and Rodney Davis for the extra monitoring help.

**T**here were several sightings of peregrine falcons in the New River Gorge in various places this Spring and Summer. No nests were decisively verified.



# Aura's Story

A Case Study in Lead Poisoning

**O**n March 18<sup>th</sup> we received a call from WV DNR Police Officer Andy Lyons alerting us to a golden eagle on Shepherd Mountain near Keeney's Knob that was having trouble flying. Wendy was dispatched to the remote location and returned with a mature female who was unable to get enough force from her wing flaps to get off the ground. One leg seemed weaker than the other and her stamina faded quickly. No apparent injuries but very thin and dazed. We worried about possible lead poisoning. X-rays showed nothing in the digestive tract, so we sent off a blood sample for testing to the Golden Eagle Tracking Study Team at WVU.

The test results were astounding. The eagle had a lead level measuring 58.6 ug/dL - the test only goes as high as 62 ug/dL. This bird not only was lead-poisoned, she should have been dead! She was visibly weaker by the hour. Dr Streit prescribed a regimen of multiple medications and treatments that, combined with hand-feeding sessions, meant that the eagle was being handled every 2 hours from 7 am to 11 pm.



weeks we thought we'd lose her for sure. Her

The lead did horrible things to her. She could barely stay conscious at first, so fluids had to be slowly tube-fed or given under the skin and she could barely keep food down, sometimes not at all. The lead had her bleeding from her digestive tract, and there were times in the first 3

feet balled up in a contraction that would not let up, so we did hot water and Epsom salt soaks with 10 - 15 minute massages twice daily until the contractions started to ease up and we could make padded foot balls for her toes to wrap around. As the feet relaxed over the course of the next week we were gradually able to increase the size of the pads to spread her toes out more and more towards a natural position.

Finally by April 12 her lead levels were back to a normal level and her feet were starting to open and be usable. She was starting to go nuts being kept in intensive care, so we put her into the 40 foot room in the Flight Barn to calm her down and give her some personal options. She could stand but not perch.

Gradually over the course of the next several weeks she began perching, then on May 30<sup>th</sup> she took her first observed flight all the way across the room, landing on the top of the hutch on the opposite side of the room! The flight was labored and heavy, but she was flying.

On June 13<sup>th</sup>, we saw that something wasn't right with her mentation. We had purchased an expensive lead analysis machine in the interim, and we used it now. The lead test came back 8.6 ug/dL. The lead was leaching out of her bones or organs and making her sick again. Back to the treatment regimen for a week, then she was tested again. By June 20<sup>th</sup> her lead levels were back to normal and she was antsy so she was allowed to start free-flying in the flight barn's Leon Wilson Continual Flyway. Over the next few weeks she was gradually starting to fly more, but her flying was still labored and heavy, no stamina, no real loft or maneuverability. Landings were more like lucky crashes than planned set-downs.

On July 14<sup>th</sup> we discovered an eruption of exuberant tissue growth on both ankles. Exuberant tissue growth is exactly what it says: lots of tissue suddenly mushrooming out of an opening in the skin, no nerves and very few blood vessels in it. The right ankle had less

than the left ankle. Dr Streit set up a treatment regimen of hydrotherapy, then topical therapeutic dressings wrapped up in a pressure bandage, all to be changed and done twice a day. So the “chase around the flyway” exercise program began - both for the eagle and for the humans.

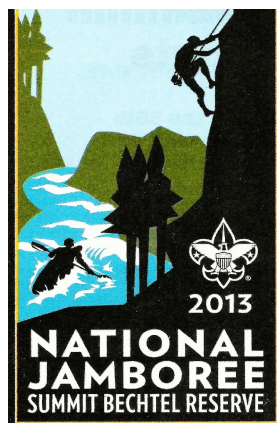
By July 30<sup>th</sup> she was not showing signs of significant progress. Dr Streit consulted with Dr Sue Mohler and with the help of Greenbrier Veterinary Hospital in Lewisburg a series of 4 weekly laser therapy treatments on the growths began. The right ankle responded well, but the left one continued to be problematical, so on August 20<sup>th</sup>, Dr Streit surgically removed about half of the left ankle’s growth. The right ankle had healed up completely.

Tired of saying “the lead poisoned female golden eagle” on the Three Rivers Avian Center’s Facebook page updates, we ran a 24 hour contest. The winning name was “Aura”, because “Au” is the periodic table’s abbreviation for gold, and because another meaning is “beautiful presence.” She certainly has such a presence and puts up with a lot from us as we work to heal her up.

As of today, September 18, 2013, 6 months to the day of her intake, she is flying VERY well with power, maneuverability and endurance. Landings are planned and well executed and she can even hang from the ceiling - either from the wire mesh area or the hard-covered area. That takes a lot of flight ability and strength, as well as good holding ability from her feet. Her lead level is non-existent, the right ankle is healed and her left ankle is making marked healing progress. The growth is down to about 1/4 of where it was at its worst. We still have a few weeks to go to get her ready to fly free. When she’s ready for release, we hope to enter her into the WVU Golden Eagle Tracking Study, if the team there has an opening for her, and see where she goes and what she does over time.

Watch the Three Rivers Avian Center’s Facebook page for further developments. You do not need to be a member of Facebook to read the page - it’s open to the public. Just

click on the Facebook logo from our web page and it will take you right to it.



The motto for the Boy Scouts 2013 National Jamboree at the new Summit Bechtel Reserve as “Go Big, Get Wild”, and wow, did they ever! The new permanent home of the National Jamboree is a 10,600 acre Scout Reservation located near Mount Hope in Fayette county WV. It is the

newest of the 4 High Adventure Bases owned by the Boy Scouts and during it’s inaugural Jamboree it hosted over 30,000 youth, leaders, support staff and vendors.

TRAC was asked to bring our Raptor Ambassadors for daily displays in 2 separate areas: the West Virginia tent at the Gateway Center hosted our hawks, owls and Perry the Peregrine, and the National Eagle Scout Association (NESA) invited Regis to be showcased in their organization’s tent. In 8 days, between the 2 tents, TRAC talked to over 12,000 individuals.

Actually, to call the NESA display simply a tent is kind of a misleading image. Regis was given an entire corner about 10 - 12 feet across with a photographic backdrop of Seneca Rocks and a new, custom made cedar perch made just for Regis by Pete Cocks, of PC Fine Woodworks in Waldon New York. An Eagle Scout escort was provided whenever he transitioned to or from the display area to his rest/cooling area in a separate tent.

Photographs of TRAC at the 2013 Jamboree can be found (yep, you guessed it) on our Facebook page AND on our website. Many thanks to all who helped take care of the birds and handlers in the WV tent - your care and concern was SO critical, especially the make-shift air conditioner!! Also a huge THANKS to NESA for their help with Regis!! Regis and Wendy were treated royally well.

# Migration Celebration 2013: A good time for all



It was pouring rain a half an hour before the Migration Celebration began and a cold breeze was blowing, but right at 9 am, at the start of the Celebration, the rain quit, the breeze died down and it settled into being a pleasant day. 1,056 folks from 5 states attended this year's event, a little fewer from last year but far exceeding our expectations with all the advance bad weather.

Little Beaver State Park near Beckley provided the perfect setting for this family oriented, explore-the-outdoors-type festival. The Division of Natural Resources Wildlife Diversity Program gave kids of all ages lots to explore and do, from painting animal shapes outside on the sand to making stencils, sand tracks and matching birds with their calls. Granny Sue told stories and oversaw the crafts section, Bev Delidow, Jim Fregonara and Betsy Reeder lead birding and nature walks, and of course TRAC Ambassadors were there too. Regis the Bald Eagle, Twister the Barn Owl (he's now 23!) Nick the Red Tailed Hawk (she's 22) and Perry the Peregrine Falcon were all in attendance and were the focus of the free 2 hour photography workshop lead by Steven Wayne Rotsch.

The Migration Celebration is an annual festival of West Virginia's wild birds and our natural heritage. The family-friendly event is held at Little Beaver State Park and hosted by Three Rivers Avian Center. We would like to

thank our partners for all the help that made it all happen this year: The WV Division of Culture and History, the WV State Legislature, the WV Division of Natural Resources, Jeff Hajenga, "Granny Sue" Holstein, Dr. Bev Delidow, Betsy Reeder, Steve Rotsch, Flynn's Hotdogs and especially the staff of Little Beaver State Park.

**THANK YOU!!**



*Three Rivers Avian Center's endowment is accepting donations of any amount at the Beckley Area Foundation. All donations to the Three Rivers Avian Center Fund are fully tax-deductible.*

*Created in 2002 by Joyce and Randall Broyles, the endowment's annual distribution provides much needed funds for the general operation of the Center, and at the same time makes sure that TRAC has funding into the future.*

*For more information, please visit the Beckley Area Foundation's website at [www.bafwv.org](http://www.bafwv.org), call them at 304-253-3806, or e-mail them at [info@bafwv.org](mailto:info@bafwv.org). If you would like to mail in a donation to the TRAC endowment fund, the address is:*

*Three Rivers Avian Center Fund  
c/o Beckley Area Foundation  
129 Main Street  
Beckley, WV 25801*



**We could sure use the following items:**

- Paper towels
- Odoban (cleaning solution)
- Old Towels &/or washcloths  
(we've been going thru them lately)
- volunteers to help clear brush
- Chore Boy copper scrubbers

**Upcoming Projects:**

- Construction of a new, updated enclosure for Hoolie our great horned owl ambassador
- Completion of the songbird flight cage  
some materials are still needed
- Clearing of overgrown brush areas

**B**ecome 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. 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**

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!*

**Your name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**E-mail:** \_\_\_\_\_ **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 fully tax-deductible & will help advance the work of Three Rivers Avian Center.*

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Animal Care Associates	The Forman & Frame Family	Sharyn Ogden
Anne & Warren Ballard	Dwight & Jane Griffith	Mr & Mrs Dean Osgood
Margaret Ballard	Bill Grimes	David & Sherry Patick
Pat Barker	Good Shepherd Veterinary Hospital	Dr Jeff & Monica Patton
Kathleen Bilton	Roger Hardway	Ferdinand & Christine Perrone
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Rodney Davis	Judge & Pat McWhorter	<i>(Your name could be here.....)</i>

**A Special Thank You to: The Beckley Area Foundation**

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