



The Raptor Chapter

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Bald Eagle Nest in Summers County Has Two Chicks!

The news has spread rapidly: two bald eagles have nested in plain view on an island in the New River here in Summers County, and have made history by doing so. It's the first confirmed nest by Bald Eagles in Southern West Virginia, and the first confirmed nest in the New River Gorge National River. The proud parents are an adult male named by observers as "Whitey", and a 4 year old female named "Streaky".

The best observation area is a quarter of a mile away which makes getting good photos difficult, but Chris Dorst of the Charleston Gazette brought a big lens and his expertise to the challenge and got some great shots of the two eagles and of one of their hunting attempts. To see Chris' full color pictures and to read the accompanying great article by Rick Steelhammer, follow this website link:



Whitey soars on a hunt near the nest tree on March 19, 2010. Photograph courtesy of Chris Dorst, Charleston Gazette newspaper.

<http://wvgazette.com/News/201003200383>. A full multi-media piece will be posted on the site soon by the Gazette's Doug Imbrogno.

The beginning stage of nest construction was spotted the first week of December by Jim Phillips, local birding expert and the Naturalist for Pipestem State Park. He alerted us here at TRAC and we hurried

to take a look as well, then organized a regular observation watch among an eager group of 22 volunteers. As of this writing, 170 hours have been accumulated observing and documenting nesting behavior, mating, incubation, nest defense, hunting and other behaviors since Jim first saw the beginning of the nest construction.

Since "hatch day", the nest overlook has become a popular stopping spot for many birders, tourists and local people. General updates on the progress of the two chicks will be posted on our blog: www.tracwv.org. They should be ready to try out their wings around mid to late May. Way to go, Whitey & Streaky!

What they know...

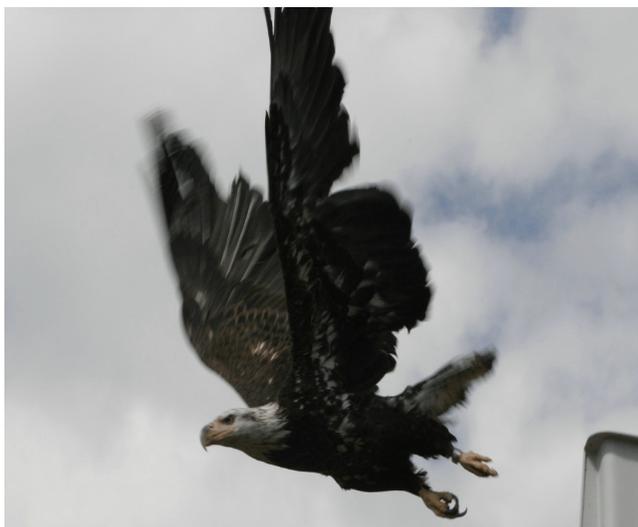
- Ron Perrone,
TRAC Education Director

A problem with anthropomorphizing is that you can never really be sure that it's all in your head. Anyone working with animals winds up talking to them, but at the same time wondering how much gets through. What sometimes gets us here at TRAC is what really *does* get through. In the case of birds, the joke can be: "they may be bird brains, but they aren't stupid." Often the joke ricochets back on the humans.

In October 2004, a three year old Bald Eagle we named Comanche was turned in from Speedway in Mercer County with an obvious severe fracture of the right wrist. What transpired during the initial examination was enlightening.

First of all, Bald Eagles are formidable, strong, highly intelligent predators, and they are really big birds. Handling them requires experience and planning. You can't have one on the glove and hold it far enough away from you so as to not get bitten should the bird decide to take a swipe at you, and Bald Eagles are noted for being nippy. In our talk-through session prior to the full intake exam, we decided to make a few changes to the usual way of doing things. Rather than placing the bird on it's back on the exam table, we decided to put temporary jesses on her legs to control the feet, get her up on the glove into a normal comfortable posture, then began the exam.

After the jesses were on, the bird was allowed to stand up on my glove. Immediately its huge head swung around and went for Wendy's face. What it got was a big chunk of raw whitefish crammed into its maw. Stunned



*Comanche flies free May 21, 2005,
molting but fully flighted.*

Photo courtesy of John Clemens

by this unexpected change of plans, it had to spend a few seconds working it and swallowing the food. A few seconds later, she swung around and went for me only to get the same treatment as I pushed a piece of whitefish in her mouth. I watched her eyes flutter in confusion as she pulled back, maneuvered the meat, then swallowed

it. And then we could see the light go on. The eagle stared at us but didn't move.

Wendy took the opportunity to gently lift the broken and bleeding right wing. The bird didn't move, just watched. Wendy slowly stretched it out and began a basic examination of the wound. The bird had been shot. Bits of skin, feather, flesh and bone were gently cleared away. The bird watched. After a few minutes, Wendy started working her hands along the wing toward the bird's body, feeling for anything amiss until she was right up to the eagle's chest. Wendy kept up a calm, quiet, gentle monologue as she went. Still no aggressive or defensive behavior from the bird, she just kept watching.

Then the unexpected. The eagle spread out its body feathers. Normally, birds do this when they are cold or when they are "rousing", spreading and shaking their feathers to get them comfortably arranged. But this time it just kept all its breast feathers spread wide open, still watching intently, as if it was inviting a search. Wendy slowly worked her hand around its main body - feeling. There! There! There! The bird had shotgun pellets all over its lower chest and abdomen.

Wendy went around to examine the other side. The eagle returned its body feathers to their normal contour. *(more on page 4)*

Migration Celebration 2010

A festival of West Virginia's birds & our natural heritage

Saturday, May 8, 2010
9 am - 5 pm

Little Beaver State Park
Free & Open to the Public

Live hawks, owls, falcons, eagle

Photography Workshop

Bird, Bug & Nature Walks

Storytelling & Magic

Exhibits from

Three Rivers Avian Center

WV Wildlife Diversity Program

National Park Service

WV Department of Agriculture

Kids & Family Activities all day

Hosted By:



This event was made possible in part through funding from the WV State Legislature & assistance from the WV Division of Culture & History.

Photo of Jack, the male Merlin, courtesy of Steve Ratsch



As Wendy arrived at the other side to see what she could find, the eagle held out its other wing and waited, watching her. Wendy stretched it out. Up to this moment the wing had seemed O.K., but as she palpated along the bones, Wendy found another fracture. After being shot, the bird had fallen and broken its other wing maybe by hitting a tree limb on the way down or when it hit the ground. Fortunately, the cracked radius bone was being held in place by the intact ulna and would heal without pinning.

We then had to get the eagle down on the table on its back to thoroughly clean and bandage the gunshot wing. Normally when we do this to a bird, we find it helpful to keep its head covered to keep it from being alarmed. With this bird, the "hooding" set off a panic response. The covering was removed, and Wendy began working on the open wound on the right wing. We noticed while I was holding her feet, the bird was watching Wendy intensely. We rolled up a towel into a pillow and pushed it under Comanche's head so she wouldn't have to crane her neck so hard. Comanche put her head down onto the pillow but continued watching. Wendy went back to cleaning, irrigating, picking, disinfecting and bandaging. When the ordeal was over and as I slid a hand under the eagle's back and started to lift her into an upright position, she jumped up and stood there on my glove. Not once through the 20 minutes we had been working on her had she become aggressive. After putting her in her room and stepping away from the door's observation window, we both realized what an emotionally charged time it had been. As we say here, "communication has been established".

Surgery by TRAC Staff veterinarian Dr Bill Streit followed the next day to remove the gunshot remnants and it went well. The gunshot injury was so horrendous to the wrist joint that for several times daily over many, many weeks we had to un-splint the wrist, take off the bandages, clean it, hydrotherapy the injury site, put a series of medications, then re-bandage and re-splint the wrist until it healed.

Every time, we used the pillow and allowed her to watch us work, and each time she would lie still until we were through and it was time to stand up. Not once through the months of her stay at TRAC did she ever bite or use her feet to harm us. And while I don't expect every patient to participate in its recovery this way, I can't help but think that Comanche figured out what we were doing. When she was finally released at Pipestem State Park In May of 2005, 300 people came to watch her go with just a few days notice. It was a rehab and release to remember. For many reasons.



Mark your Calendars!

April 22, 2010 10 am - 2 pm Earth Day with the Governor's Make It Shine Program. TRAC display featuring live raptors and information. Clay Center, Charleston.

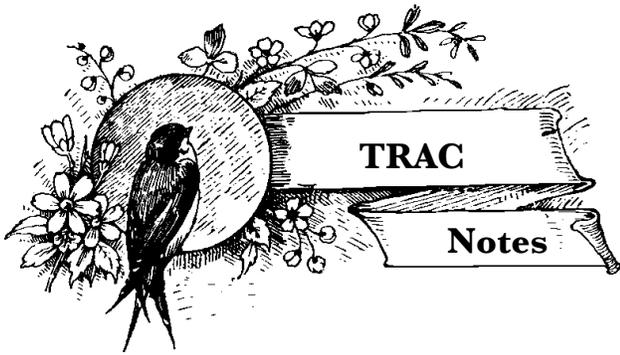
May 1, 2010 1 - 5 pm Free public tour days at TRAC begin: First Saturday of the month, May - Oct from 1 - 5 pm. All other tours by appointment only.

May 8, 2010 9 am - 5 pm Migration Celebration Festival at Little Beaver State Park (see the TRAC Blog for a complete schedule www.tracwv.org/wordpress)

May 22, 2010 9 am - 4 pm TRAC Photography Workshop at TRAC, (more info: www.tracwv.org/wordpress)

May 29 & 30, 2010 Vandalia Festival, Capitol Complex, Charleston, see our web site for times. Our booth will be located at the corner of the Culture Center nearest to the Governor's Mansion.

The TRAC website has a full list of our presentations and events taking place all over WV: www.tracwv.org/upcoming.html



What a Snow Storm!

It all started on December 18th. A few lazy flakes turned into a torrent of snow, leaving us with 2 feet of it on the ground by the time it was done. It was wet and heavy with a blueish tint, showing that the snow was very close to the melting point. As we plowed and hiked our way through it, the snow turned to compression ice, blocking access to doors and mandating the use of chains on all wheels of our AWD van. We set out an extra two feeding stations on our back porch as the temperatures dipped down and stayed down in the teens. By the beginning of January, the original snow had compacted into a crusty dense layer with new snow on top, so as we walked through it we were constantly searching for reliable footing.

Our patients, educational raptors, and the TRAC facility made it through the whole Winter in good shape. We only had to bring the educational raptors indoors for just a few days when the temperatures dipped down below 0 degrees Fahrenheit with strong winds pushing the wind chill factor much lower, but other than that our birds were not inconvenienced much. The patients in the flight barn (a red shouldered hawk and a coopers hawk) had an easy time of it. The flight barn worked perfectly: the open mesh in the roof in each room allowed snow to come in, while the solid part of each room's roof gave them plenty of shelter and clear floor space to maneuver around in.

There was little damage to any of the TRAC buildings. We need to replace a lost a vent pipe from the roof of the hospital and one

from the Intern cabin, both of which were broken off as the heavy snow left the roofs in one large icy clump.

The van had a hard time of it however. Our road up the mountain was plowed infrequently, so often we were driving in deep snow, all wheels chained up, with firewood in the back of the van for weight and shovels with us to dig ourselves out of sudden drifts. Our 2003 Astro Van lost it's all wheel drive capability in mid-February, leaving us with only 2 wheel drive and still a bunch of snow to deal with. Although still driveable, the cost to repair the transmission is more than the van is worth, so we're now on a hunt for a replacement vehicle by next Winter. We're considering maybe changing to a 4 wheel drive Ford Expedition for the next incarnation of Raptor 1.



The search for a nesting pair of peregrines in the New River Gorge began during the first week of March. A single adult peregrine has been seen in several locations, always on the wing: at Fayetteville, Lansing, Jumping Branch and Grandview. Monitoring of the nesting crevice at the old hack site at Lansing continues.

The Peregrine Restoration Project is on track to begin again this Summer at Grandview. The chicks selected to take part in the Project should be arriving in mid-May, and we're hoping to be able to provide pictures of their time here via some sort of web cam arrangement this year. We will be posting notes and the pictures on the TRAC Blog as we go along: www.tracwv.org/wordpress.



It's Baby Season! The first chick of the year has been turned in to TRAC for care: a day old great horned owl chick found cold and hungry on March 24th. He's doing very well now and growing like crazy!

For information on what to do if *you* find a downy chick, visit the TRAC Blog for a downloadable flier: www.tracwv.org/wordpress



TRAC Staff Veterinarian: Dr Bill Streit
 All Creatures Veterinary Clinic 304-425-9944
 1027 Stafford Drive Plaza, Princeton
Many thanks to Dr Sue Mohler and the All Creatures Staff as well!
Thanks also to TRAC Advisory Board members
Dr. Jeff Patton & Monica Patton LVT
 Animal Care Associates, Charleston 304 -344-2244
 & the Animal Care Associates veterinarians and staff

The TRAC Hospice Veterinary Network works together to provide high quality veterinary care our wild bird patients. We couldn't do without them, and we appreciate their help immensely. Let them know you appreciate their help too when you have a chance!

Beckley

Beckley Veterinary Hospital	215 Dry Hill Road, Beckley	304-255-4159
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Charleston/South Charleston

Animal Care Associates	840 Oakwood Road, Charleston	304-344-2244
Good Shepherd Vet. Hosp. (Dr. Sarah Stephenson)	3703 MacCorkle Ave. SE, Charleston	304-925-7387
Kanawha Co. Animal Emergency Clinic	5304 MacCorkle Ave SW, South Charleston	304-768-2911
Valley West Veterinary Hospital	201 Virginia Street West, Charleston	304-343-6783

Cross Lanes

Cross Lanes Veterinary Hospital	524 Old Geoff Mtn Road, Cross Lanes	304-776-4501
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Elkview

Elk Valley Veterinary Hospital	113 Frame Road, Elkview	304-965-7675
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Huntington

Stonecrest Animal Hospital (Dr. Kris King)	#1 Stonecrest Drive, Huntington	304-525-1800
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Hurricane

Hurricane Animal Hospital	2120 Mount Vernon Road, Hurricane	304-757-2287
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Lewisburg

Greenbrier Veterinary Hospital	Rt 219 North, Lewisburg	304-645-1476
Lewisburg Veterinary Hospital	US Route 60, Lewisburg	304-645-1434

Oak Hill

Oak Hill Animal Hospital	2525 Summerlee Road, Oak Hill	304-465-8267
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Parkersburg

A-Vet, Inc. (Dr. Joe Conlin)	3602 E 7th St, Suite 3, Parkersburg	304-428-8387
Parkersburg Veterinary Hospital	1504 36 th Street, Parkersburg	304-422 - 6971

Princeton

All Creatures Veterinary Clinic	1027 Stafford Drive Plaza, Princeton	304-425-9944
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Union

Monroe Veterinary House Calls	Union	304-667-2365
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Needs List:

Bath-sized towels	Unflavored Pedialyte	Paper towels	Simple Green cleaner
Good quality common bird seed	Black sunflower bird seed	Safflower bird seed	
Disinfecting wipes	AA Alkaline Batteries	D Alkaline batteries	Postage stamps

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

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
Jack	Merlin (male)	\$30

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

Your support is vital to our success! Thank you.

Your name: _____

Address: _____

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

Starting this year, 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.

Of course, we will continue to send paper-based correspondence to those without an e-mail address or to those who prefer to receive traditional mail. The newsletter will continue to be mailed out via Postal Service at the end of March, June, and September, with the Raptor Express sent to members in December. Feathered Friend Sponsors will continue to receive their certificates via Postal Service also. Please make sure your Postal mailing address is current! We're getting a lot of returns.

If you have already sent us your e-mail address, please send it along again to make sure we have your current address on file. If you prefer, you can send it directly to me on-line: wendy@tracwv.org. Thanks for the help!

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	Jennifer Ceravone	Bill, Sherry & Katie Grimes	David & Sherry Patick
Sharon Anderson	Carl & Sherry Chapman	Roger Hardway	Dr. Jeff & Monica Patton
Animal Care Associates	Di Conger	Ken Hechler	Ferdinand & Christine Perrone
Anne & Warren Ballard	Sharon Cook	Dr. Cheryl Hickman & Family	Lewis & Matilda Purnell
Charles & Nancy Brabec	Crown Hill Equipment Company	Mr. & Mrs. Bill Hitchman	Gary Rankin
Scott & Emily Briers	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	Gary & Betty Ellis	Charles & Nancy Hurst	Allen & Mindy Waldron
Brooks Bird Club - Handlan Chap.	The Forman & Frame Family	Carol Jackson	Harlan Wilson
Joyce Broyles	Sandra Garzon	Danny Keatley	James & Mona Wiseman
Terry & Evan Buck	Good Shepherd Veterinary Hospital	Tom & Sally Lemke	<i>(your name could be here too!)</i>
Charles & Rebecca Carter	Dwight & Jane Griffith	Judge & Pat McWhorter	

A Special Thank You to:

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



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