



The Raptor Chapter Express

December 4, 2008

Greetings! We hope this missive finds you and yours well, happy and enjoying the holiday season. There's not a lot of time to get a full newsletter out before the end of the year, but we thought you'd like a quick update on the happenings here at Three Rivers Avian Center. The normal length newsletter will come your way again in late January to early February.

The construction on the Flight Barn continues, albeit interrupted frequently by rehabilitation duties and educational programs. We now have the rolls of vinyl coated wire mesh on hand ready to put on the side walls and roof, we've gotten the last drainage ditch dug thanks to the loan of a backhoe from neighbor Mark Ehlermann, and we're ready to put down the landscaping fabric barrier that will separate the ground from the flyway flooring sand substrate. Many thanks to volunteer Caleb Keneipp who has been willing to come help with just a few hours notice! We have continued fundraising efforts throughout the Fall, and now have just \$2,500 to raise to enable us to finish construction. We plan to make more progress on it during December as the weather permits!

The Peregrine Falcon Restoration Project finished the 2008 hacking season with two birds still in rehabilitative care at the end of August. A female peregrine from the James River Fleet in VA had a battle with a trichomoniasis infection in her mouth, and a male peregrine from the Walt Whitman Bridge in PA lost his left back talon (not his toe!) in an incident before we received him. Since we were worried that without that talon he might have difficulty hunting if we released him with all the other falcons, he was placed under the care of falconer and TRAC Advisory Board member Bill Grimes in June. The female healed up very well by September 13th, and was released at the base of the Bluestone Dam in Hinton, an excellent hunting area for her at the time for both waterfowl and pigeons. A great photograph of the release was taken by Raleigh Register-Herald Newspaper photographer Dayton Whittle, and it's up on our website for all to enjoy.

The male peregrine falcon was released on Tuesday December 2nd in front of the State Capitol in Charleston. The site was chosen because waterfowl of all species had been gathering on the Kanawha River in front of the Capitol over the past several weeks, there is a year-round abundance of pigeons throughout the City, and two peregrines from the last two year's releases have been hanging out around the I-64 Bridge at Oakwood Road, just down river from the release site. Bill gently cut the kangaroo leather jesses free from the male's legs while he was focused on eating a quail tidbit on Bill's glove, and we all stood back and waited. And waited. And waited. The male finished dining, roused, looked around, and seemed to think that Bill's glove would be a perfectly good perch for the rest of the day! But eventually the surroundings and pigeons overhead got his attention, and he took off from the glove, flying high and strong up the River. About 2 hours later, Jim Triplett, a long-time birder in the area, reported that he saw a peregrine "herding a flock of pigeons" above Kanawha City's MacCorkle Avenue car wash. Steve Rotsch took a fantastic photograph of the take-off moment from Bill's glove, and that is on our website too. Go to www.tracwv.org, click on the "Peregrine Restoration Project" link from the main page, then choose "2008" from the year list. Scroll down, and you'll see both release pictures.

Two other things to note: the full report of the 2008 New River Gorge Peregrine Falcon Restoration Project is available in a "pdf" downloadable format from our web page, go to www.tracwv.org/restoration.html. Also, the College of William and Mary's Center for Conservation Biology has done some fancy programming, and you can now check any time to see where last year's satellite transmitted peregrines are any time you'd like. Programmers have been working hard, and they have made it so that the daily satellite data now gets placed automatically on a map and put on their web site. For ease of use, we've added their page as an inset on ours, just go to the Restoration Project page and scroll down a little. Three peregrines are transmitting now, the others have gone silent. The ones that are transmitting are moving around a little: the male that stayed in Harpers Ferry all Summer is still in the area as of

11/23/08. The transmitter and/or antenna may be damaged and no longer sending transmissions every twelve hours. He was spotted at a banding station in lower PA a few weeks ago. The transmitter backpack seemed to be a bit off-kilter and the lower quarter of the antenna had a very distinct bend in it. The bird was hatched out on the Betsy Ross Bridge in NJ in May 2007 prior to becoming part of the Gorge project, and has transmitter number 54495. The female with transmitter number 54496 was hatched out on the Sea Isle Bridge in NJ before coming to the Gorge in 2007, and stayed along the lower part of Ohio near the Ohio River for most of this season, occasionally foraging into WV and the Gorge. She is now, as of 12/2/08, in the Talladega National Forest in Alabama. The third peregrine, another female, was hatched out on the Upsher Bay Falcon Tower, VA then brought as a chick to the 2007 Gorge project and given transmitter number 41300. Right after we put the transmitter on her and released her, she made a break for Canada! She moved all around the upper Great Lakes, then moved gradually south and ended up in Mobile Bay, AL. This season she spent a lot of time moving around WV and surrounding areas, and is now back down in Mobile Bay, AL as of 11/30/08.

This year the TRAC Education Department was the busiest in our 18 year history. With two programs left to present at Lewisburg Elementary School in few days, we have already had a record audience attendance of over 20,000 people. Programs are already booking well into 2009, including the Vandalia Festival in Charleston at the end of May, the String Band Festival at Clifftop in August, the Migration Celebration at Little Beaver State Park in May, photo workshops, and of course our scheduled free public tour days on the first Saturday during the months of May to October from 1 - 5. The schedule of events is on our website and is updated regularly. There are several programs for the upcoming Spring school semester that are being scheduled now, so we are encouraging educators to let us know as soon as possible if you are interested in having our "Wings of Wonder: WV Birds of Prey" program in your school or group.

And of course, there are always some announcements to share:

For those of you who missed last year's Eagle Watch, we're doing it again! Jim Phillips just e-mailed me to announce that the 4th Annual Eagle Watch will be held on Saturday, January 3rd in Summers County and surrounding areas. It's free and a lot of fun, although sometimes the eagles forget they are supposed to appear. At the end of the Watch, participants usually gather to share experiences and reports at the Dairy Queen on the Hinton By-Pass. This past Watch, the group saw 9 Bald Eagles and 1 Golden Eagle. 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 e-mail him at: cne01663@mail.wvnet.edu. Besides bringing your binoculars and bird books, remember to dress warmly in layers and pack a lunch. Fluids & a comfy folding chair help too!

Dr. Cheryl Hickman, Chair of the TRAC Board of Directors, has asked me to remind folks that TRAC has the ability to accept installment payments for pledged donations. If you would like to make a payment on a monthly, every other month or quarterly basis, just drop me a line and I will send you a payment booklet with the agreed upon donation payments and payment due dates set up in a tear-out coupon format. This gives donors an easy on-site reminder to make their pledge payment without receiving extra papers in the mail. The pledge reminder booklet is available for any donor who wishes to make an annual donation of \$120 or more (which is just \$10 per month). Cheryl points out that the booklet method has helped her keep current with her donation schedule and it also allows her to donate a bit more than she would otherwise be able to do if it were all required in a single gift. You may also make your donations at any time using Mastercard, Visa, Discover or Paypal from our secure website.

Looking for the perfect last minute unique gift that's meaningful for that special someone? Think about ordering a Feathered Friend Sponsorship of that someone's favorite TRAC Raptor, or make a purchase from the TRAC General Store on our website. It has been newly organized for ease of use, and has many items for sale including tote bags, caps, shirts, posters, patches, and more. Proceeds from the Feathered Friend Sponsorships and General Store are used here at TRAC to help provide for our patients and our resident Educational Raptor Ambassadors. Orders received by December 18th can still be sent in time for Christmas. It's the gift that really DOES keep on giving!

We hope to see you soon. As always, everyone here at TRAC appreciates your help and support in 2008. Best wishes from all of us for a happy, healthy and fun New Year!

Sincerely yours,

Wendy Perrone, TRAC Executive Director

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