



Raptor Chapter Express
December 11, 2007

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 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.

October ended with a fun and unusual release of three red tailed hawks back into their Charleston area homes. What made this release unusual, besides the number of red tails let go at once, was that one of them had very pale coloration except for his just-turning-two-years-old tail. A couple of members of TRAC living in the Fort Hill area report that there have been such lightly colored red-tails hanging out in their area for several years. Perhaps this one was one of their offspring, now healed up from a badly prey-bitten foot, and the data about where he was found support this idea. We have had two reports so far of the bird since the release, so maybe he's decided to stake out his own territory in the Cato Park area. He'll be a mature adult in 2008.

We have had several other interesting cases this quarter, including the first Saw Whet Owl turned in for care to TRAC. The adult owl was found on top of Muddy Creek Mountain in Greenbrier county at the end of October with a dislocated elbow and a concussion. Since the elbow was ultimately unrepairable we had hopes that he may be able to join the educational ambassadors, but the concussion proved fatal. Sometimes, in roughly 5% or less of concussions we see, the area in the brain that controls appetite and eating gets switched off. All food is refused, and if force fed or tube fed the patient ends up throwing up whatever has been given. This is what happened to the Saw Whet Owl and we lost him after 7 days. The winter of 2007 is a very big year for Saw Whet Owl migration so keep your eyes and ears open if you are in an area above 2500 feet! The person who found this owl near her home in Asbury in Greenbrier county

mentioned that she had been hearing some odd, quiet nighttime calls that didn't fit in with her knowledge of other owl calls. For more information on these amazing little owls, including their calls, check out Cornell University's website on them:

www.birds.cornell.edu/AllAboutBirds/BirdGuide/Northern_Saw-whet_Owl.

The unusual weather we've had this Winter so far combined with the drought conditions of the Summer and Fall have lead to an erratic and unpredictable pattern of patient intakes. Sometimes we will have almost a week with no new patients, sometimes we receive several in one day. The flight barn has been put to work to help get these birds back into condition and ready for release, and it is doing a great job. IT has shown it's versatility, even giving a Great Blue Heron deluxe habitat, complete with a large wading pool. We are still waiting on word from one funding proposal to finish the last stage, the "racetrack" that is supposed to go around the outside of the three inside cages. Hopefully we can have this important space completed by the end of Spring. If you are interested in helping with the construction, please drop us an e-mail. We are starting up an e-mail notification list and we'll let everyone know at once when the funding is available: trac@tracwv.org. Please include a phone number and address when you write. Thanks to all who have offered - we'll be needing you!

The Peregrine Project has scaled down for the year, but data is still coming in from the satellite transmitters we attached to six of the peregrines. National Park Service Wildlife Biologist Matt Varner has been posting maps of their travels on the New River Gorge website and TRAC Education Director Ron Perrone has been cross-posting it on the TRAC website with links to the Park Service's project pages. It is interesting how much time these birds are still spending in the Gorge. At the last map update, one has been down into Florida, one is hanging out in New Orleans (after visiting Manitoba, Canada) and the others are creating a kind of Gordian knot all over the Atlantic region. Take a look when you have a chance, and keep an eye open when you are in the Gorge - it's not too unusual to see one. Next season will be even better!

In April, the TRAC Board of Directors officially adopted the North American Association of Environmental Educators' Guidelines for Excellence, a set of professional standards to help ensure quality environmental education programs. Our educational outreach expanded as well. With one more program to do this year, TRAC has already exceeded 16,000 attendees at our programs, a record number. We have also expanded our program offerings into Ohio and Kentucky. Our on-site photo workshops did very well this year and yes, we will be offering them again with our fearless photographer Steve Rotsch in charge. Workshop 2008 dates are may 17 and October 11, with a mini-workshop to be held at the TRAC Migration Celebration May 10 at Little Beaver State Park near Grandview. For more information on the workshops, contact Steve at swrkab@aol.com. Free public tours of TRAC will be held on May 3, June 7, July 5, August 2, September 6 and October 4, all from 1 - 5 pm.

We hope to see you soon. As always, we appreciate your help and support this year. Best wishes from all of us for a happy, healthy and fun New Year!

Sincerely,

Wendy Perrone, TRAC Executive Director

Three Rivers Avian Center, Brooks Mountain Road, HC 74 Box 279, Brooks, WV 25951
Phone: 304-466-4683 or in State: 1-800-721-5252 Web page: www.tracwv.org