



The Raptor Chapter Express

December 4, 2010

A Publication of Three Rivers Avian Center

Greetings! We hope that you and your family are enjoying the holiday season and are staying warm in this snowy, blowy weather.

The song birds here at TRAC are keeping our feeders busy and are giving us a colorful view at the same time. Later today I will be making suet cakes for them; the extra fat will help them through this colder weather. By making our own here, we can make higher quality cakes more cheaply than we could buy them, and we can load them up with more tasty treats than most commercial cakes offer. We've discovered that the birds really like them better too. Since it's the holiday season I may throw some cranberries into the recipe as well, but I've found that our wild birds won't eat cranberries unless I've softened them and chopped them up first.

Fall migration has brought us several new patients, including one that was an unusual species for us. A raven was turned in on the 17th of October - only the second raven we've had turned in for care in our 20 years of operations. He'd been hit by a vehicle on a back road near Peters Mountain (Monroe county) and had a cracked skull, a concussion, and an abraded left cornea. It took about a month for him to get back to 100%, and in the interim we got to learn about Raven behaviors close up. It was a fascinating experience. He was released at the foot of Peters Mountain with his finders and several friends in attendance. It was one of the prettier releases we've had in a while too - he spread his wings and flew off over the fields towards the Mountain, then caught a thermal updraft and rode it up, up, up into the clear blue sky and was gone.

We've also had several owls turned in that have been tangled up in barbed wire fencing. Owls and other raptors hunt fence lines for rodents and other prey that use the overgrown grass and weeds along the fence as protective cover in their perambulations. Owls seem to get tangled up more than

Suet Cakes for the Birds Makes 3 "cakes"

Melt together (microwave):

- 1 cup crunchy peanut butter
- 1 cup lard (no substitutes)

Then mix in:

- 2 cups rolled oats (old fashioned oat meal)
- 2 cups corn meal (we prefer stone ground)
- 1 cup whole wheat flour
- Several handfuls of Raisins, Nuts, etc

Once it's all mixed together, you can form it into balls and hang it from a tree limb in a plastic mesh bag - such as the ones used for holding onions at the store. OR, if you have old plastic containers left over from previous suet purchases, use those and put the cakes in metal mesh suet holders. Freeze whatever you are not going to use right away - they keep forever.

hawks, and the injuries can often be lethal. One of the more difficult cases here in the last couple of months was a barred owl who had many severe cuts in her wing from the barbs, but her “give no quarter” attitude helped pull her through the healing process. She was released back on the farm where she was found, to the rejoicing of all. We are currently working with a sharp shinned hawk that flew into a window in Kanawha county and broke it’s right ulna. It’s healing well and should be released in a few weeks. He’s almost ready to start exercising in the flight barn now.

The flight barn construction project continues. One whole side is now completed, including the wire mesh roof. The exterior is painted dark green now and the whole building blends in nicely with it’s surroundings. When the weather allows, we’ll be back onto finishing up the other 3/4 of the roof! There’s one more side that will have a wire mesh roof, then white Tuftex panels will cover the ends of the oval building. I’ve posted a recent picture of it on the TRAC Blog on our website, taken during the week of Thanksgiving: www.tracwv.org/wordpress.

Last winter we were asked to consider creating a golden eagle banding station here at TRAC. We are located between two others, one at Pipestem State Park and the other at Rimel Wildlife Management Area. After talking with the WV Division of Natural Resources we have now established a banding station here at the top of our amphitheater. It will be interesting to see which birds come in as the Winter progresses. The data that we may collect for the ongoing study of golden eagle movement through West Virginia could prove to be quite helpful. Already we have documented visits by a red tailed hawk, crows, ravens and turkey vultures. It will be interesting to see if any of the local bald eagles come in to get some free food too.

Speaking of bald eagles, it looks as if the nesting bald eagles on Brooks Island, (aka Whitey and Streaky) are going to reuse ast years’ nest again. They never left the area during the Summer, and in the last several weeks they’ve both been at the nest together. They’ve added new grass to the interior as well as new sticks to the exterior, so it looks as if they are beginning to get serious. We will be putting periodic updates about the nest on our website blog. The distance and water make photographing the nest a little difficult, but we’ll try to get some pictures up as well.

The 2010 Peregrine Falcon Restoration Project report has been completed and is now available on our website: www.tracwv.org/restoration.html It was another successful season and we’re looking forward to 2011! We should be getting the first chicks in sometime in May.

As we come to the end of 2010, a hectic, crazy, sad, happy year, I am once again grateful to those who have made this year’s work possible. I speak for all of us here at TRAC - staff and Board of Directors members alike - when I say Thank You to you, our members, volunteers and supporters. Your contributions have helped the Center to continue to provide quality veterinary care to wild bird patients, continue the largest Peregrine Falcon Restoration Project in the East, monitor and record the activities of the first documented pair of nesting bald eagles in southern WV, present our award-winning environmental education programs throughout the State, and continue to improve our facility’s capability to provide high quality rehabilitation space for our wild patients. We couldn’t do it without you. Thank you!

Have a wonderful, warm holiday season, and best wishes to you and yours for a happy 2011.

Sincerely yours,

Wendy Perrone
TRAC Executive Director