



The Falcon

Our Mission:

To rehabilitate and release injured and orphaned birds of prey while inspiring environmental understanding through education for the benefit of all living things.

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We're on the Web!

Check out

www.wvrrc.org

for news, pictures, merchandise, and a list of upcoming educational programs!

Holiday Rehab

Screech Owl Release

By Mike Book, Chairman, Board of Directors



*Kneeling, holding the owl: Karen Denbigh
Others: Jeff, Pam (found the owl), Ashley, Chelsea and Betty Holbert, Emily Walker.*

For the past ten plus years I have come to expect one or two winter holiday phone calls. Not from a family member wishing me a happy holiday or anything like that, but rather a distress call for help with an injured raptor. These calls come from the Center's old friend, Karen Denbigh. She is from Spencer, WV, so any calls from there always entail extensive travel. We usually meet somewhere along I-79 near the Glenville exit to reduce travel time for both of us. Many Christmas and New Year holiday times were interrupted by some ill-timed accident to one of our avian friends.

Karen is genuinely interested in helping as well as learning. She is doing so well in fact that when she is notified of an injured bird in her area, she calls me and we determine the extent of the injuries and decide if this is a minor injury that she can treat and release herself. This picture is her most recent triumph... with the aid of these concerned folks from Clendenin. Karen has developed her own network in and around Spencer that helps with our rehab effort as well as our education effort. Everyone in this photo should be proud of their contribution and will likely remember this event for the rest of their days. Thanks to all the Holbert family and Emily Walker for finding the injured screech owl and caring enough to contact Karen. And thank you Karen for your continued support and personal contributions. Wonderful people like you are the reason we've been doing what we have been since 1983. Thank you so much.

—Featured Species—

Eastern Screech Owl

Megascops asio
(formerly *Otus asio*)

By Katie Fallon, Board of Directors

The Eastern Screech Owl is one of the most common raptors in West Virginia, and is consistently our most frequent patient at the WVRRC. The Eastern Screech Owl's range stretches from Canada and Maine in the north to Florida and Texas in the south, and as far west as Montana and Colorado. A similar species, the Western Screech Owl, lives from Montana west to the Pacific coast, and south through Mexico. The Eastern Screech Owl can live in open woods, suburban areas, and areas with a mix of habitats. They nest in tree cavities, but will also nest in artificial nest boxes. Plans for Screech Owl nest boxes can be found on our website on Otus's page (www.wvrrc.org/otus.html). Screech Owls have also been known to nest in city parks, including Central Park in New York City.

Screech Owls get their name from their distinctive call, which often sounds like a high-pitched, descending whinny. Some people describe the whinny as "saying," "Oh-O-O-O that I had never been bor-r-r-n!" Screech Owls also make a variety of other sounds, including a soft trill. The best time to hear Screech Owls calling is early spring (February and March) during mating season. Calling usually tapers off by May. Clutch sizes vary, but usually Screech Owls will lay 3-4 eggs, which they will incubate for about 30 days. Baby Screech Owls fledge (leave the nest) after an additional 28-32 days.

Generally, Eastern Screech Owls weigh between 5-8 ounces; like most raptor species, females are usually heavier than males. They have a wingspan of 20-22 inches. Eastern Screech Owls have a varied diet, and, like many other raptor species, will eat whatever food source is most abundant. Prey includes mice, rats, chipmunks, bats, pigeons, snakes, frogs, moths, crayfish, spiders, and a wide variety of other creatures. However, Screech Owls can themselves become prey of the much larger Great Horned Owl.



Photo by Ruth Rowand

Otus, our education Eastern Screech Owl, was hit by a car and suffered damage to her left eye. She is an example of the grey color morph. Eastern Screech Owls can also be red (rufous) morph. Some scientists suggest that the red morph is more common in warmer, moist climates (like Florida) while the grey morph is more common in colder climates (in Michigan, for example), but this theory has not been conclusively proven. While we treat both color morphs at the WVRRC, the grey may be slightly more common.

Eastern Screech Owls are well-camouflaged. They come in two color morphs—grey or red. In West Virginia, Screech Owls may be either color, and even birds of the same clutch may be different color morphs. Screech Owls conceal themselves by leaning against tree trunks, and can be very difficult to see. The feather tufts above the eyes are often called "ear tufts," though they don't seem to have anything to do with hearing. Some biologists suggest that these feather tufts help the Screech Owls blend in with their surroundings.

At the WVRRC, most of the Eastern Screech Owls that we treat are the victims of car collisions, though we occasionally care for Screech Owls that have been poisoned (probably unintentionally) or caught in traps. For an up-close

view of Otus's eye injury, see the photo on page 4.



WVRRC Seeking Volunteers

Are you looking for a way to contribute to your community? Do you enjoy wildlife or the outdoors? Are you hoping to gain valuable experience working with injured birds of prey? Do you enjoy teaching or public speaking? Are you willing to work with other volunteers of diverse background and age?

If you answered “yes” to any of the above questions, the WVRRC may be able to use your help! We need volunteers of all kinds—rehabilitation volunteers to feed and care for the injured birds we treat, education volunteers to present programs for schools and other groups, and transporters to deliver injured birds to our center. We are especially in need of folks willing to work on fundraising and grant writing.

If you'd like to volunteer, or if you'd like more information, check out our website:

www.wvrrc.org

and fill out a volunteer application. Or call (304) 366-2867.

RATS!

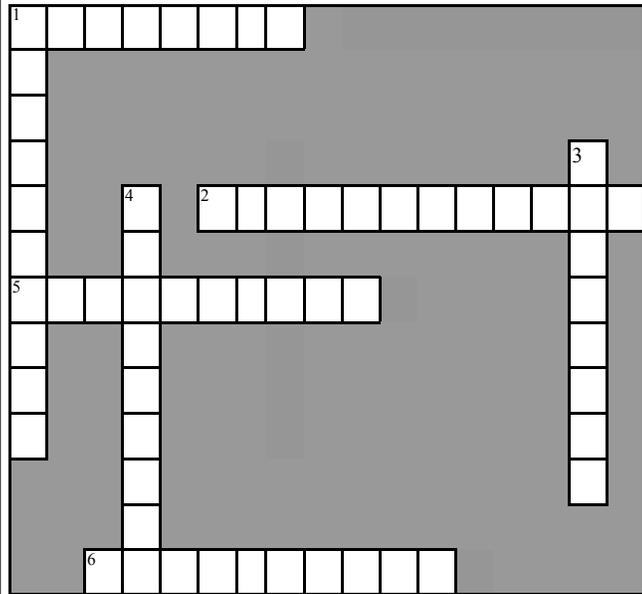
This year the WVRRC will spend over \$5,000 on frozen rats. Although there are cheaper foods available, we have found that whole rats are nutritionally superior for birds of prey.

\$5,000 will feed all the rehabilitation birds as well as the education birds for one year!

Please let us know if you are interested in making this donation by calling (304) 366-2867 or emailing raptor@wvrr.org.

Kids' Corner

Crossword Puzzle: Test your West Virginia knowledge!



Across:

1. State bird
2. State flower
5. State tree (two words)
6. State fish (two words)

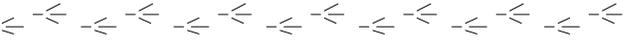
Down:

1. Capitol city
3. State nickname: "The _____ State"
4. State animal (two words)



Photo by Ruth Rowand

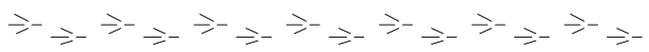
Otus the Eastern Screech Owl was hit by a car and is blind in her left eye. Read more about Screech Owls on page 2.



Bequeathments, life insurance policies, endowments, and annuity funds are all available.

You can help to insure the future of the West Virginia Raptor Rehabilitation Center.

Please contact us today to make your contribution!



Education Report

By Nick Hales, Director of Education

On January 28th, the West Virginia Raptor Rehabilitation Center attended the annual West Virginia Hunting and Fishing Show sponsored by the West Virginia Trophy Hunters Association. Hundreds of people attended the show and many of them stopped by our booth to see our education birds and ask us questions. We appreciate the WV Trophy Hunters Association for asking us to attend again this year. This was our second year there and the show allowed us an opportunity to reach a very large audience. On February 28th, Mike Book and Marilyn Bowman took Thunder and Orion to the annual Rotunda Day in the State Capitol building in Charleston. The Center also attended the annual Morgantown Hunting and Fishing Show on March 4th and 5th. On March 25th, the Center attended the "Come Out and Play" fair held at the West Virginia University Recreation Center. Due to our attendance there, Annie once again made the front page of *The Daily Athenaeum*. Annie proves time and again just how photogenic she is.



Annie the Red-tailed Hawk enjoys the wind beneath her wings.

Education program statistics for the months of January through April are as follows: volunteers have traveled over 800 miles and spent 120 hours presenting educational information on raptors to over 1300 audience members. Thank you to our supporters and volunteers!

Please take a look at our website at www.wvrrc.org and click on the "Upcoming Events" link to see where we will be appearing next.

WVRRRC BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- Chairman Michael Book
- Operations Director Marilyn Bowman
- Education Director Nick Hales
- Katie Fallon
- Jesse Fallon
- Robert Boyle
- Lloyd W. Spring, III
- Michael Boyce

Wish List

- Cleaning Supplies
- 1/4" or 3/8" diameter natural rope
- Latex gloves
- Weed eater
- Heavy welding gloves
- Frost-free upright freezer

News from the Center

Raptor Disposition Report January 1—April 30, 2006

SPECIES	RELEASED	DIED	EUTHA-NIZED	PENDING	TRANS-FERRED	TOTAL
American Kestrel				1		1
Cooper's Hawk		1				1
Golden Eagle		3				3
Great Horned Owl				1		1
Screech Owl		1		3		4
Red-tailed Hawk	1		1	1		3
TOTAL	1	5	1	6	0	13

Bad '06 Start for Golden Eagles

By Mike Book, Chairman, Board of Directors

Over the past several years the Raptor Center has treated several *Golden Eagles*, some successfully and others without success. This year we have already seen two of these magnificent birds at our Center. The first one arrived from Tucker County where it was accidentally caught in a trap. One leg had a longwise split compound fracture. Because of the nature of the fracture the bone could not be pinned or even screwed; it had to be wired. The unselfish professionals from Audubon Animal Clinic that do this work for us, at no charge, did another fine job on a difficult injury. Less than 24 hours after the surgery the golden eagle died. The veterinarian that performed the surgery thought that an embolism (a blockage in the circulation system likely caused by a tiny bone fragment) was the possible cause of death.

A second golden eagle came to us from Lewis County. It was hit and killed by a truck when it was startled off of a road-killed deer carcass. It is not uncommon for these birds to feed from opportunistically provided food sources during the leaner times of the year. This bird was unique, however. The talons (feet) on birds of prey consist of four toes. Three of these are located on the front of the foot and a fourth (called the *hallux*) is located on the rear to provide gripping and perching power. As you can see in the photo on page 7, this eagle is missing one toe on the left foot and two toes on the right foot. Both rear toes are missing, which makes gripping next to impossible. The bird was in good health other than the obvious. It was a male and weighed 8.75 pounds and was likely surviving by feeding off of carrion. In this case the bird had survived and done well with this handicap. The injuries were old and fully healed. Likely causes resulted from either trapping or electrocution. I'd be more inclined to go with the trapping.

Adopt-A-Bird Application



YES, I would like to adopt a(n) _____

My check for \$ _____ is enclosed.

Name: _____

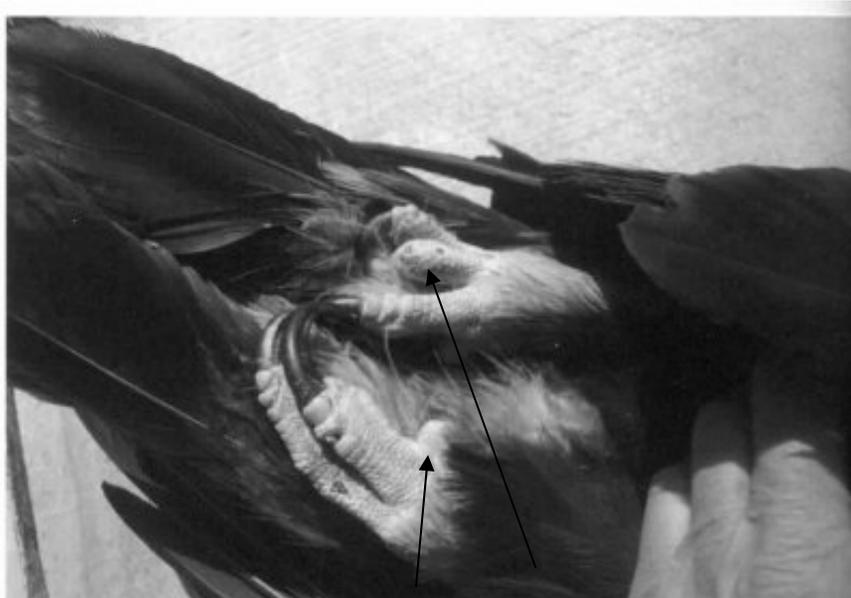
Address: _____

City/State/Zip Code: _____

SPECIES:	CARETAKER:	STEWARD:	PARENT:
Bald or Golden Eagle, Peregrine Falcon	\$250	\$100	\$30
Osprey, Vultures, Hawks, or large Owls	\$200	\$90	\$25
Kestrel or Screech Owl	\$150	\$80	\$20

PARENT receives an adoption certificate and the WVRRC newsletter. STEWARD receives a photograph of the sponsored bird, an adoption certificate, and newsletter. CARETAKER is entitled to be photographed with the adopted bird, receives an adoption certificate, and newsletter.

Bad '06 Start for Golden Eagles



Notice that this golden eagle is missing several toes. It may have survived primarily on carrion (dead animals) because it would have been difficult for the eagle to grab and hold onto prey without its back (hallux) nails. Read the full story on page 6.

WEST VIRGINIA RAPTOR REHABILITATION CENTER

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WWW.WVRRC.ORG

WVRRC MEMBERSHIP FORM

Membership in the WVRRC is open to anyone who shares an interest in the Center's mission. Membership is based on the calendar year in the following categories:

Student / Senior	\$7	Supporting	\$35
Individual	\$10	Donor	\$50
Family	\$17	Sponsor	\$100
		Patron	\$500

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

MEMBERSHIP LEVEL: _____

Would you like your newsletter emailed?

Email address: _____

Phone Number: _____

To join, please complete this form,
enclose a check or money order made
payable to WVRRC and send to:

WVRRC
PO Box 333
Morgantown, WV 26507

The WVRRC is a non-profit, volunteer-based organization with 501-c-3 status. All donations are tax-deductible.