

Annual Report

2020-2021



HAWK WATCH
INTERNATIONAL

Photo by Forest Woodward



Mission

To conserve our environment through education, long-term monitoring , and scientific research on raptors as indicators of ecosystem health.

Photo by Jennifer Bridgemann



Photo by Hayden Wayment, Nikki's son

Dear Friends,

Wow, what a year we had! One of the greatest challenges of managing a non-profit is trying to project what the coming year will look like, especially when developing a budget. I never dreamt my first year as Executive Director would end like this. When we started our fiscal year (July 2019), we had an ambitious budget, an enthusiastic staff, and a tireless group of volunteers and donors. As we ended the same fiscal year, we were facing the uncertainty created by a global pandemic.

Thanks to you, we completed another year of raptor migration, counting 630,389 and banding 1,785 birds; we reached 21,888 students, community members and families through our raptor education; and we put transmitters on 9 Golden Eagles in the western US and 4 Martial Eagles in Krueger National Park, South Africa. All during a global pandemic!

One of my favorite aspects of humanity is that when things get hard, people step up to make a difference. This time has been a real test for each of us, and we are so grateful for your unexpected, although not surprising, support. So many people I have spoken to have shared their support and desire to help us continue contributing to the scientific knowledge of raptors. And, there are no words for that outpouring of love.

As we began one of our busiest seasons-- raptor nesting, our annual fundraiser, and countless requests for education programs, the world came to a halt. With safety protocols in place and science on our mind, your support allowed us to persevere through that season. Our science staff continued research with limited help from folks outside the organization, our development team began engaging you in a new format, and our education team pivoted to meet teachers where they were, virtual.

I found that one thing that unites our community (staff, donors, volunteers, and partners) is science. The belief in science, the desire for scientific research to continue, and the selflessness to support science. For that reason, I am humbled and grateful as I write this letter. Thanks to each of you for being a part of this community that values science and supports our mission. We are nothing without you all!

As we head into our 35th Anniversary, we are optimistic. We are looking forward to coming together with you all in new formats.

Yours in conservation,



Long-term Monitoring

Photo by Forest Woodward

Migration

By all counts, the 2019 fall raptor migration season at HWI was pretty unremarkable. Counts were lower than average at most of the sites, especially those in the Pacific Northwest that dealt with early and powerful winter storms. The only big change HWI biologists Dave Oleyar and Jesse Watson saw coming for 2020 was a new format for reporting our migration results each year.

But by early spring, they knew they were in for a much more hazardous and historical moment for the Migration Network. "Things with COVID-19 started to really heat up around March or April, so we never even shared job postings for migration crew members," Dave reflected.

As the source of the largest long-term data set of raptor migration in North America, there was a lot to think about. "It really hurt at the moment," Jesse said. "All these eager field biologists need jobs and we want to conduct this important research."

But ultimately, the risk was just too great. After thinking about where each site was located and how far it was from medical care, Jesse and Dave made the decision to cancel the 2020 fall migration season at every site other than Corpus Christi and Grand Canyon. These were the only two sites they felt could continue safely.

Luckily, since it is such a long-term dataset, missing one year of data from some sites was less concerning than the risk to human life. "We took comfort in knowing our people were safe," Dave shared.

And, as Jesse reminded us, the birds did still migrate, whether we watched them or not. "They were probably happy to not see us gawking as they flew by last year!" We hope the birds enjoyed their break! We are very hopeful we'll see you at a hawkwatch site in the near future.



Bonney Butte:	116
Chelan Ridge:	133
Commissary Ridge:	252
Goshute Mountains:	860
Manzanos Mountains:	424

Total: 1,785



↓ Bonney Butte:	1,777*
↓ Chelan Ridge:	859
Bridger Mountains:	2,579
Commissary Ridge:	4,024
↓ Goshute Mountains:	8,011
↓ Grand Canyon:	3,608
↓ Manzanos Mountains:	4,107
Corpus Christi:	602,558
Total:	630,389



- Corpus Christi:
 - 1 Northern Goshawk
 - 3 Golden Eagles
 - 21 Bald Eagles
- Bonney Butte:
 - 2 Red-shouldered Hawks
- Manzanos Mountains:
 - 31 Broad-winged Hawks
- 4,156 visitors to our sites

Support Migration: Adopt a Hawk!

Did you know that you can adopt any of the raptors that are banded each year at HWI's migration sites? For as little as \$50, you'll receive an adoption packet with info about your bird, including its weight, sex, and band number plus an 8x10 photo of the species you adopted, taken by raptor legend Jerry Liguori.

hawkwatch.org/support/adopt

In-Hand Guide

If you spend much time on the Internet, you probably see the clickbait “exclusive content!” so often that you wonder if there is any truly unique content left in the world. Rest easy, because HWI’s In-hand Guide to Diurnal North American Raptors shows that there is! Featuring over 450 high-quality photos covering 17 species, the guide is a wealth of information on molt, sexing, and aging for raptors commonly captured at migration sites in North America.

“There’s nothing like this anywhere in the world for any region’s raptors,” explained HWI Research Biologist Jesse Watson, one of the lead authors of the project. Watson, along with HWI’s Dr. Dave Oleyar, former HWI educator Jerry Liguori, and Hawk Ridge Banding Director Frank Nicoletti developed the in-hand guide over the last three years.

“A message that Jerry, Jesse, and I commonly heard from HWI migration crewmembers over the years was how great it would be to have an all in one reference with images that would aid both seasoned and new banders in understanding the nuances of the raptors we catch and band,” Oleyar shared. “We finally decided to create something like this for our teams and other raptor banders while driving back to Utah after a visit to the Bonney Butte HawkWatch in Oregon.”

Of course, developing the first of anything isn’t exactly easy. To create the guide, Watson shared that they worked with dozens of raptor banders and researchers across the continent to gather

content documenting the various ages, plumages, and other idiosyncrasies of raptors that a biologist might encounter. They added content from 53 raptor biologists and raptor conservation organizations to the immense personal library built by Liguori during his career as an authority on North American raptors.

“Every bird is different, like a fingerprint or a snowflake,” Watson explained. “Existing guides had all of the generic information, but none include extensive images that allow for visual learning.”

And, it took lots of time and editing, so much so that it sort of felt like working on a thesis all over again for Watson. Luckily, the process also served as a unique learning experience.

“I knew upfront that writing this guide meant spending a lot of time with Jerry,” Watson shared about the opportunity to learn directly from one of North America’s leading raptor experts. “As we looked at photos and discussed each bird, I got to see things through his eyes, and learned how he studies and analyzes each and every bird.”

And now, other raptor biologists—and you—can, too.

“I’m already seeing a number of biologists picking up on the tips in the guide and using them to improve their knowledge, and to better document the birds they encounter,” Watson reflected on the guide’s success. “And creating a standard that everyone knows and uses throughout the raptor world is one of the main goals of the effort.”

In-hand Guide to Diurnal North American Raptors



By Jerry Liguori, Jesse Watson, Frank Nicoletti, and Dave Oleyar

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American Kestrel • 163

Females should only be aged based on molt or fault bars. On AHY/ASY female the width of the subterminal black tail band (excluding R1) is often noticeably wider than the other bands. In HY/SY female, the subterminal band is not significantly wider than the proximal bands. However, this is not nearly 100% accurate due to overlap and variation in tail pattern. Fig. 7 shows examples of variation in known HY AMKE tails.



Education



Pandemic Push

For years, HWI's educators have wanted to bring the joy and intrigue of our Raptor Ambassadors to people outside of Utah. But it was a big proposition. Even after investing in virtual learning tools such as a high-quality camera and a green screen so the infrastructure was available, we had big questions. How would we deliver these programs? What technology would we—and our attendees—need to be successful? Would people really get the same impact out of a virtual program?

Then the COVID-19 pandemic hit. Schools closed. Our education programs all but stopped overnight.

So when Ben Segee, a science specialist in Maine, reached out and asked if we could accommodate a distance learning program for his sixth-grade students, Education and Outreach Director Melissa Halvorsen jumped at the opportunity. "I knew it would be a learning experience for us because it's really different to provide these programs virtually, but the nice thing about the pandemic was that we were all going through it at the same time," Melissa shared.

With Goose, Kotori, and Calurus by their side, Melissa and HWI Educator Iza Schwartz led their first virtual "Parade of Raptors," introducing the students to three types of raptors—a falcon, an owl, and a hawk. And in the process, they learned a lot of lessons that apply to all the education programs HWI provides—whether virtual or in-person.

"This year really forced us to slow down," Melissa explained. "Our programs used to be packed with so much information, but to keep students engaged virtually, we've had to focus on the core concepts so that we have time to ask students questions and let them interact with the material."

And now with a full suite of 25 virtual, interactive, raptor-based math and science lessons, the HWI Education team is ready to provide informal science lessons in the classroom or from afar. To book a program for your school or group, send an email to education@hawkwatch.org.

Education Numbers

21,888 people reached

519 programs

320 teachers

714 hours & **41** minutes

9 birds

44 docents

9,904 miles driven



Photo by Debbie Petersen

Unforgettable: Aymara

Amayra. Amara. Myra.

It was a bit of a running joke how few people—including volunteers and sometimes staff—correctly pronounced the name of HWI's beloved Swainson's Hawk. But if you knew her, you understand that Aymara (EYE-MAH-RA) was unforgettable.

Named for the people who have lived in regions of the Andes for more than a millennium, Aymara joined HWI as a Raptor Ambassador in 2013. She was deemed unreleasable after she flew into a large tree limb and injured her breast. The injury left her unable to sustain flight.

But Aymara's injury could not crush her spirit. You couldn't get near her door without her chirping to greet you (or scare you off, if she thought you were nervous). More than a few of us had the pleasure of wearing Aymara as our latest hair accessory.

Thanks to her spunky attitude, Aymara earned a reputation. She often made new volunteers nervous and would be the last bird they learned to handle. She was a feisty, strong bird, adapted to migrate 14k+ miles per year. Without that journey, she channeled her full spirit into meeting each of you and helping you learn about the many risks raptors face.

Aymara truly was a teacher. Even if she didn't speak our language, she spoke to our hearts. Thank you, Aymara, for educating people across the United States about raptors, conservation, and how even a serious injury can't take the spark from a determined soul. We promise that even if people forget your name, they'll never forget your spirit.



Support Education: Feed our Birds!

With eight non-releasable Raptor Ambassadors on the team, we spend thousands of dollars on mice, rats, fish, and quail each year. Hungry for more raptor education programs? For just \$40 a month, you can feed one of our birds a nutritious diet that allows them to educate tens of thousands of people a year.

hawkwatch.org/support/monthlygift

Conservation: Locally & Abroad



Photo by Steve Slater

Eagles in Africa



Photo by Megan Murgatroyd



Nine months after launching the International Program in January 2019, we welcomed a new addition to the team—Dr. Megan Murgatroyd—our first-ever internationally-based biologist. Focused on the conservation of threatened raptors in Africa, Meg was hired to expand HWI's international program to study and conserve birds like the Martial Eagle, Verreaux's Eagle, and Bearded Vultures. And because Meg is based in South Africa, her research and conservation work were able to continue (albeit slightly adjusted!) even when the COVID-19 pandemic wreaked havoc on scientific research across the globe.

While the rest of us were hunkered down in our homes, Meg was wading through tall grasses—infested with ticks, mind you—in South Africa's iconic Kruger National Park to monitor the breeding performance of Martial Eagles. “The tick bites are itchy and last for days, but just a quick scroll through my newsfeed, and I'm reminded that I'd rather this any day!” Meg shared in a blog post as the season kicked off.

The largest eagle in Africa, Martial Eagles have seen about a 60% decrease in their population in the last 20 years in South Africa. “Breeding productivity has been worryingly low since this project was started in 2013,” Meg explained, of the raptor that was just recently reclassified as Endangered. The goal of Meg's research is to understand what is causing these declines and what we can do to protect Martial Eagles better in the future.

Martial Eagles build large nests in trees. Each pair has a territory which they defend against intruders, so the same pair will use the same nest for consecutive breeding attempts, although they only usually breed every other year. In collaboration with the FitzPatrick Institute of African Ornithology at the University of Cape Town and the Endangered Wildlife Trust, Meg and her team visits nests around 20 nests three to four times a year to see if they lay an egg and if the breeding attempt is successful. For more detailed information about the species, the team installed seven cameras in nests this year. The nest cameras take time-lapse photos throughout the breeding season so we can see if nests are successful, what prey species are brought to the chick, and if they fail what the cause of failure is.

They've also placed GPS tracking units on seven adult Martial Eagles to get insights into their habitat requirements as well as the causes of mortality. To date, 24 eagles have been tagged since the inception of the project—14 adults and 10 juveniles. This year 3 adults; one female and two males were added to this sample. The most recent tracking devices can also detect when the birds are eating; therefore collecting important information on the distribution and species (when doubled with finding the prey remains or citizen science sightings) of prey in Kruger.

Global Conservation

Remember back in 2017 when we told you all about the incredible raptor migration at the Bab-el-Mandeb strait in Djibouti—and our plans to monitor it? Unfortunately, security concerns have prevented it. However, Evan was able to organize a team and travel there in 2017. While there, they discovered something fascinating. In August 2019, this paper was published documenting our teams sighting of the Semi-collared Flycatcher (*Ficedula semitorquata*), which was a first in the country, and what is potentially the first breeding record of the Lesser Flamingo (*Phoeniconaias minor*) for the country. They're not raptors, but we were nonetheless excited about this contribution to ornithological research!

You may have heard about our recent paper identifying global raptor research and conservation priorities, which led to the launch of the inaugural international conservation grant this year. But did you know that we also did a follow-up analysis to better understand how global priorities for raptor work relate to societal issues and economic inequality around the world? In this paper, we highlighted potential opportunities for conservation investment, in places like coastal West Africa, where projects could disproportionately contribute to raptor conservation, while also helping to reduce social and economic inequalities.



Support Science: Sponsor a Transmitter!

Small, solar-powered GPS transmitters are key to identifying critical habitat and causes of mortality for endangered vulture and eagle species. For \$120 a month, you can sponsor and name one of these birds. You'll receive an adoption packet with info about your bird, including an 8x10 photo of it, taken by Dr. Evan Buechley or Dr. Megan Murgatroyd. You'll also receive monthly updates on its movements.

Contact Kirsten at kelliott@hawkwatch.org for more information.

Nearly a Decade of Golden Eagle Work



Photos by Steve Slater

“It all started eight years ago, on the bumpy dirt roads of northwest Utah. HawkWatch International had hired me to monitor Golden Eagle nests,” HWI Research Associate Dustin Maloney shared. It was broad-scale work—did adults occupy a nest that year, did they have nestlings, did the nestlings survive until they could leave the nest on their own? Studying raptor behavior in Utah’s West Desert grew on him that season. Little did he know then that he’d still be with HWI close to a decade later and diving deeper down that rabbit hole.

From the very beginning, Dustin’s role focused on raptor productivity. It went from the Bureau of Land Management wanting to know how many Golden Eagles were nesting in the West Desert and how successful they are, to them wanting to know how many raptors are relying on the Utah landscape as a winter refuge, and understanding where the migratory pathways are for raptors in the West Desert. As his time with HWI grew, so did the complexity of the questions we began investigating.

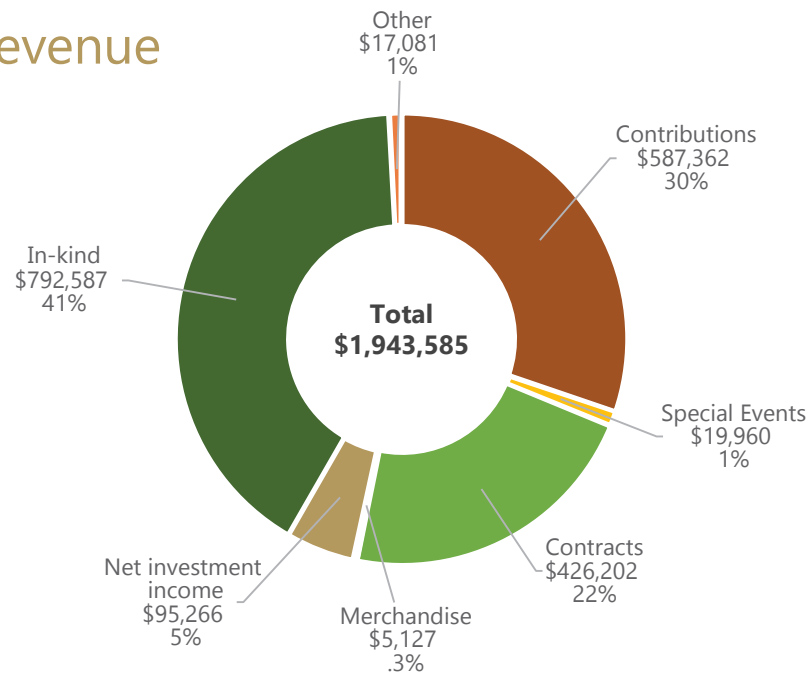
Things like scavenger ecology and the factors contributing to Golden Eagle mortality due to vehicle strikes became a big part of his work. “The transition from broad-scale productivity to a fine-scale, specific set of questions really helped me grow as a biologist,” Dustin shared. Under the guidance of Dr. Steve Slater, and with the help of all the inspiring work being done around him, Dustin learned the skills he needed to take the next step in his career.

And now it seems things have gone full-circle. He’s back on those same bumpy dirt roads in northwestern Utah. Only this time, instead of hiding among the sage trying not to disturb adult eagles while they feed their young, he’s rappelling straight into nests and installing data loggers and trail cameras.

With the help of HWI and Dugway Proving Ground, Dustin is now pursuing a graduate degree, studying factors that contribute to parasites and disease in Golden Eagle nestlings across western Utah. “I’m proud to be a part of such a great organization and am looking forward to many more years of conserving raptors and our shared environment,” he said.

Financials July 2019—June 2020

Revenue



Statement of Activities and Change in Net Assets

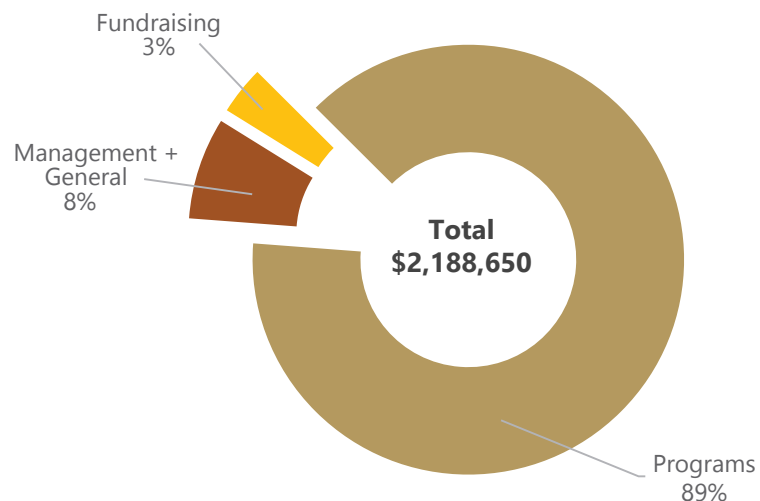
Income

Public Support	\$1,399,909
Earned Revenue	\$448,410
Net Investment Return	\$95,266
Total Income	\$1,943,585

Expenses

Program Services	\$1,942,857
Supporting Services	\$245,793
Total Expenses	\$2,188,650
Operating Revenue Over Operating Expenses	-\$245,065

Expenses



Statement of Financial Position

Assets & Liabilities

Assets	\$2,358,742
Liabilities	\$339,888
Total Net Assets	\$2,018,854

Net Assets (beginning of year)	\$2,263,919
Net Assets (End of year)	\$2,018,854
Change in net assets	\$245,065

Staff

Annette Gibert

HWI Educator

Christina Castellano, Ph.D.

Development & Communications Director

Dave Oleyar, Ph.D.

Long-term Monitoring & Community Science Director

Dustin Maloney

Research Associate

Eric Chabot

Research Biologist

Evan Buechley, Ph.D.

International Programs Director

Iza Schwartz

Educator

Janet Nelson, M.S.

Educator

Jesse Watson, M.S.

Research Biologist

Jessica Taylor

Field Biologist

Laurie Conlon

Data Entry Specialist

Loralie Jensen

Administration & Finance Director

Megan Murgatroyd, Ph.D.

Conservation Biologist

Melissa Halvorsen

Education & Outreach Director

Nelson Holmes

Volunteer Coordinator & Educator

Nicole Williams

Development & Communications Coordinator

Nikki Wayment

Executive Director

Steven Slater, Ph.D.

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Board Member Profile

If you ask Jill Curtis what she does for a living, she'll likely tell you she's a dermatologist on the side. Her main gig? Volunteering for HawkWatch International.

"When I was deciding on a career, I didn't know about paths like raptor science or raptor education," Jill explained. "But I'd driven by the HWI office for years, thinking it was really cool so when I finished medical school, I knew I had to get involved somehow."

When the opportunity finally presented itself, she jumped at it. Literally.

"As I was driving home one evening past Olympus Hills Park I saw the Hawkmobile in the parking lot so I parked my car, jumped out, and ran to the park where I met Dave Oleyar who was looking for kestrels," Jill explained. A month later, she attended a Bird Docent orientation session and her journey with HWI took flight.

Jill began taking HWI's Raptor Ambassadors out to education programs and helping care for them. Soon, her professions collided when HWI brought in a new bird, Galileo the Short-eared Owl.

"I think my deep involvement developed out of that. Galileo really needed help with his feathers and my background in dermatology gave the team some insight on how to help," Jill explained.

Of course, this sort of commitment doesn't go unnoticed at a small organization like HawkWatch International, and in late 2018, Jill joined the Board of Directors.

"I wanted to give my time away," she shared as she explained why she decided to invest even more of herself in HWI. "I loved the science, what HawkWatch represented, and of course, that I could get close to the birds," Jill said.

And get close to the birds she has. In addition to her board service, Jill continues to care for HWI's Raptor Ambassador, provide education programs, and track the many raptors and other animals she has symbolically adopted from conservation organizations across the globe. "I just want to give as much as I possibly can."



Photo by Mac Kincaid

Donor Profile

Growing up in Syracuse, New York in the 1930' and 40's, Kay Millar loved school and excelled academically. She came to love her science courses. And she also liked to be outdoors, dig under rocks, and watch birds.

As she explored careers in the sciences, Kay ruled out a lab technician as too routine and a wildlife biologist as too risky. "I grew up during the Great Depression so my father always pointed out that I needed to be able to support myself," she shared. Eventually, she decided on medicine, completing her M.D. degree and residency in Syracuse. But it wasn't long until Kay found a way to work wildlife biology into her life.

Looking for a change of scenery, Kay took a faculty position at the University of Utah's School of Medicine in 1968. She soon began spending her free time birding at Bear River Wildlife Refuge to learn how to identify the birds. Eventually, she became involved with the Great Salt Lake Audubon. That's where she first found out about HawkWatch International.

At the time, founder Steve Hoffman was relocating HWI from New Mexico to Utah and welcomed volunteers to help with raptor migration projects. Armed with her Peterson Guide, several weeks of vacation, and a passion for biology, Kay joined the team at the Goshutes. "I don't have great eyesight for a birder, but I could process birds and keep records," Kay shared.

From there, Kay became even more involved with HWI—going out on field trips in the West Desert, serving as the Chair of the Board's Science Committee, conducting Winter Raptor Surveys, and more. And it's because of all she has done with HawkWatch that she has made it a priority for her charitable giving.

"What's special to me about HawkWatch has been the opportunity to participate," Kay explained. "HawkWatch has given me the companionship and the ability to work with like-minded people at a high level, without being a professional in the field."

And, because she has been so involved, Kay knows exactly what her contributions are doing for raptors and our shared environment. "An organization like HawkWatch needs the money," Kay said. "You're not going to do it without us."

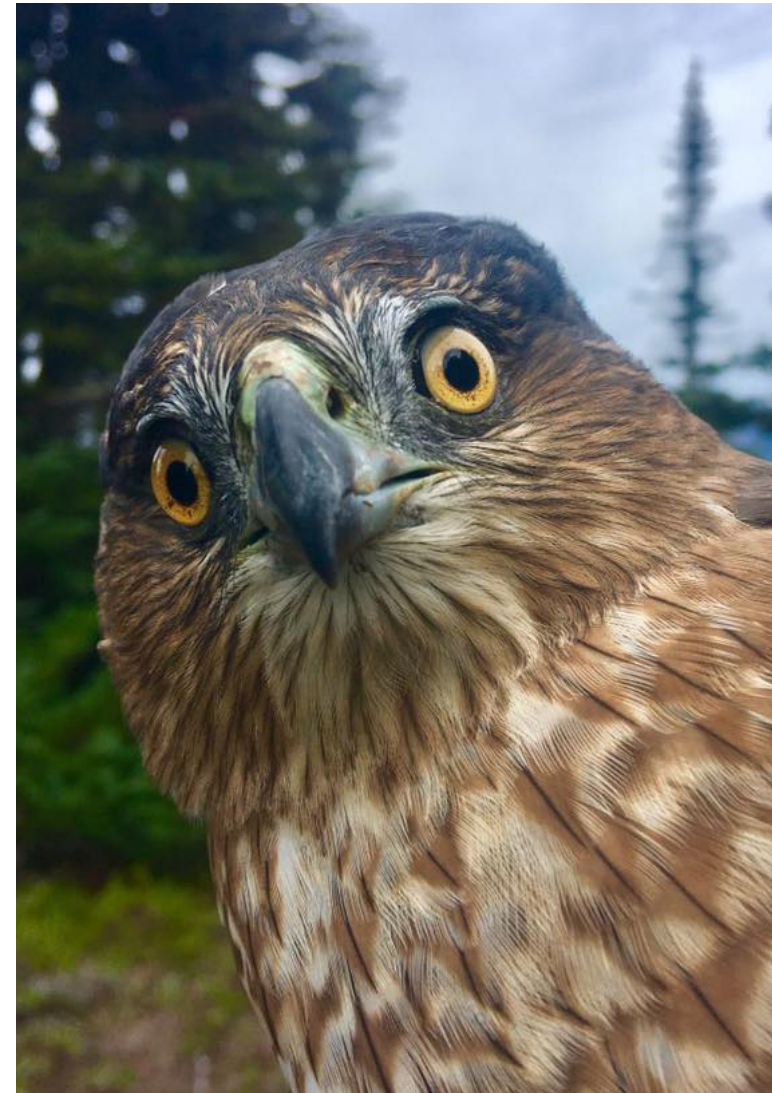


Photo by Ashley Santiago

Donor List

Individuals

Aaron and Niki Crabtree
Aaron Barna and Patricia Johnson
Aaron Silverman
Al Hinde and Kelly Gray
Alan Marsh
Alan Mueller and Linda Artman
Alexander and Sarah Uhle
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Alexandra Ziegenmier
Alice Lightle
Alison Littlefield
Allan Sutter and Elizabeth Durham
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Dennis and Jean Bramble
Dennis Coleman
Dennis Durkee
Diana Little
Diana Thulin

Bold=Monthly

**=Matching Gifts*

Italics=Board or staff gift

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Don Green
Don Marion
Don Paul
Donald Henderson and Alice Cahill-Henderson
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Donna Kuroda
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Ian Topolsky
Ila Jean Larson
Iza Schwartz
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Jake Gilson and Suzanne Kanatsiz
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James and Nancy McLaughlin
James Buckmelter
James Harper
James Jeffery
James Keetley
James Moe and Cherie Sohnen-Moe
James Sipiora
Jan Ahern
Jan and Jack Cato
Jane Tatchell
Janet Jandreau*
Janet Nelson
Jannie Spader
Jason Hutchison
Jason Roberts
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Jay and Shirley George
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Jeff Prah
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Jeffry Quick and Randi Ross-Quick
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Jennifer Fiske
Jennifer Hartline
Jennifer Hathorne and Mike Green
Jennifer Schoech
Jeremiah Mollman and Jillian Olmsted
Jeremy and Amy Hanks
Jerry and Sherry Liguori
Jerry Bassalleck
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