

ANNUAL²⁰₂₀ REPORT



JAMES
FIORENTINO
21

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DIRECTOR'S REPORT

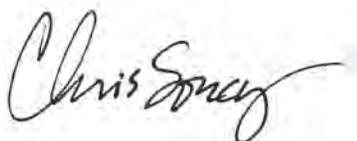
REASONS TO BE THANKFUL

I promised myself I wouldn't write a lengthy intro to this year's annual report that focused on what a difficult year it was; we all know that already. From the devastating news of the Cornell University study which found significant, long-term losses in the populations of nearly every group of birds in North America; to the loss of our co-founder, Diane Soucy; to the impact of COVID-19 on our operations here at The Raptor Trust (and on the lives of all of you, our supporters, as well), the obstacles we faced in 2020 simply do not need to be cataloged—again. So that's all I'll say about it and, instead, I'm going to focus on the reasons we have to be thankful, maybe even optimistic.

You - our supporters. You truly stood by us last year. When we closed our displays to visitors last March, we were concerned about how that might affect our donations and operating budget. But the many loyal supporters of The Raptor Trust - from single individual donors to the largest foundations - helped provide us with the resources we needed to once again treat well over 5,000 birds. From Day One we have always said, "We could not have done it without you," and that was never more true than this past year.

Our team. The Raptor Trust staff, volunteers and trustees are an incredibly selfless, dedicated and compassionate bunch. We operated with fewer staff and fewer volunteers all year. Those that were here kept the wheels turning with a doubled-down sense of conviction that was inspiring to be a part of. Our Education team adapted to presenting virtual programs. Our Medical and Facilities team muscled through logistical challenges that would have crushed the souls of mere mortals. Without being able to hold any actual events, our Development office found innovative ways to engage with people. No one is luckier than me to be able to watch all of these amazing people in action every day - covering for each other, pitching in, working long hours, doing whatever the heck it takes to get the job done, all in the service of injured and orphaned wild birds in need of help.

Our mission and partnerships. Having a clear and meaningful mission makes our jobs easier. It provides direction. It drives us to work hard at what we do. Along with it, having meaningful partnerships - with our friends, supporters, bird rescuers, colleagues at other rehab centers, and with state and federal wildlife agencies - is the foundation of our success. We've put together some stories that highlight our mission and these partnerships in this 2020 annual report. We hope you enjoy it, and we thank you for sticking with us.



CHRIS SOUCY
Executive Director
The Raptor Trust



Chris Soucy releasing an American Kestrel,
Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge,
Summer 2020

THE RAPTOR TRUST IS DEDICATED TO THE FULFILLMENT OF THREE PRIMARY MISSIONS:

1. To provide free care and assistance to injured, sick, or orphaned native wild birds.
2. To educate people about wild birds, especially birds of prey.
3. To provide a humane example for others.



Every person who receives this annual report has helped a bird who needed care. You may have brought a patient to The Raptor Trust, attended a program, donated to support a bird in recovery, visited, volunteered - or several of those things! You know how much your support matters, and we thank you for all of the ways you have stepped in to save a life.

Even as bird populations have been impacted over the past several decades, **The Raptor Trust is here to stay.** Here to help where we can. Here to provide medical care - and hope - in our small but ecologically significant corner of the world. And we couldn't do it without you.

WAYS TO SUPPORT:

Donate: You can donate by mail, on our website, Facebook, PayPal (paypal.me/raptortrust), Venmo (@Raptor-Trust), and you can even purchase items on our Amazon Wish List! Some employers will match your donations with company-provided gifts to The Raptor Trust, doubling your impact.

Monthly donations: Join our Raptor Pass program by pledging a monthly gift that provides a big impact for wild birds. Sign up for recurring donations via our web page or Paypal.

Tribute gifts: Tribute Giving is a way to celebrate those you cherish. By making a gift in honor or memory of a loved one, you can provide food, shelter, and care to birds that need it most. Be sure to let us know the name of the person you wish to honor and anyone you wish to be notified.

Legacy gifts: The Legacy Society is made up of caring individuals who have included The Raptor Trust in their will or estate plans. Regardless of gift size, members ensure that TRT will continue to fight for the survival of wild birds far into the future. For more information, contact Ashlee Adams at aadams@theraptortrust.org.

Your donation supports the thousands of patients we receive each year - **all of the work you'll see in the following pages.** We're grateful to the many friends and neighbors who help us each day with their kindness and support!

The Raptor Trust
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Millington, NJ 07946
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ABOUT THE COVER ARTIST

Artist James Fiorentino was the youngest artist ever inducted into the prestigious New York Society of Illustrators. Known for his realistic images of sports icons, presidents, Nobel Prize winners and other notables, his award-winning art is showcased in museums, galleries and private collections across the globe. James serves on the Board of Trustees at The Raptor Trust.

Cover Art: "Ugla the Great Horned Owl,"
by James Fiorentino.



REHAB BIRD OF THE YEAR

In 2020, The Raptor Trust started a new tradition: We asked friends and fans on social media to pick their favorite rehab bird of the year. It was a hotly contested battle, but after a series of surveys, we tallied up your votes and got our winner—the American Kestrel!

The American Kestrel is a perky, colorful falcon. Males have slate-blue wings and a black bar on their orange tail feathers, while females have brown wings with black stripes. This fierce (and fast) bird is the smallest falcon in North America, weighing 3-6 ounces—about 34 pennies.



Many of the Kestrels we admit are orphaned and must learn skills here at The Raptor Trust that they would have learned from their parents in the wild. In 2020, 67 American Kestrels were admitted - 53 of which were successfully released and 4 of which are still in care. That's an 80-85% success rate with this Threatened Species in our state.

If you find yourself along a roadside or open field, take a moment to look for this small, colorful bird. They can often be spotted perched on power lines, occasionally bobbing their tails as they search for their supper.

NEW GIFT SHOP

In early spring 2020, The Raptor Trust Bookstore and Gift Shop was fully renovated and stocked, just in time for....everything to shut down. Kristi Ward, Senior Rehabilitation Technician and Gift Shop manager, did a fabulous job of making many of the unique new items available online, and even had many of you back to the store by appointment.

The new gift shop was made possible by a generous donation from Richard Allgaier and Janice Coleman in loving memory of their dear friend, Wendy Shadwell, in whose name the original store was dedicated. The renovation is astounding: a brand-new building, complete with new lighting and air quality systems, storage space, and of course, **beautiful displays full of fascinating books, gifts, and novelties for lovers of wildlife.**

We look forward to reopening the gift shop again later in the spring and hope to see you there. Stay tuned!



CASE STUDY: MOURNING DOVE FLEDGLING (20-4183)

Admit Date: October 3, 2020

Reason for Admit: Caught by Dog/Cat

Release Date: October 24, 2020

Days in Rehab: 21

Approximate Cost of Stay: \$540



Summary: This young Mourning Dove was found in a suburban yard in Hillside Township, likely having been caught by a cat or dog. It had an open laceration at the knee and an older, healed radius and ulna fracture of its wing. The bird's knee injury needed to be sutured in order to heal. Senior medical staff performed the surgery under a local anesthesia. Knee injuries can be tricky; Mourning Doves stand with their knees bent and hop as they walk, which makes it difficult to keep wounds closed, even with sutures.

The fledgling was kept inside to monitor its knee and make sure it was eating well on its own. For the first few days after the surgery, the Mourning Dove did not eat, which is not unusual after such a stressful ordeal. The staff gave the bird food via a tube and continued to offer seed. Antibiotic treatment was started to fight any infection that might occur. Once it began eating well on its own and appeared ready to gain more freedom of movement, it was moved to an outdoor dove annex.

The Mourning Dove's knee healed well, and it continued eating independently - a good sign! After some observation and recuperation in the outside dove flight cage, it was time for the release. Young Mourning Doves are released in groups and with adult doves to simulate the flocks they form in the wild. This young bird was finally released after three weeks of care here at The Raptor Trust.

SUMMER PHONE CHALLENGE

by Barbara Franko and Alyssa Rella

Managing rehabilitation on a daily basis is challenging enough, but managing it all during our busiest time of year with reduced staff, no summer students and a reduced number of volunteers made last year uniquely challenging. We depend on summer students, especially to help us with the first step of rehabilitation: phone calls! We had to invent a new way for staff to handle the calls while not contaminating the phone each time it rang. The two of us became the "official phone bank" staff, answering calls in a remote office for the entire busy "baby bird season." We took a record number of calls, **averaging 65-80 calls a day**, plus text messages on the cell and many emails.

The majority of calls between April and July were about baby birds found on the ground. Well-meaning people who want to help often think that a small bird on the ground must be injured. Sometimes, that is not the case, and parent birds may be nearby and caring for their young. In cases like this, a phone call or photo via a text message can help us identify whether a bird needs to be rescued or if it should be left alone. We love to hear, "I took your advice, watched from a distance and saw the parents come back and feed the baby. Thank you so much!" Remember - **most wildlife goes through a vulnerable phase while growing up**, and while you might be

tempted to step in, often there's no need to interfere in the natural process.

We also received many calls about birds that really did need help. From injured raptors to full nests of baby birds blown from a tree, finders were extremely helpful in getting the birds to us, either by making the trip to The Raptor Trust themselves or calling dedicated Animal Control officers, who worked non-stop during this pandemic. Finally, our night message gave finders detailed instructions on what to do to keep birds safe and comfortable until we were able to call them back.

The phones are always busy during the spring and summer, and communication between the public and our team is the best first step in determining how to help birds that have been found. **Thank you for your help in making it a success.**

TEST YOUR WILD BIRD KNOWLEDGE

DO THE FOLLOWING BIRDS NEED TO BE RESCUED?

(answers on page 9)

1. A duckling or gosling found alone
2. A naked baby bird on the ground
3. A fluffy bird hopping on the ground
4. An owl on the ground during the day
5. A hawk on the ground during the day

REHABILITATION REPORT

WHAT YOU HELPED US ACCOMPLISH IN 2020

We admitted 5,381 birds in 2020. While it was not our busiest year ever, it was pretty darn close. Our numbers do fluctuate a bit from year to year; that’s just the nature of things. Some years we can pinpoint reasons for changes.

Last year, one of the factors that affected the admit numbers was surely the COVID-19 pandemic. As always, orphaned birds made up a large percentage of the year’s admits, and in 2020 the infirmary was slammed in late spring and early summer. More people were home during the breeding season—either working from home or, unfortunately, unemployed. **Baby birds that ended up on the ground were simply more likely to be found than in previous years.**

We also received many birds that suffered from impact injuries in 2020—a higher percentage than usual. We can’t put our finger on exactly why that is; it could simply be one of those fluctuations, but we saw a greater percentage of birds hit by cars, flown into windows, and generally banged up in other ways.

766 of the birds The Raptor Trust admitted were non-native or domesticated species. While our mission directs us to care for native birds, we do try to help find homes for exotic birds such as parakeets and domestic ducks. State law prevents us from releasing these non-native and exotic birds back into the wild.

The Raptor Trust released 2,115 birds back into the wild, and transferred 125 to other wildlife centers for care (most for eventual release).



We received more American Robins than any other bird last year: 635 of them! The other birds that made the **“Top 5”** list for the year were Mourning Doves (526), Blue Jays (265), Mallards (185) and Common Grackles (185).

Some of the more **unusual and interesting birds** admitted in 2020 included a Brown Booby, an Indigo Bunting, a Long-tailed Duck, a White-winged Scoter, a Bay-breasted Warbler and a Louisiana Waterthrush. All of these unique birds were either successfully released or transferred to other wildlife centers for further care and release.

2020 brought 490 raptors of 19 different species through our doors. That’s up 40 birds from 2019. The 2020 raptor numbers were:

Red-tailed Hawk	156	Red-shouldered Hawk	7
Cooper’s Hawk	75	Barred Owl	5
American Kestrel	69	Bald Eagle	4
Eastern Screech Owl	47	Merlin	3
Turkey Vulture	29	Northern Saw-whet Owl	3
Black Vulture	24	Short-eared Owl	2
Great Horned Owl	22	Sharp-shinned Hawk	1
Peregrine Falcon	20	Barn Owl	1
Broad-winged Hawk	12	Long-eared Owl	1
Osprey	9		



Common Reasons for Admit	#
Fell from nest/orphan	1864
Impact, other	1104
Hit by car/side of road	752
Animal Caught	224
Transferred to TRT	108
Failing/Diseased	81
Caught in netting/fishing line	58
Covered in foreign substance	36
Shot	4

STRANGE TALES FROM THE INFIRMARY

by Kristi Ward



What do a firecracker, a pool cover and a squirrel have in common? They were all bird admit reasons in 2020!

We know the most common reasons birds arrive at TRT...flew into a window, hit by a car, attacked by another animal, or just found on the ground. However, each year there are a few

birds that arrive in our admit office for **out-of-the-ordinary reasons**.

This past spring, we had our own version of the Northern Saw-whet Owl found in the Rockefeller Center tree; a finder purchased a tree at a garden center and arrived home to find that it included three nestling **Common Grackles!** It wasn't possible to get them back to the garden center, so we took the little babies in and raised them for release.

Finders often bring birds to us that have been stuck in things like glue traps, but when it's a **Hermit Thrush** stuck in a rock wall, a **Great Blue Heron** found in a small container on a boat, or a young **Mourning Dove** stuck under a pool cover, it's a bit odd. You wouldn't think a **Red-tailed Hawk** could get its leg stuck in a tree, but we rescued two of them from that very predicament last year.

Along with these bizarre rescues, there were also unfortunate cases of horrible cruelty. While we have seen cases of cruelty over the years, these two had happy endings - even though their injuries were deliberate. In late June, we received a Mourning Dove with a **firecracker attached to it**. The dove sustained only feather damage and was released on August 22. We also received a pigeon pierced throughout his body with dozens of safety-pins. This was a horrible sight to see, but we were able to treat the bird, which was released.

I've worked for The Raptor Trust for over 20 years and remember being told a story of a Red-tailed Hawk who had a dead squirrel stuck in his mouth. On November 17, I had my own personal experience of a **Red-tail with a squirrel stuck in his mouth!** I was able to remove the legs of the squirrel, which had been stuck under the bird's tongue, and dislodge the squirrel's body. After the wound healed in his mouth, the Red-tail was released on December 10, 2020. **A great end to a year of very strange occurrences.**



These cases are unique, but they all have something in common: **caring finders**. Thank you to all who help make it possible for us to do our work by rescuing these birds. In many cases, that is very hard to do!

TANGLED UP...AND BLUE

by Alyssa Rella

Last year we received 58 birds of 16 different species, all tangled in fishing line, netting and other types of debris. While these birds suffered a variety of injuries, the constriction of their legs and wings often results in compromised circulation. The most common entanglement injury we see is birds getting in fishing line. This is common among waterfowl species, which dabble and graze for food along lake and stream edges where fishing line is routinely discarded, but in 2020 we also received an Eastern Screech-Owl, a Wild Turkey, several Cooper's Hawks and many songbirds tangled in fishing line.



Each year, we admit more and more birds entangled in soccer nets, litter, garden fencing, string, balloon ribbon and various types of plastic. In addition to songbirds, we admitted two Osprey and an Eastern Screech Owl entangled in these types of hazards. Entanglement causes severe stress to the birds; they often injure themselves further while struggling to get out.

Of the birds we received last year due to entanglement, only 17 were able to be released (about 44%). Already in 2021 we have received 6 birds tangled in netting or fishing line, including an endangered Red-shouldered Hawk, a Great Horned Owl and an Eastern Screech Owl. We ask all of you to **please help our wildlife** by always disposing of and recycling plastics properly and picking up litter when you see it.

ENDANGERED SPECIES

The US Fish and Wildlife Service defines the status of endangered and threatened species this way:

- **Endangered species are at the brink of extinction now**
- **Threatened species are likely to be at the brink in the near future**

In 2020, The Raptor Trust took in 121 individual birds of 10 different species currently on the endangered and threatened species list in New Jersey. That represents an increase of approximately 17% over 2019's number. The 10 threatened and endangered species admitted in 2020 were:

Bald Eagle

Peregrine Falcon

Red-shouldered Hawk

American Kestrel

Osprey

Barred Owl

Long-eared Owl

Short-eared Owl

Black-crowned Night Heron

Yellow-crowned Night Heron

New Jersey also maintains a list of Species of Special Concern; species whose populations and habitats warrant special attention in order to keep them from becoming further threatened or endangered. 24 species of Special Concern were treated here in 2020—more than ever before:

Broad-winged Hawk

Cooper's Hawk

Sharp-shinned Hawk

Barn Owl

Yellow-breasted Chat

Black-billed Cuckoo

Snowy Egret

Least Flycatcher

Great Blue Heron

Common Nighthawk

Spotted Sandpiper

Cliff Swallow

Common Tern

Brown Thrasher

Wood Thrush

Veery

Blue-headed Vireo

Black-throated Blue Warbler

Black-throated Green Warbler

Blackburnian Warbler

Nashville Warbler

Northern Parula

Whip-poor-will

Winter Wren



SPECIES SPOTLIGHT: YELLOW-CROWNED NIGHT HERONS

by Heather Natola

Yellow-crowned Night Herons (YCNH) look like a Disney-fied version of the more common Great Blue Heron. With big eyes, gorgeous color blocking, and a statuesque pose, the adults are beautiful and elegant. Their offspring, on the other hand, are **wiry, gangly creatures with a screech like a dinosaur** and none of their parents' graceful good looks.

YCNH's are considered a species of least concern across the US, but a threatened species here in New Jersey. These birds rely on coastal wetlands for breeding, and with increasing development along the Jersey Shore, their populations have declined in our state. They are a relatively rare patient for us, but in 2020, **The Raptor Trust admitted 3 orphaned YCNH's**, one from our partners in NYC and two from New Jersey. Before that, we hadn't received one since 2017.

YCNH's are known for being defensive of their nest from a very young age, lunging at potential predators with their sharp beaks. In care, they display similar territoriality, defending their rehab enclosures with the same ferocity. These brave, awkward-looking babies were certainly a highlight of the 2020 season.

MEDICAL CAPABILITIES

by Libby Haines

Thanks to the generosity of our supporters, **The Raptor Trust is fortunate to have state-of-the-art medical equipment**, which enables our staff to better diagnose patients and to provide them with the best possible care.



Digital X-ray is an indispensable tool that we use on a daily basis. It not only allows us to see if a fracture exists, but also to determine the extent of the injury, whether it might heal on its own with immobilization, or if surgical intervention is required.

Ultrasound is used to evaluate soft tissue, such as the heart and abdominal organs. It is a non-invasive method of observing the structure and movement of internal organs, as well as blood flow.

Doppler is used while a bird is under anesthesia to monitor heart rate and pulse.

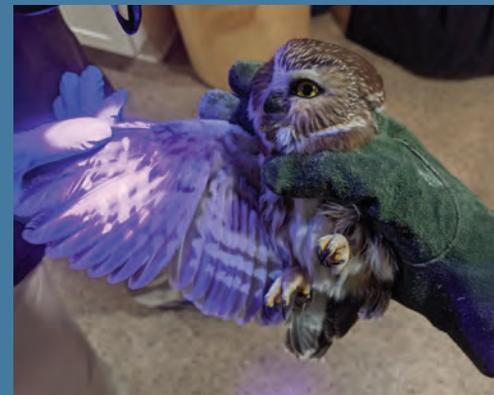
Respiratory conditions such as aspergillosis (a common fungal infection in birds) can be diagnosed with an **endoscope**. It can be used to remove lesions, as well as foreign objects such as metal/lead.

Certain species of birds (i.e. eagles, vultures, swans) are prone to lead poisoning due to their feeding habits. Our **blood lead analyzer** only requires a small sample of blood, providing results within minutes.

Patients suffering severe head trauma may benefit from an oxygen-enriched enclosure. Our **oxygen chamber** provides such an environment, and can also be used to nebulize medications to treat respiratory infections.

Cold laser therapy uses a low-intensity laser to stimulate healing. The light from the laser triggers chemical reactions in cells that allow for tissue repair and relief from pain and inflammation.

UV light causes pigments in the feathers of some birds to fluoresce. We have used it recently on Saw-whet Owls to determine age, as newer feathers are more fluorescent (pink glow under UV light).



CASE STUDY: BARRED OWL (20-4686)

Admit Date: Nov. 22, 2020

Reason for Admit: Hit by vehicle

Release Date: February 25, 2021

Days in Rehab: 96

Approximate cost of stay: \$2,064

On November 22, a beautiful Barred Owl—a **threatened species in NJ**—was admitted to The Raptor Trust. The bird had been found on the side of the road with an injured wing. Once safely at The Raptor Trust, X-rays showed a fractured left wrist and a ruptured air sac, likely from being **hit by a vehicle**. Medical staff started the bird on

anti-inflammatory medication, and because the fracture was well-aligned, carefully wrapped the wing against her body to heal.

The bird was moved into the Critical Care Raptor Room, administered fluids for dehydration, and offered species-appropriate food, which she ate heartily! Over the next several weeks, the bird steadily gained weight, but the fracture took some time to heal. To prevent the muscle supporting the bone from atrophying, medical staff regularly stretched and wrapped the wing (while the owl was under anesthesia) each week.

By January, the fracture felt solid and the owl was again examined by Dr. Jennifer Norton, who determined that she was **ready to move to a flight cage** to practice her flying and hunting skills. This Barred Owl made excellent progress in rehab and was successfully released on Feb 25, 2021.

TEST YOUR WILD BIRD KNOWLEDGE—ANSWERS

1. Yes! Ducklings and goslings cannot survive without their parents and should never be alone. Carefully check the surrounding area and if there is no adult around, scoop up the baby and get it to a rehabber.
2. Maybe. Can you see a nest nearby? If you can locate the bird's nest, put the baby back. If not, keep the baby warm and get it to a rehabber.
3. No! A fledgling looks like a miniature version of its parent and is learning to fly. Give it space and let the parents continue to care for it. (This is the bird equivalent of crawling before walking.)
4. Yes! Owls are nocturnal and should not be on the ground during the day where they could be vulnerable to predators.
5. Maybe. Does the hawk have a prey item at its feet? If yes, then give it space to eat its meal. If not, see if you can approach it. If it does not fly away, it needs to be rescued.

CASE STUDY: RED-TAILED HAWK (20-79)

Admit Date: January 31, 2020

Reason for Admit: Shot

Release Date: April 2, 2020

Days in Rehab: 62

Approximate Cost of Stay: \$1,340

Summary: On January 31, a Red-tailed Hawk was found on the ground in Paramus in a residential neighborhood. With help from the Franklin Lakes Animal Hospital and Bergen County Zoo, the Red-tail was admitted to The Raptor Trust, where X-rays showed two fractures in the right ulna. It also showed a shotgun pellet. **The bird had been shot.** Though these birds have state and federal protections, we see shot birds of many species all too often.

Further, a large hematoma, or collection of blood outside of a blood vessel, had formed on the bird's wing. The pellet was removed, the wing was wrapped, and the hawk was started on antibiotics. While the injury was troubling, the bird seemed alert and ate well - a good sign! After two weeks, the wing was solid and the wrap was removed. **Time for flight practice.**

The Raptor Trust uses a system for getting injured birds ready to go back to the wild - very much like physical therapy for humans after an injury - and it works. This hawk was moved from the Critical Care Raptor Room to a small outside cage, where it could hop around and get used to the outdoors again without damaging its newly healed wing. Then, it was moved to a larger flight cage, where the bird could test out its flight alongside other recovering Red-tailed Hawk patients. On April 2, this hawk, with three of its comrades, **was released after a full recovery!**



WARBLER SEASON

by Shari Stern

In late August each year, migrant songbirds begin their journey from the boreal forests of North America to warmer climates in Central and Northern South America. Each fall, The Raptor Trust admits hundreds of migratory birds badly injured on their journey. Friday, October 2 was one of our biggest days on record for neotropical bird admissions. We received **52 warblers of a dozen different species who were in need of care!** Most of these birds were rescued by citizen-scientist volunteers from New Jersey Audubon, who often survey the grounds around large, glass-fronted buildings in Newark, NJ. Others are brought to us by local citizens or animal control.

Some birds are more fortunate, and their window collisions may leave them only temporarily stunned. Having been given a warm, dark, quiet place for a few hours, these birds quickly regain their senses and are able to be released after a quick flight test! Other birds may require more intensive treatments and are brought into our passerine care area, where they will be given food, water, shelter, and any medical attention they require.

Sadly, each year **thousands of these migratory birds perish** on impact from collision injuries or get picked up by predators while concussed and immobile. We urge you to help, not only when these victims are brought in for care, but also in stopping these collisions by keeping nighttime lights off or dimmed in your homes and offices during migration season.



EDUCATION UPDATE

by Shari Stern

When challenged by social distancing, school closings and crowd limits, our education team stepped up to **keep our mission moving forward** in new and creative ways. We posted workbooks on our webpage for families stuck at home; featured educational posts, games and quizzes on social media; made the switch from live to virtual programming; organized visits for guests in the fall; and developed new skills through virtual professional development opportunities.

Our team also took advantage of the quieter months to engage our resident and ambassador birds with new enrichments and positive reinforcement training. **Ollie the Kestrel and Hampton the falcon were both "quick studies"** and it was a joy to watch their confidence blossom as we all learned how to better communicate. Ollie has become so comfortable with our new virtual format that he can often be caught proudly preening his feathers while lounging in the office between on-screen appearances. And his audiences adore him! The vultures have enjoyed practicing natural scavenging behaviors while playing with stick bundles, paper towel rolls, leaf piles, dog toys, and straw dolls.

We can't wait to be able to welcome back the public and to show off new interpretive signage, raptor encounter experiences, and outdoor group programming. We are committed to continuing to offer visitation opportunities free of charge. In the meantime, understanding the diverse needs of a changing economy, we have priced our virtual programs in a way that helps ensure broad accessibility. By fall of 2021 we hope to complete our scholarship program to help fund future live and virtual programs in underserved NJ schools.



LEONARD & DIANE SOUCY MEMORIAL LECTURE SERIES

In honor of Len and Diane, who believed strongly in environmental education for all, The Leonard and Diane Soucy Memorial Fund supports The Raptor Trust programs, scholarships for underserved communities, and of course, our annual November lecture series.



This year's keynote speaker was **New York Times bestselling author, Jennifer Ackerman**, whose book, *The Bird Way: A New Look at How Birds Talk, Work, Play, Parent, and Think*, was published in the spring of 2020. Ackerman has written about science, nature, and biology for more than three decades. Her previous book, *The Genius of Birds*, a testament to avian intelligence, has been published in 20 languages.

Through a series of beautiful photographs and videos, those guests who attended this online presentation enjoyed finding out the many intricacies of the secret - and often bizarre! - wonders of the avian world, including **fascinating tales of mimicry, plumage, deception and cooperation**. Turns out, "Bird Brain" might just be a compliment!

Thanks to Jennifer and all who joined us for this intriguing presentation.

SPOTTED LANTERNFLIES AND BIRDS - A STICKY SITUATION

by Alyssa Rella

This fall The Raptor Trust admitted several birds that were found stuck to spotted lanternfly tape. The spotted lanternfly is a newly-arrived, invasive insect wreaking havoc on trees in the United States. In an effort to curb the spread of lanternflies, NJ residents were urged to use tape on trees, which would trap the bugs and prevent them from spreading and reproducing. Unfortunately, these sticky traps catch anything that crawls up a tree - including many species of birds!

In one week, we received 4 birds stuck to lanternfly tape—in addition to the dozens of birds we receive annually that are stuck on sticky traps that target rodents. Sadly, **many birds do not survive this traumatic experience.** Often the stress of being stuck on the trap is deadly. Worse still, many are severely injured by people who pull them off without

realizing the damage they may cause, such as broken bones or irreparable feather damage.

The best thing to do if you encounter a bird stuck in a glue trap or lanternfly tape is to cover the exposed sticky parts of the trap with newspaper or paper towels, put the bird - still on the trap - inside a box, and keep it warm, dark and quiet. Bring it to a licensed rehabilitator as soon as you can. **The staff at rehabilitation centers are specially trained to remove the birds from the traps** while causing minimal damage and stress to the bird.

If you have spotted lanternflies in your area (and most people do now), there are many ways you can improve upon the sticky trap, including cutting the tape into smaller strips and covering it with a chicken wire cage. Small adjustments like this can save many bird lives.

2020 STATS:

26 birds admitted stuck to lanternfly tape or glue traps

16 different species including a Screech Owl

38% of these birds died due to being stuck



IN MEMORY OF ELLEN GOLDBERG

Our good friend and long-time Raptor Trust educator, Ellen Goldberg, passed away in January of 2021. She was one of the very first full-time educators at TRT and she taught countless programs in her 10+ years here. Ellen was as passionate an educator as one could be, and made her mark on The Raptor Trust's Education Department and all who attended the programs she presented for us.

Ellen seemed destined for a life in service of animals from a young age. Her father took her bird-watching at the Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge near their home in Brooklyn as a child, and these trips ignited a passion that spanned a lifetime.

In addition to working here at TRT, Ellen also worked at St. Hubert's Animal Welfare Center in Madison, NJ. After relocating to Florida in 2015, Ellen worked at the Busch Wildlife Center, and also volunteered at the Savannas Preserve State Park and Hobe Sound National Wildlife Refuge.

She fostered dogs and cats; she raised swallowtail butterflies and doves; she ran a successful dog-sitting and training business. She was truly most at home with animals and helped thousands of them, of all species, in her lifetime. Bless you, Elly; you will be missed by many.

THE RAPTOR TRUST IN THE WORLD



Our staff strives to remain on the cutting edge of animal welfare and education initiatives. From our humble backyard beginnings, The Raptor Trust has grown into a nationally recognized avian rehab facility.

Sharing what we have learned and collaborating with other professionals **gives all wildlife patients their best chance at humane care and a successful return to the wild.**

During the past year we've been busy, both here in the infirmary and in the world at large!

- Executive Director, Chris Soucy, was the keynote speaker for the January meeting of the New Jersey Chapter of the American Association for Laboratory Animal Science.
- Director of Education, Shari Stern, joined the Education Committee at International Association of Avian Trainers and Educators (IAATE) and has contributed articles to their quarterly journal, *The Flyer*.
- TRT educators attended virtual sessions of conferences for the Association of New Jersey Environmental Educators (ANJEE) and also IAATE.
- Educators, rehab staff and administrative staff attended virtual training provided by Natural Encounters, Inc – Training and Education Center (NEI TEC) to better serve our avian ambassadors.
- Continued organizational membership and attendance at conferences presented by both NJ Association of Wildlife Rehabilitators and National Wildlife Rehabilitators Association.

SWEEPING HISTORICAL RESEARCH PROJECT AT THE RAPTOR TRUST

Like all scientific communities, rehab depends on trials and outcomes. Over the years, our **winged patients have provided us with invaluable information to help others** like them down the road. Starting with Len Soucy, our staff has maintained data about various bird species, population dynamics and medical treatment outcomes since before The Raptor Trust was a public nonprofit organization.

While our patients benefit directly from our institutional memory and experience, sharing it would benefit many others. In December, The Raptor Trust received a generous gift from an anonymous donor to fund a major initiative that will enable us to compile and systemize the files into one coordinated database, which the scientific community at large can then draw upon for analysis of how the rehab community can better serve wildlife.



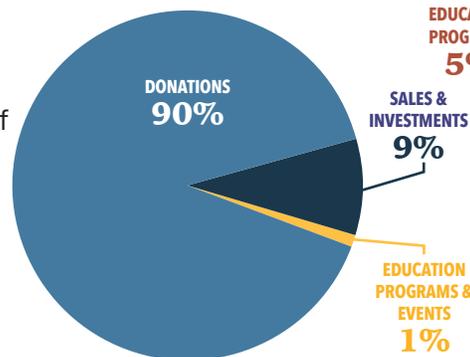
Photo by Peter Pasterczyk

This new program will enable us to engage two graduate student fellows to categorize our immense body of historical data - a task which has never been undertaken before. These scholars will also have opportunities to present their findings through our own publications and at conferences within the fields of veterinary medicine, biology, and ornithology. We are grateful to have a donor to kickstart this important, far-reaching project and look forward to inviting you all to these public presentations - **giving you a glimpse at 50+ years of dedicated research and care for our avian friends.**

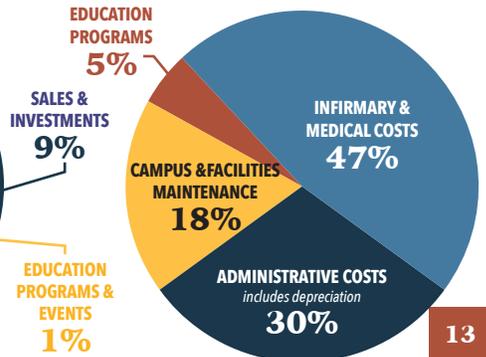
FINANCE REPORT

As it was for most organizations, 2020 was also a turbulent year for The Raptor Trust. We continue to rely solely on the donations of individuals, foundations, and corporations. This past year more than ever our avian friends needed your support. The generosity you showed continues to amaze us. **We are forever grateful for your continued support!** Following is an overview of our income and expenses for the past year.

2020 INCOME



2020 EXPENSES



REMEMBERING UGGLA

This year, one of our very dearest ambassador birds, Uggle, the Great Horned Owl, passed on.

Uggle was an almost unimaginable 40 years old. I believe he may have been the second-oldest Great Horned Owl that ever lived, and he lived almost every day of those 40 years right here at The Raptor Trust.

In the early spring of 1980, the backyard wildlife rehab facility that my parents ran on our property had not yet become The Raptor Trust. It was still The New Jersey Raptor Association at that point: not yet incorporated and without the 501(c)3 nonprofit status that would follow. A “fledgling” organization, one might say. Even though The Raptor Trust wasn’t “hatched” until a few years later, Len and Diane had been caring for wild birds—often in the laundry room or bathroom of our house—since the mid-1960’s.

It was in that setting that someone dropped off a **young floof of an owl**. Just a few weeks old, the owl had been found by some well-intentioned folks who attempted to raise it on their own. There are few things cuter than a baby owl, but raising a wild raptor is not easy to do. It is also against state and federal law. The owl wasn’t being fed a proper diet, did not have proper housing, and it wasn’t thriving.

Worse, even though it had been with the people who had found it for only a few weeks, it was already completely imprinted and dependent on humans, having been hand-fed and socialized to people. **This youngster, still fluffy, had already lost his chance to live in the wild.** Since he was so young, and already so accustomed to people, Len and Diane made the decision to keep him as an education and ambassador bird.

My 95-year-old great-grandmother visited at that time, and gave him his name. The first time she saw the bird, she exclaimed, “Uggle!” The Swedish word for “owl,” she explained, is “uggle.” The name stuck.

For 40 years Uggle delighted visitors here. He was talkative. Children would inevitably “hoot” at him—he was an owl after all—and he would often return the favor.

He was inquisitive. Having been imprinted, he had no fear of humans and would often sit out during the day, right up at the front of his enclosure, **engaging passers-by with his big, yellow eyes and that kind of funny way he always tilted his head to one side.** He really seemed to enjoy it.

He was photogenic. He has graced many of our gift shop cards, mugs and other items, including a holiday card we sent out in December.

Not long ago, some of my young second cousins came to visit—little guys two generations further down the family tree than me. While passing by Uggle’s enclosure, it occurred to me that SIX generations of my family knew this one amazing bird. That’s hard to wrap my head around, but there it is: SIX generations.

Later in his life, Uggle’s voice changed and he began to make this kind of scratchy, crackly-sounding call. Never one to pass up an opportunity for an inappropriate joke, **Len used to say that he had “lost his hooter.”** Uggle remained as talkative as ever; he just sounded like a grumpy, little old man mumbling under his breath. In owl-culture, perhaps that’s exactly what he was.

There would be no way to even begin to count the number of people this one wonderful bird met, delighted, hooted at, taught. Hundreds of thousands, probably. Half a million maybe. And while it would have been better in every way for him to have lived a natural life in the wild, he did live an amazing and meaningful life as an ambassador for his species and for all wildlife. Godspeed, old man.

Chris Soucy



TRUSTEES AT WORK

I have been a friend of The Raptor Trust since 1991. Visiting often over the years, getting to know Len and Diane, and seeing firsthand the fantastic work that is done at The Raptor Trust is what made me start volunteering in 2009. These past 11 years have been some of the most rewarding experiences of my life! I am thankful to have this very special opportunity to help these birds in need who come through our door.



Barbara Franko

I discovered The Raptor Trust when I moved to NJ, a small place making a big difference to the wild bird population around me. The joy is watching babies grow strong and injured birds recover enough to be released. The wonder is being up close to a wild animal and appreciating it for its individuality. Being a part of an organization dedicated to making the world a better place is the most rewarding thing I have ever done.



Caroline Ford

After I lost my job due to Covid in April 2020 I decided to use some of my free time to volunteer cleaning the raptor cages. It's been a neat experience for me as you are in the cages with the birds while you clean up half-eaten mice and bird poop! I am also a volunteer raptor runner, which allows me to help by capturing and bringing injured birds from northern NJ down to the Trust for treatment when they have no other way to get there.



Rick Weiman

2020 VOLUNTEERS

by Heather Natola

When we started 2020, I was looking forward to my first baby bird season with a full crew of volunteers. New recruits were anticipating our April training session, and it was gearing up to be a great summer. Unfortunately, it was not meant to be. Out of an abundance of caution we **furloughed all volunteers**, starting in March. By June, we got so busy we had to call in some reinforcements, but of our many talented infirmity volunteers, we were only able to bring back one per day instead of our usual 6-9 per day.

Although we had very few volunteers this year, **people helped us in myriad other, equally important ways**. Our volunteers dropped off increasingly difficult to find supplies like tissues and paper towels. Other volunteers processed fruit for us and sorted newspapers from home, or chauffeured birds around the state for us. Some volunteers were able work safely outdoors, assisting our maintenance team. New positions were created when we briefly opened for public tours in the fall, and these amazing people helped us find the best ways to keep everyone safe while visiting our displays and brand-new gift shop.

We may have had fewer volunteers, but they were no less appreciated. Thanks much to all of you! **We couldn't have done it without you.**

Our heartfelt condolences go out to the family of volunteer, Chris Springle, who passed away in 2020.

Joe Affinito	Barbara Feno	Kaitlin Muccio
Mobin Ahmad	Alice Fernandes	Erin O'Connor
Rowan Baxter-Green	Caroline Fernandes	Tiffany Pilitowski
Nita Blatt	Avery Fessler	Nina Pilitowski
Margaret Blewett	Caroline Ford	Georgiana Ploss
Denise & Troy Brandon	Barbara Franko	Jamie Reiman
Jennifer Books	Christopher Gilman	Samantha Russo
Judy Books	Trish Gradley	Gabriella Santucci
Susan Browne	Bob Gray	Nancy Sapanara
Jack Callahan	Stephen Gruber	Gabriele Schmitt
Mitchell Callahan	Samantha Hartford	Joseph Serpe
Pierce Chan	Fred Harvey	Genie Sisti
Lin Chu	Barbara Henderson	Rachael Sitzer
Janet Cicariello-Cook	Shelly Herman	Chris Springle
Sailor Cook	Joan Hoeckele	Jennifer Stollery
Dennis Daly	Nancy Huffman	Doris Stoner
Wren Davis	Mary Humphries	Helan Thomas
Heather Dobosz	Daniel Keller	Amy Thornton
Sarah Dodson	Megan Klutz	Marguerite Van Wowk
Nicole Donohue	Melanie Krebner	Stacey Volanto
Richard D'Orazio	Susan Lazzari	Walker Tai
Carolyn Doyle	Michelle Luar	Rick Weiman
Jimmy Duhamel	Karen MacNaul	Monica "Moni" Wolf
Grace Eid	Benjamin Miller	Jenna Zimmerman
Hank Fandel	Shane Morgan	



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2021 RAPTOR TRUST EVENT CALENDAR



APRIL THROUGH OCTOBER

Sign up for a **guided tour** of our aviaries on select days. Check our website and Facebook page weekly for updates and special events.

OCTOBER Walk for Hawks.

Is there a better time to get outside than migration season? This fall competition encourages all ages to walk, run, or bike to benefit migratory birds in care at TRT. Register, log your miles, submit, and don't forget to take pictures of your journey!

OCTOBER Focus on Raptors Spring

Photo Event. An opportunity for committed shutterbugs to take close-up portraits of our educational raptors perched in an outdoor setting. Possible species include Barred Owl, Screech Owl, Red-tailed Hawk, American Kestrel, and Peregrine Falcon.

OCTOBER Vultures of the World.

Learn more about vultures - those very misunderstood birds! We will examine the wide variety of vultures found across the world and what makes them unique and such an important part of our ecosystem.

NOVEMBER Leonard and Diane Soucy Memorial Lecture Series.

This highly anticipated event sells out each year. Past speakers have included Scott Weidensaul, Christian Hagenlocher, Dr. Jonathan Slaght, and Jennifer Ackerman, on topics ranging from national birding contests to enormous Siberian owls to bird intelligence.

NOVEMBER Owls in the House.

Learn about New Jersey's nighttime birds and meet a live owl. Buy a kit or a complete owl house for your own backyard in our most popular program ever.

DECEMBER Frosty Feathers.

Families with kids ages 3-8 are invited to huddle into our heated classroom for a warm cup of cider and a fun filled program on the fashionable fluff that birds use to keep out the cold.

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