



# The Raptor Chapter

Volume # 23

2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter Edition

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## FIVE BARN OWL CHICKS VISIT WV FROM KY

**O**n Friday morning, June 6, 2014 a driver for US Equipment Distributors in Huntington WV pulled his rig into the shop to unload a piece of equipment from a decommissioned coal processing plant in KY. A loud hissing sound erupted from the load, making him think at first that he'd somehow gotten a nest of snakes inside something. He investigated with fellow workers, and they discovered a nest of 5 very young barn owls. To rescue the owlets, they had to dismantle the top of the coal cleaning equipment. The birds were quickly taken to Stonecrest Animal Medical Center in Huntington and then transport volunteers from Huntington and Charleston moved them within hours to TRAC.

The barn owl chicks were very young, but they were able to eat on their own. Their food (mice and rat pups) was dropped through a positioned pipe so that they would not associate food with humans. Their cage was also set up so their contact with humans was extremely limited - one quick check daily and cage cleaning as needed only. A log at the front corner of the cage was positioned to encourage

exploring and perching, and by the end of the week they were old enough to begin to perch on it and were really exploring their cage.

Meanwhile, TRAC contacted fellow wildlife rehabilitator Eileen Wicker, Executive Director of Raptor Rehabilitation of KY to alert her to the situation. Barn Owls are a species of concern both here in WV and in KY (and other States too) as their numbers decline across the US. To have a nest of 5 healthy chicks from an undiscovered nest site was a matter of great interest, and we agreed that all efforts should be made to get them back to their native habitat as quickly as possible. Eileen contacted the KY



Dept. Of Fish & Game Resources who were delighted to work with us to transport the barn owls back to KY. Raptor Rehabilitation of KY was tapped to raise them up and release them when they were ready. The birds were returned to KY on June 18, healthy and hissing up a storm! They were released on July 30<sup>th</sup>, strong and able to take their place back home.

This is a story not just of baby barn owls, but also of the cooperation that frequently goes unnoticed between State Wildlife agencies, wildlife rehabilitators, & those who find birds in need. It happens more often than many think, and in this case sent a critical group of youngsters home. They fly free today thanks to a coordinated effort. THANKS to all.

## Some Mid-Season Numbers

**T**oday I have been working on some numbers that might be of interest. First off, over the last 20 years at our permanent location (established in 1993) our intake of patients had a high of 158 in 2003 and it's lightest back in 1996 with only 87 birds turned in. This year it is only mid-August and we are at 177 birds representing 47 species. And there's a small pile of records on my desk yet to be entered into the database, which will push us even higher. At this rate, it will be a 250+ bird year when the average over the last 20 has been around 115. This big jump can be attributed to the huge increase in song birds, especially nestlings and fledglings turned in for care.

This year's intakes include 2 new species for us, a brown thrasher chick and a pair of kingbird chicks. Much of the task of rearing most of the songbirds fell to Monica Patton, a licensed Registered Veterinary Technician and TRAC sub-permittee. She and her husband Dr. Jeff Patton, DVM are with Animal Care Associates in Charleston, WV and are on the TRAC Advisory Board. At TRAC, we erected a temporary hacking station just for songbird chicks which allowed us to raise several at once. From there we released an American kestrel, a robin, 2 kingbirds, a blue jay, a brown thrasher as well as a few adult songbirds, some of which acted as surrogates for the chicks while they were recovering from minor injuries. Raising the kingbirds, the blue jay and the thrasher all proved to be about as much fun as bird rehabilitation could possibly get. All were successful releases.

For songbirds, the main reasons for intake were the categories of "Fell From Nest", "Nest Destroyed", and "Human Interference". The first 2 categories can have several explanations but unless the event was witnessed, we are in the dark as to what really happened or why. But the 3<sup>rd</sup> category, "Human Interference", is of particular interest because what this means is that someone has

"saved" a bird that probably didn't need help. We have 12 (7%) birds marked as such.

We have had the usual cross section of raptors turned in, led by 10 Red-tailed Hawks, 9 Eastern Screech Owls, and 6 Cooper's Hawks. We also had 5 Red-shouldered Hawks, but the most notable cases were the 5 Barn Owl Chicks, a Golden Eagle, the Bald Eagle "Streaky", and a human imprinted Kestrel we have named "Gimli", who we hope will join our education stable of birds. (The application to the US Fish and Wildlife Service is pending.) Streaky, the lead-poisoned/hit by train Bald Eagle has been discussed in the previous issue, we were sad to lose her. The Golden Eagle was also severely poisoned by lead from scavenging deer carcasses and other prey killed with lead ammunition and died almost immediately upon intake.

The story covering the 5 Barn Owls is on the front page of this newsletter. But let me say here and now that after 24 years of lovable old Twister the Barn Owl, these chicks were unquestionably the most hostile, violent, and unbelievably LOUD hissing screamers we have ever had the pleasure to endure. They were so extreme, they became endearing in a comically bizarre kind of way. You haven't lived until you remove 5 fledgling Barn Owls from their cage, clean up after them, rearrange and clean the cage perches and water, then return them. Wear ear plugs.

Overall, the list of causes of injury to raptors was led as usual by collisions, with cars, windows, and other human structures. They totaled 56 (32%) with a number of others possible, the given history at intake was not clear on some..

So that's the mid season wrap-up. If you get the chance, TRAC's website, [www.tracwv.org](http://www.tracwv.org), has end of year reports all the way back to 1990 and by the end of the year, will have the results of this year's work as well. Our Facebook page (under Three Rivers Avian Center) also has more incidental and detailed info about interesting patients as they come in.

*-Ron Perrone, TRAC Education Director*



Photo by Steve Shaluta

## RIP Twister TRAC's Barn Owl Ambassador 5-1990 to 6-18-2014

This news is sad, but not unexpected for those who have been following TRAC for a little while. Our Barn Owl Ambassador Twister died on Wednesday June 18th around 4 pm. He was 24 years old (average age for a barn owl is 17 -18 years old). Twister was our very first Educational Ambassador, given to us by Donald Robert Rusk, a falconer and environmental educator as well as one of our earliest mentors.



Photo by  
Stephen Wayne Rotsch



Photo by Stephen Wayne Rotsch

Twister and TRAC Education Director Ron Perrone formed a tight bond that lasted all of Twister's life. His personality was so big that he was featured on the TRAC logo, where he will remain.

We've assembled some photos from Twister's life, we hope you enjoy them. A further photo album will be posted on the TRAC website, in the newsletter section. [www.tracwv.org](http://www.tracwv.org)



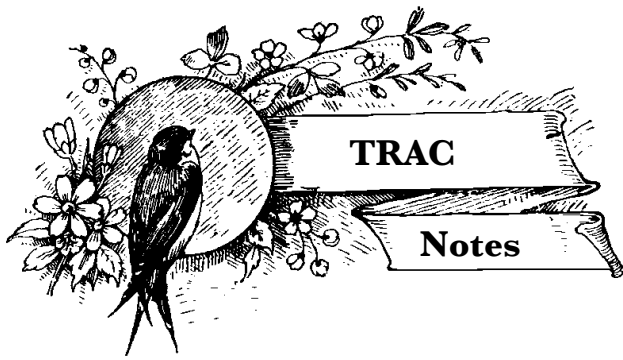
## RIP Chip TRAC's Broad Winged Hawk Ambassador Spring 1998 - July 16, 2014

Sometime during the night between July 15th and July 16th a raccoon attacked the mews housing our educational ambassador birds. After trying many places unsuccessfully, it finally found a rotten spot in a soffit on the roof of the hospital that gave way. The raccoon climbed in, chased our broad wing hawk Chip around the cage then killed and ate her. All that was left was a few flight feathers.

Chip came to us in 1998 as a juvenile. She had been found with a broken wing in the woods near Anstead in Fayette County WV. The finders tried to heal her by binding her wing, but it healed incorrectly leaving her flightless. They turned her in to TRAC when she broke a leg due to malnutrition a few months later. Chip was always a favorite, her bright eyes and interest in everything going on around her engaged everyone who met her. Although she only weighed a pound and was the smallest of our hawk ambassadors, her personality was huge. She had just helped raise a young broad winged hawk. We released the young broad wing on the 16<sup>th</sup> as planned, honoring Chip as we did so. Chip was 16 when she was killed. The average lifespan of a broad wing hawk in captivity is 14. She was still going strong, helping other broad wings fly. Fly high and well now Chip. *More photos will be posted with Twister's on our website.*



Photo by  
Caleb Keneipp



**T**hree Rivers Avian Center has been named as one of the “55 Good Things About West Virginia” for 2014 by The State Journal, West Virginia’s business newspaper. Every year since 1986, The State Journal has devoted time and space to tell the stories of the people, places, businesses and traditions that make West Virginia a special place — the good things.

We are honored to be included as one of the “exceptional gems” that the Journal has picked to profile in 2014.

**T**he Summers County Office of Emergency Management has assigned TRAC a new address. We are still in the same place, but now we have an official physical address.

The new mailing address (for all correspondence, packages, etc) is:

**Three Rivers Avian Center  
2583 Brooks Mountain Road  
Hinton, WV 25951-9121.**

The facility is located on the newly re-named Avian Center Road just off Brooks Mountain Road.

**G**olden Boy, the young male golden eagle from TRAC, is still traveling!! According to the newest map (July 29th), he is back up at the top of Canada, just below the Arctic Circle near Nunavik. It’s the same area he was in last Summer.

Golden Boy, a 2<sup>nd</sup> year male golden eagle (at the time) was released at Grandview Park in the New River Gorge on March 4,

2013. He was found in Monroe County, WV caught in a coyote leg hold trap. He was rehabilitated at TRAC and was the first eagle to enjoy the freedom of the continual flyway in the new flight barn. Prior to his release, he was equipped with a solar powered transmitter which allows location data to be collected via satellite.

As part of an important Golden Eagle migration study, Golden Boy (Golden Eagle # 663) will help identify migration routes used by Golden Eagles along the Appalachian Mountains. Details of this study are available on the Appalachian Eagles website: <http://www.appalachianeagles.org/track-golden-eagles>

According to the mapping data, Golden Boy went up to the northern part of Canada near the town of Nunavik in 2013, stayed there until Autumn, then came back down to WV. He flew right over TRAC and spent the winter in the general area, especially between Pipestem and Bluestone State Parks. When Spring rolled around, he went back up the same route, and has seemingly decided to return to his previous year’s haunts.

We do not know how much longer we will be able to receive data from his satellite transmitter. They do not last forever, but we are all hoping to have at least one more year or two before it wears out. In the meantime, visit our website for the latest maps and tracking data from Golden Boy. Thank you to Dr Trish Miller and the folks at the Golden Eagle Tracking Study for the updates!

**W**e are looking for a few good volunteers to help out with some basic maintenance around the TRAC facility. We need to repaint some of the buildings, including the outside of Regis’ room, the Intern/Guest cabin, and the workshop. We also need to bury a water line up to Regis’ cage so that we can more easily clean his kiddie pool and inside his cage. (That means digging a small trench 2 feet deep from the TRAC hospital up the hill to Regis’ cage). Contact TRAC at 304-466-4683.

## Hoolie's Cage Is Getting A Make-Over This Fall

**H**oolie, our Great Horned Owl Ambassador is currently housed in the last of the old style flight cages on the TRAC grounds. Made out of shade cloth with metal pipe supports, it has certainly seen better days! We have vinyl coated wire mesh around the bottom and sides, but it is not as predator proof as we would like and as she deserves. With the raccoon attack on Chip last month and a mink on the Mountain who is currently focused on chickens in the area, we are very concerned for her safety. At the moment Hoolie is spending her nights indoors.

So, time for a make-over! The completed cage/habitat will measure 10' wide x 20' long x 9' high. It will feature a 1" square vinyl coated wire mesh enclosed outdoors area that is 10' wide x 12' long x 9' high, and a fully enclosed room with a tuftex panel roof for light and solar gain. The room section will be made of unused logs donated from a commercial log home, steel entry doors and 2 windows. The floor of the room will have vinyl flooring over plywood for ease of cleaning, the outdoor section will be layered: #4 gravel as a base, then landscaping fabric, native soil then mulch as a top layer to keep the mud factor down until grass takes over. The entire structure will have a concrete/ solid cinder block footer with drains on the downhill side to move water out of the cage. Gravel on the outside of the uphill part of the footer will pull off rainwater drainage from the hillside above.

Since Hoolie likes being in the woods, we have set aside an area next to her current cage in a thicket of sassafras. There she will have shade in the Summer and solar gain in the Winter. If the weather gets below 0 degrees we will be able to close her into her room and can also run a heater in there for her if needed. Other than in dangerous cold snaps, Hoolie will be free to move between the inside and outside areas.

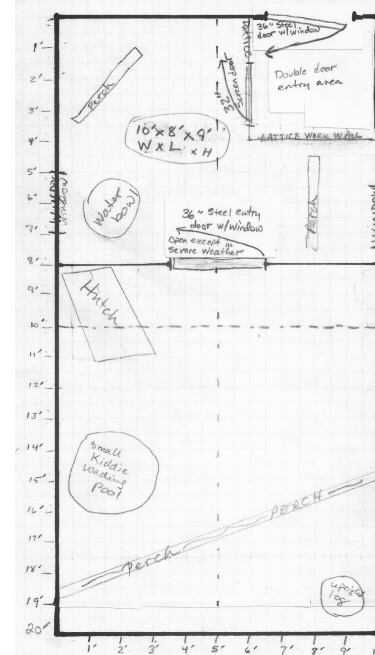
We have been assembling materials for her cage over a period of time and have most

of the really expensive materials on hand. We have all the logs for the walls of the room - they are unused logs from a neighbor's log cabin (they elected not to put on an enclosed porch that came with the kit). We have all the 1" vinyl coated wire mesh we need. We have all the treated 2 x 6s we need for the rafters. We have all the special screws needed for the Tuftex roofing, as well as almost all the fasteners/nails/screws that we need for everything else. We have all the joist hangers, and landscaping fabric that we need. We have the drinking bowls and the bathing bowl, perches and lattice for the double door entry area. We have volunteers ready and waiting to work on the project.

There are still some materials to purchase however before we begin and for that we need to raise \$2,700.00.

These funds will cover costs for the concrete and block footer that we have to put down first, lumber not on hand, earth moving, plywood for the floor, plus doors, windows, roofing materials, long nails for the logs and vinyl flooring.

We are planning on starting this project at the beginning of September, completing it hopefully by the middle of the month. Please consider making a special financial donation towards this project. Hoolie really needs her new, predator safe habitat soon! Help!!





## TRAC Hospice Vets

These veterinarians listed below have kindly agreed to donate their talents and veterinary care to TRAC patients. We couldn't do our work without them. Please let them know that you

value their assistance too!

### TRAC Staff Veterinarian: Dr Bill Streit

All Creatures Veterinary Clinic 304-425-9944  
1916 W. Main Street, Princeton  
with Dr Sue Mohler, Dr Karen Hughes & ACVC staff

Animal Care Associates 304-344-2244  
840 Oakwood Road, Charleston

Dr Jeff Patton & Monica Patton RVT, TRAC Advisory Board

\*\*\*\*\*  
Beckley Veterinary Hospital 304-255-4159  
215 Dry Hill Road, Charleston

Cross Lanes Veterinary Hospital 304-776-4501  
524 Old Geoff Mtn Road, Cross Lanes

Ceredo-Kenova Animal Clinic 304-453-6384  
750 "C" Street, Ceredo

Country Roads Veterinary Clinic 304-586-0700  
3420 Winfield Road, Winfield

Elk Valley Veterinary Hospital 304-965-7675  
113 Frame Road, Elkview

Good Shepherd Veterinary Hospital 304-925-7387  
3703 MacCorkle Ave. SE, Charleston

Greenbrier Veterinary Hospital 304-645-1476  
Rt 219 North, Lewisburg

Hurricane Animal Hospital 304-757-5937  
2120 Mt Vernon Road,, Hurricane

Kanawha Co. Animal Em. Clinic 304-768-2911  
5304 MacCorkle Ave SW, South Charleston

Monroe Veterinary House Calls 304-667-2365  
Union (Dr Sue Mohler)

Oak Hill Animal Hospital 304-465-8267  
Summerlee Road, Oak Hill

Stonecrest Animal Hospital 304-525-1800  
#1 Stonecrest Drive, Huntington

Tri-State Veterinary Clinic 304-525-8387  
6474 Merritts Creek Road, Barboursville

Valley West Veterinary Hospital 304-343-6783  
201 Virginia Street West, Charleston



We get a lot of questions that come up over and over after our educational programs or when we are meeting someone who is turning in a bird for care. Here are the top two and the answers:

*#1. If it can't be released, can I keep it?*

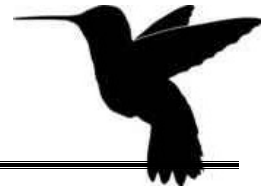
There are many folks who are totally in awe of the bird they found and would like to keep it as a pet/friend in their home or property. It is TOTALLY understandable. Many would probably provide fine housing and long term care. The US Fish and Wildlife Service however has very strict rules about keeping wild birds since these are all legally kept as property of the United States and the Planet. That's why you have to have a written Federal permit to keep a migratory bird (including cardinals, doves, etc...) or to hunt one (such as turkeys, grouse, etc). There are treaties with other countries to be enforced too, so basically, the answer is, sadly, No.

*#2. I have a feather collection, can I keep that one that just dropped on the floor?*

Again, No. And unless your collection is of game or pet bird feathers, destroy or dispose of your collection, there could be Federal and State fines. (See answer #1). Federally, the Lacey Act, the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, the Eagle Protection Act and the Endangered Species Act protect wild bird feathers, nests, eggs and individual wild birds. The exception is game birds. If you can legally hunt it or it is a legal exotic pet, you can have the feathers.

Although we have been able to accept credit card/debit card payments on-line on our website through Paypal for several years, there have been a growing number of requests to enable such payments on-site and over the telephone as well. We have been researching our options and have recently found a company with very reasonable fees. We are in the midst of setting up an account with them and should be able to handle all methods of payments very soon. When the account is activated, we will be able to process Visa, Mastercard, Discover, Paypal, and Visa Debit and Mastercard Debit cards. Payments will be able to be processed in person, over the telephone and on our website. We expect this to take effect by the end of August.

We will announce the enhanced ability on our Facebook page when it becomes active. Thank you all for your interest, comments and support!



**B**ecome a new member or renew your membership and you'll help TRAC continue to care for West Virginia's wild birds. Feathered Friend Sponsors are members who also receive a certificate of sponsorship with a photograph of their chosen raptor from our educational raptor stables. Members at the \$150 or higher level have the option of being listed on the back of the newsletter. All donations and memberships are tax-deductible under IRS code 501(c)3. Memberships and Feathered Friend Sponsorships can also be purchased directly from the TRAC website if you would prefer to pay using a credit card or Paypal account. Thanks for your support!

### Memberships

Eagle	\$1,000+
Falcon	\$500+
Owl	\$250+
Sponsor	\$150+
Patron	\$100+
Benefactor	\$75+
Supporting	\$50+
Family	\$25+
Individual	\$10+
Feathered Friend	See other box

### Feathered Friend Sponsorships

Regis	Bald Eagle	\$60
Perry	Peregrine Falcon	\$30
Robbie	Barred Owl	\$30
Rudy	Eastern Screech Owl -red	\$30
Thomas	Eastern Screech Owl - gray	\$30
Hoolie	Great Horned Owl	\$30
Nick	Red Tailed Hawk	\$30
Harlan	Red Tailed Hawk -dark morph	\$30
Kendra	Red Shouldered Hawk	\$30

***Remember to check your newsletter mailing label for your current membership level and expiration!***

**Your name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**E-mail:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone #:** \_\_\_\_\_

## **Many Thanks to our Sponsors!**

*Your name, a loved one's name or your group or company's name can be listed here for an annual donation of \$150 or more.  
Your donation is fully tax-deductible & will help advance the work of Three Rivers Avian Center.*

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Margaret Ballard  
Pat Barker  
Kathleen Bilton  
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Evelyn Bradley & Fred Gilkey  
Joyce Broyles  
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*(Your name could be here.....)*

### **A Very Special Thank You to:**

**The Acker Foundation      The Beckley Area Foundation**  
**The H. P. & Anne S. Hunnicutt Foundation**  
**The National Eagle Scout Association**



**Three Rivers Avian Center**  
**2583 Brooks Mountain Road**  
**Hinton, WV 25951-9121**