



Rocky Mountain  
**RAPTOR**  
Program  
a second chance at freedom

Winter 2024 Newsletter

# ON THE Wing

## Today, Tomorrow, and Forever Building Toward A Brighter Future

I was reminded of our 38-year history while hiking recently at Horsetooth Reservoir. I'd stopped to watch eagles soaring above the ridges, and a family saw me staring at the sky. I excitedly shared my sightings with them and their youngsters. The parents remembered visiting the Environmental Learning Center (ELC) as kids. I shared that RMRP is working hard to create a new public facility for the next generation. As we parted ways, I realized RMRP's impact really matters.

For two years, the **Wildlife & Nature Campus** partners have pursued a new home at the City-owned Hughes Stadium property. To make a decision about the future of the property, the City is undertaking a **Civic Assembly** process, engaging citizens in the process who will advise how to use the land. While the Hughes property has tremendous collaborative potential, we are compelled to keep exploring other options. Stay tuned for more information.

We recently said goodbye to Rochelle Platter, our Development Director. Her life took a big pivot, leading her to North Carolina. We wish her all the best. In her stead, a familiar face rejoined RMRP. Bob Francella served as our Development Director years ago and has remained involved for nearly 20 years. We are thrilled to have him back at RMRP.

We are also announcing that Heather Schneider will join the staff as RMRP's new **Education and Outreach Director**. As the first Director since I left the position to become Executive Director, we'll address the backlog of program requests and reach more people with the message of conservation and hope.

After 36 years as our Director of Rehabilitation and Research, **Gail Kratz** has announced that she will retire in 2025. During her fantastic career, she's helped thousands of raptors touch the skies again because of her skilled and loving care. Please be sure to extend your well wishes to Gail.

We've had many **fascinating cases** in 2024., like the six Short-eared Owls (SEOW), a record number for one year. We also saw many admissions at once, like the thirteen Turkey Vultures who were pounded by severe hail storms in the spring. Some were released quickly, like the Osprey with a fish hook lodged in its throat. A Red-tailed Hawk had an injury resulting in torticollis (a neural deficit that leaves the bird's head upside down). With some intensive physical therapy, this bird, like many thousands before it, returned to the skies for A Second Chance At Freedom.

**With your continued help and belief**, we'll save more raptors, educate more children and families, and inspire the conservation of wildlife and the environment.

All my best to you and yours this holiday season,

Carin Avila, Executive Director



PS - **Your year-end gift will propel us into 2025.** With Northern Colorado's rapid growth, raptors and people need us more than ever. Please give today!

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# Raptors of Winter

## Merlin: Not Just a Magician!

### Can You Spot One of These Winter Migrants in the Wild?

As the snow falls in Colorado, some raptors, such as the Swainson's Hawk, migrate south to avoid the cold. Other raptors, like the Rough-legged Hawk, come from farther north to winter in Colorado.

Another migratory species is the Merlin (*Falco columbarius*). Once referred to as the Pigeon Hawk, this species is the second smallest falcon in North America compared to the Peregrine, which can be up to twice its size. Columbarius in Latin means "pertaining to a pigeon," which refers to the fact that its flapping flight mimics that of a pigeon.

Merlins are fast fliers and typically hunt other birds, but not in a dive like their larger cousins. They zoom in for a fast, level attack to seize their prey. Their flight mimicry helps conceal their approach, allowing them to get close to a flock before accelerating for the capture.

Merlins spend the breeding season (summer) in Canada and Alaska. During the harsh winters, they relocate to the lower 48, even as far as Central America and northern South America.

Merlins typically borrow nests abandoned by other birds of approximately the same size.

## Meet Educational Ambassador Aurora

Aurora was rescued during the winter of 2016 by the Great Basin Wildlife Rescue in Spanish Fork, Utah. She had a badly broken wing that had become infected. To save her life, the end of her wing had to be amputated. She healed remarkably well from her procedure and became an Educational Ambassador with The Urban Interface in Texas. When they closed their doors in 2019, RMRP was extremely grateful for being chosen as her new home! Since then, Aurora has become a star educator, having completed more than 100 days of educational outreach programs.



### Sponsor Aurora

When you sponsor Aurora through the SOAR Program (Sponsor Our Amazing Raptors), your gift benefits her and helps provide for her care. SOARs make great gifts! You can sponsor Aurora, any one of our other Educational Ambassadors, or a raptor in rehabilitation. Learn more or become a sponsor by scanning the QR Code. Aurora's annual care costs \$1000, not including human care time.



<https://www.rmrp.org/soar-program/>

### Contact Us:

**Physical Address**—Call in advance if you'd like to schedule a visit.  
720 E. Vine Drive, Unit B  
Fort Collins, CO 80524

**Mailing Address**  
2519 S. Shields Street, 1K-115  
Fort Collins, CO 80526

**Phone:** 970-484-7756  
**Rehabilitation Hotline:** 970-222-0322  
**Website:** [www.rmrp.org](http://www.rmrp.org)  
**Email:** [Carin@rmrp.org](mailto:Carin@rmrp.org)

**Other wildlife emergency?**  
Go to: [www.animalhelpnow.org](http://www.animalhelpnow.org)

# Come See The Raptors!

## Experience the RMRP

Winter Wonderland Open House is Coming!

When: December 14, 2024 - Noon to 3pm

Where: 720 E. Vine Drive, Fort Collins, CO 80524

The snow may be falling, but the halls are bright at RMRP! Our Winter Wonderland Open House is a treat for all, featuring our Educational Ambassador raptors, a gift shop bursting with holiday gifts, a behind-the-scenes peek at our raptor rehabilitation hospital, and much more.

### Presents for Persephone

Educational Ambassador Persephone, the Turkey Vulture, has been very “nice” and is asking for presents for her and all the raptors at RMRP from Watson’s Wish List. You can drop them by or pop them in the mail, or, better yet, come to the Open House!

#### Most Needed Items

1. Clorox brand bleach, unscented
2. Laundry detergent, unscented
3. 13- & 39-gallon trash bags, unscented
4. Paper towels and toilet paper
5. Liquid hand soap refills, unscented
6. Dawn dish soap, original blue formula
7. 1st class stamps
8. Copy paper & #10 envelopes
9. Gift cards to Lowes or Home Depot
10. Nitrile gloves in medium and large

View the full wish list, including one-time needed items, when you scan the QR code.



<https://www.rmrp.org/wish-list-drive/>

#### RodentPro Gift Cards

Persephone personally requests gift cards to RodentPro to purchase more snacks. Scan the QR code to purchase a gift card, then send the card to Carrie@rmrp.org.



<https://www.rodentpro.com/giftcard/>

#### Staff:

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**Board of Directors:**  
Carin Avila, Chair  
Susan Baker, Secretary

Jack Dudek, Treasurer  
Judy Scherpelz, President  
Bill Wheeler, Member

# SOAR - Sponsor Our Amazing Raptors

## The Story of Swainson's Hawks

### Longest Raptor Migration in the World!

Each year, the skies above the Americas witness one of nature's greatest spectacles—the migration of Swainson's Hawks (*Buteo swainsoni*). These medium-sized raptors (1.5 to 4 pounds) embark on an incredible journey that spans over 6,000 miles, connecting their breeding grounds in North America to their wintering sites in Argentina.

Swainson's Hawks begin their migration in late summer, typically leaving North America as food sources dwindle. They travel in large flocks, known as kettles, using thermals—rising currents of warm air—to glide with minimal effort over vast distances.

By October or November, they reach the expansive grasslands of Argentina, where they spend the winter months feeding primarily on insects—a dietary shift from the small mammals they hunt in North America.

What does this mean for Swainson's Hawks at RMRP? Young Swainson's Hawks need adults to guide their journey to Argentina. The many youngsters we have in our care each year (many have spent nearly a year with us) wait patiently for the end of summer, when our scouting teams go out to the eastern plains of Colorado to look for forming kettles. Once a kettle is found, we spring into action - quickly transporting the young hawks to the kettle before it disappears. They are released and follow the adults on their migration. In late 2024, we released 19 young Swainson's Hawks to start their journey!

We are dedicated to educating the public about the significance of migratory species like the Swainson's Hawk. Your gift supports raptor conservation and rehabilitation and safeguards the future of these incredible birds.

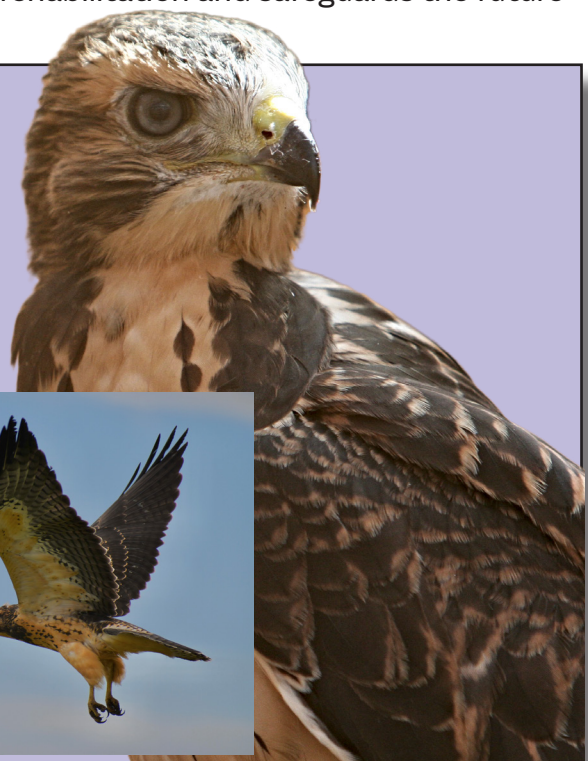
### Sponsor a Swainson's

Until December 25, sponsor a Swainson's Hawk in the SOAR Program at the \$75 level or higher and receive a postcard from a Swainson's that has made its first migration this year! Learn their extraordinary story of A Second Chance At Freedom as they make their way to Argentina.

Sponsor Your  
Swainson's Here



<https://www.rmp.org/soar-rehab/>



# Gala Go Time!!

## Rocky Mountain Raptor Program 32nd Annual Gala

Supporting our mission while having a lot of fun!

The Rocky Mountain Raptor Program invites you to its 32nd Annual Gala on February 15th, 2025. Doors open at 5:00 p.m., and the event will be held at the Lory Student Center Ballroom on the CSU campus. Join us as we celebrate you and your support of the thousands of raptors we have assisted during our 38 years of service to the Northern Colorado region.

We have an absolute blast planned for you:

- Meet live raptors face-to-face.
- A fun and inspirational assortment of silent and live auction items.
- A chef-prepared dinner; wine and beer included.
- Informative educational displays.
- Auctioneer Taryn Atlas will give us a show during the live auction.
- Enjoy the free photo booth by Craig Vollmer Photography.

This Gala supports RMRP's efforts in rehabilitating injured eagles, owls, and hawks, keeping raptors safer in the wild, and providing life-changing conservation education to children and adults. Enjoy the magic of seeing these amazing creatures up close!



<https://onecau.se/rmrpgala>

**Above:** Official event artwork featuring a Northern Pygmy Owl by RMRP Educational Ambassador Coordinator Bonnie Cleaver.

“ This was my first time attending the event and I LOVED it. I hope that I can make this an annual event for myself and my husband. ”  
- Angela M on her 2024 Gala Experience

### The Details:

**When:** February 15, 2025, doors open at 5pm

**Where:** Lory Student Center, CSU, 1101 Center Ave Mall, Fort Collins, CO 80521

**Tickets:** On sale November 29, 2024 to December 25, 2024, for the Early Bird price of \$100. \$125 from December 26, 2024 to February 1, 2025. NOTE: Tickets will not be available at the door.

# Life-Saving Rehabilitation

## She's Spicy!

### Peregrine Falcon Overcomes Serious Injury

“Watch out - she’s spicy!” was the first thing we were told about this Peregrine the day she was rescued. Found on a county road near Eaton, Colorado, she was spotted by a passerby who contacted RMRP. Rehabilitation Coordinator Mike Tincher immediately headed out to her rescue.

The Peregrine had a terrible fracture of her left radius (forearm) near the elbow. Typically, these types of fractures do not heal well. The callus formed by the healing bone can end up impeding the use of the joint. It would be a delicate journey to heal her broken wing and return her to the wild.

Despite it all, the hatch-year Peregrine (hatched this spring) was full of attitude. In fact, the first entry in her record reported just how feisty she was! She was unhappily bandaged for almost two weeks while her broken wing healed, taking out her frustrations on staff and volunteers by biting their fingers!

Although filled with a wild spirit, she stayed surprisingly calm, and her wing healed well with only a small callus at the break. After a couple more weeks of flight reconditioning and building muscle, she was ready to return home.

On release, she burst out of Rehabilitation Associate Carrie’s hands and gave her one last bite to remember her by. Her flight was strong and agile as she circled the skies overhead before disappearing into the distance.

Your support makes these stories possible. Her life could have ended on the side of a dusty road, but your gifts and those of others launched her back to the skies.

**Help Heal More Raptors:**



<https://www.rmrp.org/donate>



**Above:** This young Peregrine had a fractured wing and spent many weeks recovering at RMRP.

### Watch this Peregrine Fly Free!

Scan the code to watch her receive A Second Chance at Freedom.



[https://youtu.be/eCDJ7n\\_6zag](https://youtu.be/eCDJ7n_6zag)

# Gifts that Give Back

## Gift Shop Hours & In-Store Only Discounts

**December 6 - 9-5**

Holiday Harpy - Harpy Eagle stuffies 20% off

**December 7 - 10-3**

Get free RMRP logo sticker with \$10+ purchase

**December 13 - 9-5**

Merry Misfit Christmas - Misfit Menagerie book 20% off, all other books 10% off

**December 14, 12-3**

OPEN HOUSE!

**December 20, 9-5**

Deck Your Halls - Playing card decks 20% off, greeting cards 10% off

**December 21, 10-3**

Get free RMRP logo sticker with \$10+ purchase

By appointment: Contact Lisa Winta at [Lisa@rmrp.org](mailto:Lisa@rmrp.org)

Shop Online Anytime



<https://rocky-mountain-raptor-program.square.site/s/shop>

## Stocking stuffers...

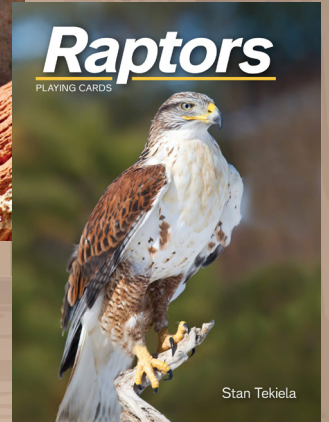


**\$15**

2025 Calendars

Playing Cards

**\$9**



## For bird nerds...

Silver Hawk Jewelry

**\$31+**



Jabebo Earrings

**\$17**

Pins

**\$20**



## For the family...

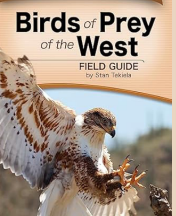
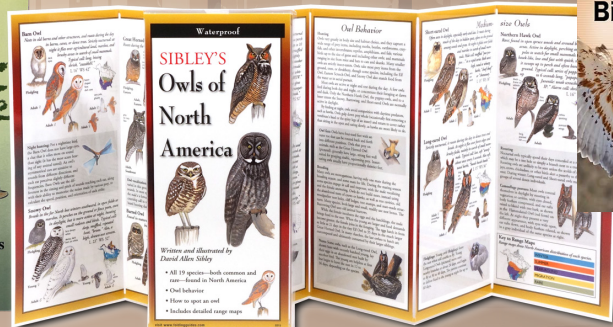
Stuffed Animals

**\$8+**



Books and Field Guides

**\$10+**



# You Have the Power to Make a Difference

## Maximize Your Impact on Colorado Gives Day

Every year in December, the spirit of giving takes center stage in Colorado. It's a day when you and others can come together to support the nonprofit causes they believe in.

### Your Gift Goes Further with the Incentive Fund

Starting on November 1st through Colorado Gives Day on December 10th, every donation made gets a boost from the Incentive Fund. Last year, friends of the program donated \$76,500 and we received a \$1,800 bonus from the Incentive Fund. This year, our goal is \$85,000. Will you help us reach it?



### Why Choose RMRP on Colorado Gives Day?

You know that our program saves and changes lives. Your Colorado Gives Day gift directly supports our vital work, ensuring that injured, ill, and orphaned raptors receive the care they need and that educational programs continue to inspire future conservationists.

**WE HAVE A MATCH!** Dollar for dollar an anonymous donor will be matching your donations up to \$62,000!!! This match will add to the Incentive Fund to make a **HUGE** impact for your donation. Donate now to make this match happen!!

### How you can donate:

Simply make a gift anytime between November 1st and December 10th, and we'll also receive a share of the Incentive Fund.

Make a Gift:



<https://www.coloradogives.org/organization/rmrp>

*Easily  
the best day  
to give*

Learn More About  
Colorado Gives:



<https://www.coloradogives.org/p/about-us>

Since 1987, the Rocky Mountain Raptor Program has inspired the protection and conservation of raptors and the environment. We achieve this by rescuing and rehabilitating hundreds of raptors each year, educating the public about natural history and human/wildlife conflicts, and contributing to research to help protect raptors in the wild. As an independent, 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, RMRP is not government-funded and receives no operating support from national or international humane organizations. RMRP is supported mostly by the generosity of people who believe in our work. Our Federal Tax Identification Number is 90-0131614.