Dear Friends,

April 24, 2014, will go down in the history of The Raptor Center as the day we broke ground on a major construction project: the renovation of our outdoor bird housing. Donors, advisory board members, staff, volunteers, and other supporters (including St. Paul Mayor Chris Coleman and College of Veterinary Medicine Dean Trevor Ames) gathered at TRC to celebrate, take a look at the architect’s renderings, and enjoy a ceremonial groundbreaking. The groundbreaking was followed by a special donor event at Eastcliff, the official residence of the president of the University of Minnesota, hosted by President Eric Kaler and his wife, Karen Kaler, who have been longtime supporters of TRC.

That Wednesday of Earth Week was also the day we kicked off our celebration of TRC’s 40th anniversary, which this commemorative issue of Raptor Release honors. In this issue, we reminisce about TRC’s 40 years at the University of Minnesota and explore where we’re headed. We recall how TRC began in a few rooms in an old building on the St. Paul campus, built by two “founding fathers” who simply loved raptors: Drs. Gary Duke and Pat Redig.

The article “Tales from the Trauma Center” shows us how patient admissions have grown over the years and tells the story of our 40th patient in our 40th anniversary year, a bald eagle suffering from lead poisoning. “Education: Touching the Hearts and Minds of Millions” explores the many facets of our education program, which may well be the essence of TRC’s mission. We remember Leuc, our iconic education eagle who recently died at age 35, recall our impressive group of international veterinary residents, and read some of their accounts of what TRC meant to them. We salute how donors make it happen; delve into the history of TRC’s building and see where we’re going; review TRC’s research and conservation efforts; and honor our volunteers’ labor of love. It’s an expanded issue, but I still feel that we barely touch on all the vital work we do and all the valuable support we receive from donors, volunteers, and the community.

Here’s to the next 40 years! I look forward to your support as we continue soaring toward a healthy world.

Sincerely,

Julia Ponder, D.V.M.
Executive Director

On the cover
First published in the 1980s, The Raptor Release has chronicled The Raptor Center’s projects, accomplishments, birds, and people, evolving along with TRC. We selected some of our most memorable covers for a look back.
Founding fathers

By Sue Kirchoff

It’s almost as if they were destined for it. For as long as they could remember, Drs. Pat Redig and Gary Duke had a passion for raptors.

At the age of 9, Redig was flying a hand-raised American kestrel on a line. In high school, he became a practicing falconer and patched up the wing of a northern hawk owl, using chloroform and a pin. A lifelong birder, Duke was partial to great horned owls, which he admired for their resourcefulness and saw as a “cat with wings.”

Their flight paths crossed at the University of Minnesota College of Veterinary Medicine in 1971, when Duke was a professor of avian physiology and Redig was a first-year veterinary student. Redig was roaming the halls of an old building called Temporary East of Hacker, where the Department of Veterinary Physiology and Pharmacology was housed. In a basement animal holding area, he stumbled upon a room containing a collection of great horned owls.

Owls in an animal holding area? How amazing was that? Feeling as if he had been struck by lightning, Redig hightailed it up to the department office to find out who was responsible for the owls. Minutes later, he was parked in Duke’s office, asking if he could help take care of them.

It turned out that Duke had obtained four of the owls from a good Samaritan when the owls’ tree had been cut down. Others had come to him from local veterinarians who had received the owls and, untrained to care for wildlife, brought them to the College of Veterinary Medicine. Unable to resist taking them in, Duke was using them to study avian digestion. By the time Redig discovered the birds, Duke had a total of seven owls and had euthanized another six or seven he couldn’t save, so Redig’s veterinary expertise was most welcome. Redig was hired.

As word of their effort spread, the animal holding area began to fill with other injured owls, hawks, falcons, and even eagles. Duke and Redig modified the animal holding rooms into flight rooms, designed chambers to hold injured and ill raptors, and gave their effort an official name, the Raptor Research and Rehabilitation Program (RRRP). When Redig finished his DVM program in 1974, he enrolled in the University’s PhD program, continuing his work with RRRP with support from the Walker Foundation, followed shortly by the Mardag Foundation. In 1975, RRRP began receiving an annual grant from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to support its work with endangered species such as the bald eagle and peregrine falcon. Redig completed his PhD in avian physiology in 1979 and was hired as an assistant professor.

Meanwhile, he and Duke built a team of staff, volunteers, and interns and obtained additional grants and donations, including a $2.38 million gift from Don and Louise Gabbert to construct and equip the Gabbert Raptor Center. In 1988, RRRP became The Raptor Center (TRC). Duke was the recipient of the ASPCA Award for Humane Excellence, the American Motors Conservation Award, and the National Wildlife Rehabilitators Award for Lifetime Achievement, among other honors. The ardent birdwatcher recorded 1,601 “life birds,” leading birding trips to Botswana, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Kenya, Mexico, Newfoundland, and Tanzania.

Director of TRC from 1986 to 2008, Redig’s honors have included the Lifetime Conservation Award from the Association of Avian Veterinarians, the American Bald
Eagle Foundation National Meritorious Service Award, and the University of Minnesota President’s Award for Outstanding Service. Working with Dr. Harrison (Bud) Tordoff, he coordinated the Midwest Peregrine Falcon Restoration Project in the 1980s and 1990s. In 1993, he became the veterinary coordinator of the California Condor Recovery Team, an advisory group to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. In 1999, longtime supporters Doug and Wendy Dayton honored Redig with a $500,000 donation to establish the Patrick T. Redig Professorship in Raptor Medicine and Surgery at the University of Minnesota. Seven years later, the U honored Redig for his pioneering work in avian orthopedics on the Wall of Discovery, an artistic tribute to the process that leads to great moments of discovery.

Duke retired from the College of Veterinary Medicine when he was diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease in 2000, but remained at The Raptor Center a few more years. When he walked out the front door for the last time on October 15, 2003, Redig was by his side.

“I was flooded with memories of the thousands of volunteers and students who had come through our doors; the thousands of eagles, peregrine falcons, red-tailed hawks, and other birds that had been given a second chance at life in the wild; the hundreds of thousands of people, young and old, who have developed an appreciation for raptors and wildlife—all because of the vision, energy, and passion of this man,” Redig recalled.

Duke’s parting words: “We did good.”

Duke died three years later at age 68. In 2008, the Duke Lecture Series was established by his longtime friends Bill and Betty Holleman to honor his commitment to birds and conservation.

“As his foresight and work were pivotal in establishing The Raptor Center, and I will always be grateful for all his efforts in forging relationships with many friends, donors, and scientific professionals,” Redig said. “We and the rest of the world are a better place for who he was and what he did.”

As for Redig, he now teaches, conducts research, advises other veterinarians on raptor medicine and surgery, and leads TRC’s efforts to draw attention to the problem of lead poisoning in bald eagles. Working out of his longtime office at The Raptor Center, he continues to his work with the title of director emeritus, a professorship in the College of Veterinary Medicine, and an abiding passion for raptors.

Sue Kirchoff is an editor/writer with the University of Minnesota College of Veterinary Medicine and a former staff member of The Raptor Center.
Looking back
During the past 40 years, the clinic has fledged from its nestling stage as a hospital for injured local raptors and spread its wings to become an internationally renowned medical center for birds of prey. More than 22,000 raptors have come through our clinic doors, providing us with opportunities to improve our treatment protocols and share them with others. Dedicated volunteers continue to help us provide the highest quality of care possible, and several have been part of our team for more than two decades. We have become world leaders in avian medicine and surgery as well as managing raptors in captivity, and respond to hundreds of requests for consultations from across the world every year, which is made possible with electronic communications.

Our patient admissions have increased significantly with each decade. These increases are attributable to many factors, including increased awareness of our program and raptors in general, a higher number of raptors living and adapting to urban areas due to urban sprawl, and advances in technology that allow people to contact us quickly from a greater range of locations. The most common known causes of admission continue to be collisions with vehicles and windows, and lead toxicity, specifically in bald eagles. However, relatively new causes such as entanglement in soccer nets, collisions with wind turbines, and heat burns from methane burners have appeared. We also see many more cases of territorial battles due to the decreasing amount of habitat available.
Looking forward

It is often said that our raptor patients can’t pay for their own care. It is true that in the traditional sense of monetary gain they cannot; however, their payment comes in the form of making us aware of the challenges faced by the world we share. Like us, raptors are at the top of the food chain. They are greatly affected by changes in every link below them, from the rodents they eat to the microbes in the soil that alter the rodent’s diet. Every patient teaches us something, and collectively they provide us with insights into the health of the environment.

Habitat loss and fragmentation, decreases in water quality, disease prevalence, and toxins in the environment are just a few health indicators. The clinic now takes this information, evaluates it on a scientific level, and then shares it via both our education department and scientific affiliations.

We have also recently created a program called CWHI – Clinical Wildlife Health Initiative. The major goal of this program is to try to standardize information received from the estimated 50,000 raptors admitted to rehabilitation centers across the country annually. Just think what all that information could tell us about the environment.

We are also expanding our efforts in digital learning. Through technology, we are better able to bring clinic messages to the public, as well as to fellow rehabilitators and veterinarians. We currently hold a basic raptor rehabilitation workshop on site, but travel and cost might be barriers to our international audiences. With the help of technology, we hope to fly greater distances, providing more learning opportunities to people across the world.

Lori Arent is the clinic manager at TRC and author of Raptors in Captivity, Guidelines for Care and Management, which is available from the University of Minnesota Bookstores at http://z.umn.edu/raptorsbook.

BAEA 14-040

The story of TRC’s 40th patient in TRC’s 40th anniversary year

It seemed fitting that the 40th patient of the year was admitted for a cause that TRC has been working hard to prevent: lead toxicity. BAEA 14-040 was an adult female bald eagle admitted from Dakota county during the snowy afternoon of February 20, 2014.

One look at her told her story: She had the classic signs of lead toxicity, most likely caused by ingesting spent lead ammunition from a deer carcass. When we saw her head hanging down and lightly trembling, her beautiful white tail feathers stained green, and her labored breathing, we instantly knew what the diagnostics would confirm. The soft, shiny metal that was put into the environment and ingested as part of her prey meal was killing her. Radiographs revealed two lead pellets in her stomach, a stomach that no longer functioned. She also had a heart murmur, which indicated that the lead toxicity was affecting her vital organs. Our veterinary staff removed the lead pieces by flushing her stomach and began treatment to remove the absorbed lead from her blood. Unfortunately, her condition deteriorated over the next few days, and she did not survive.

Although this story is sad, the positive side is that TRC is leading the movement to educate people about using alternative ammunitions such as copper for recreational activities. This movement is gaining momentum, and someday we hope to report that the number of bald eagles admitted with lead toxicity is zero.

- Lori Arent

From the archives —

One of a kind: the California condor

In November 2005, a critically endangered California condor with a broken wing was flown to TRC from Arizona for treatment. The condor was released at the north rim of the Grand Canyon in January 2006.
Think back. How did you first learn about raptors and The Raptor Center (TRC)? Perhaps it was at a spring or fall raptor release, that signature TRC event where rehabilitated birds are released to the wild. Or maybe you were in school, where your class had a special visitor — an educator from The Raptor Center who displayed raptors on her gloved hand, providing your first opportunity to see the magnificent birds up close. Or at one of thousands of other TRC programs at parks, churches, fairs, scouting events, or Bald Eagle Days events throughout the upper Midwest. Thanks to community support and a dedicated education staff and volunteers, The Raptor Center is practically a Minnesota institution, reaching thousands of people every year.

The Raptor Center didn’t start out with a public education mission. Based at the University of Minnesota College of Veterinary Medicine, TRC’s first education efforts were designed for veterinary interns. Its first outreach programs were presented for adult groups to garner support and donations to sustain the research and rehabilitation program. One of those groups happened to include Louise Gabbert, who, with her husband, Don, donated $2.38 million to construct and equip the Gabbert Raptor Center.

The building, which was dedicated in 1988, provided the infrastructure for TRC to offer a multifaceted education program. The state-of-the-art facility included informative exhibits, an education courtyard to house education birds, a large and small auditorium with retractable screens and moveable walls, and even a place for visitors to hang their coats.

The public education program took off. Program requests began pouring in; education birds, staff, and volunteers were added; a fee structure was established; and a small fleet of vans was acquired for travel to programs around Minnesota and the upper Midwest. TRC’s spring and fall bird release events, initially held at Fort Snelling State Park and later moved to various Three Rivers Park District parks to reach more people, attracted thousands. TRC educators and birds were booked for presentations at annual Bald Eagle Days events in Illinois, Iowa, Wisconsin, and South Dakota, and TRC began offering annual excursions to Read’s Landing for wintertime bald eagle watching, the Audubon Center of the North Woods in Sandstone for owl-watching, and Hawk Ridge in Duluth to observe raptor migration in the fall. Other seasonal offerings included summer Raptor Camps for kids and presentations at the Minnesota State Fair. A variety of on-site programs included open house events, Family Fun Nights, Raptor Tails Story Time, a senior learning series, and Youth RaptorCorps, a service-learning club that continues today.

By Sue Kirchoff

Dr. Pat Redig demonstrated a fracture repair technique to visiting veterinarians from Japan who came to The Raptor Center for a weeklong immersion course in raptor medicine, surgery, and rehabilitation in 2004. Photo by Sue Kirchoff
Veterinary education
TRC’s veterinary education program expanded, too. In 1990, TRC established the world’s first veterinary residency program in raptor medicine and surgery. Dr. Roberto Aguilar, a native of Mexico, became the first in a series of veterinarians to complete the three-year program, study for a master’s degree from the College of Veterinary Medicine, and return to their home states and countries to share their knowledge of raptor medicine and surgery. Even more veterinarians were reached through internship and externship programs, which drew students from around the world.

In 2005, TRC began offering the Care and Management of Captive Raptors Workshop, a four-day course about maintaining captive raptors for educational purposes. TRC veterinarians also traveled around the nation and abroad to present workshops on raptor medicine and surgery at veterinary conferences. In 2012, Drs. Julia Ponder, executive director, and Michelle Willette, staff veterinarian, presented a workshop at the South East Asian Zoos Association Conference in Taiwan. A year later, Dr. Ling-Min Wang, one of the workshop attendees, joined TRC as a clinical intern.

Legislative and corporate support
With funding from the Legislative Commission on Minnesota Resources (as it was then known), education staff began developing a raptor curriculum for elementary school students. By the 1990s, TRC was also garnering increased corporate support, thanks to board members who advocated for TRC at their companies. From 1993-1998, Target enlisted TRC to present educational programs at the grand openings of new stores around the country. PetSmart followed suit from 1996-2001. TRC educators became experts in the logistics of traveling with raptors, reaching thousands of people every month.

By 2002, education staff and volunteers were presenting nearly 1,000 outreach programs per year for schools, community organizations, and other groups, as well hundreds of on-site presentations and tours, reaching some 250,000 people of all ages.

Pleased with the number of people their programs were reaching, TRC educators began exploring ways for TRC to continue expanding its reach while having a deeper, more long-lasting impact on sustainability and raptors. They enlisted a team of teachers to assist in the planning and design of online learning programs, began offering some programs in Spanish, and designed a yearlong raptor curriculum. Piloted at Rockford Middle School in Rockford, Minnesota, it has now expanded to two additional middle schools in Prior Lake, Minnesota. The core of the curriculum allows students to explore the impact of lead poisoning in bald eagles. For the first half of the year, students track and graph real-time lead levels in bald eagle blood samples. In the second half of the year, they analyze their charts and graphs, using them as evidence to explain whether there is exposure, whether that exposure is causing harm, and whether the data suggest a possible cause. This real-world, real-time curriculum is helping schools promote environmental literacy while providing opportunities for students to develop skills in critical thinking, problem-solving, teamwork, and communication.

“TRC programs allow students to explore the impact of lead poisoning in bald eagles, and question if their area’s lead levels are causing harm. The curriculum also includes instructional videos of real scientists speaking about research on lead poisoning.”

“TRC’s raptor curriculum is a great way to teach students about lead and the impact it has on the environment,” says Allison Fasking, science teacher at Twin Oaks Middle School. “It has been one of the highlights of the course for many of our students. The material is presented at a level our students can understand and it allows them to gain leadership skills. It also instills an appreciation for these beautiful birds of prey.”
six months later – helped at-risk youth by involving them in the care and exercise of TRC patient birds.

- An eagle adoption kit introduced in 1997 by Healthy Planet, a California company, offered members of the public an opportunity to sponsor one of six eagles from The Raptor Center — three patient eagles and three education eagles. By 2002, more than 2,000 adopters from around the world were receiving “Hands Helping Wings,” a quarterly newsletter providing information about eagles and the work of TRC.

- In 2005, TRC joined forces with Americorps, a government program that engages adults in community service work with the goal of meeting critical needs in the community. As part of an effort to close the achievement gap between white and black students, Americorps Promise Fellows brought educational programs with live raptors to minority and low-income children. They also developed Youth RaptorCorps, a service learning club.

- In 2008, the Duke Lecture Series was established with a donation from Bill and Betty Holleman, longtime friends of Dr. Gary Duke, cofounder of TRC. The popular annual lecture honors Duke’s commitment to birds and conservation.

- In response to concern about the American kestrel population, TRC launched Kestrel Watch, a citizen-science project, in 2008. The Kestrel Watch website offers identification tips, information on the species’ natural history, and answers to commonly asked questions about kestrels. Kestrel Watch participants submit data about kestrel sightings, which are posted on maps and graphs on the site.

- Certification programs in raptor medicine, education, care, and management
- Enhanced partnerships with other University of Minnesota centers dedicated to environmental education, teaching, and learning
- Expanded citizen science projects and collaborations with outdoor education facilities

“Our goal is to give the decision-makers of tomorrow a deeper environmental education and understanding, to provide them with the resources they need to build a healthier, more sustainable world,” says Ponder. “Raptors will always be a beautiful way to deliver our message.”

Sue Kirchoff is an editor/writer with the University of Minnesota College of Veterinary Medicine and a former staff member of The Raptor Center.

Looking forward
Ultimately, TRC wants to increase stewardship of the environment through education. Goals for the future include —

- An online “Raptor Academy” that will offer modules for educators, veterinary and rehabilitation professionals, and the public
- Certification programs in raptor medicine, education, care, and management
- Enhanced partnerships with other University of Minnesota centers dedicated to environmental education, teaching, and learning
- Expanded citizen science projects and collaborations with outdoor education facilities

“Our goal is to give the decision-makers of tomorrow a deeper environmental education and understanding, to provide them with the resources they need to build a healthier, more sustainable world,” says Ponder. “Raptors will always be a beautiful way to deliver our message.”

Sue Kirchoff is an editor/writer with the University of Minnesota College of Veterinary Medicine and a former staff member of The Raptor Center.

Books
TRC co-founder Dr. Pat Redig, clinic manager Lori Arent, and other staff members have shared their expertise in several books.

- With chapters covering everything from anesthesia to surgery, from bumblefoot to malaria, Medical Management of Birds of Prey, by Patrick T. Redig, DVM, PhD, was an authoritative reference manual for the veterinary care of raptors. Sold almost entirely by mail order, the first edition was published by The Raptor Center in 1981 and updated several times over the years.

- Raptor Biomedicine, a book for which Dr. Pat Redig was senior editor, was published by the University of Minnesota Press in 1993. The book included contributions from raptor veterinarians and biologists in 10 countries, from the United States to the United Arab Emirates.

- Published by TRC in 1996, Care and Management of Captive Raptors was adopted as the standard for raptor care by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in 2003. In 2007, the book was published by Hancock House Publishers under the title Raptors in Captivity: Guidelines for Care and Management, by Lori R. Arent.

Feathered ambassadors

By Sue Kirchoff

The Raptor Center’s education birds, a collection of 30 eagles, hawks, owls, and falcons that cannot be released to the wild, are an indispensable part of The Raptor Center’s education program, bringing alive TRC’s messages of conservation and appreciation of raptors and other wildlife. Meticulously trained and cared for by a team of staff members and volunteers, each bird plays a special role in TRC’s education program.

Leuc, The Raptor Center’s resident turkey vulture, has played an important role in scientific study and research. Taken as a nestling by the University of Wisconsin for scientific study, he acted as a model for developing wing tags, color markers, and radio-transmitter mounts. This work helped pave the way for the use of similar equipment in the California condor, an endangered species. Like The Raptor Center, Nero is celebrating his 40th birthday this year.

In memory: Leuc

The Raptor Center mourns the loss of Leuc, a 35-year-old bald eagle who had been with TRC for most of his life. Leuc became an education bird after he was found along a highway in Hayward, Wisconsin, and admitted to TRC in 1983. Unreleasable due to a shoulder injury, Leuc lived in the main exhibit near TRC’s entrance, where he was often the first raptor visitors saw. His image was used in TRC’s early “Who says just one doesn’t matter?” ad, membership brochures, and gift store catalogs. Leuc died suddenly on April 9 after undergoing a routine weight check. A preliminary necropsy report indicated that he had a ruptured ventricle (chamber of the heart), resulting in an almost instantaneous death.
Veterinarians come from around the world to learn from the experts

By Amber Burnette, Sue Kirchoff, and Dr. Julia Ponder

Since the mid-1980s, veterinarians have traveled halfway around the world to study at The Raptor Center, participating in programs ranging from month-long externships to the world’s first three-year residency in raptor medicine and surgery. All told, more than 300 veterinarians from 26 countries have worked and studied at TRC. Research conducted by these dedicated professionals has contributed to a wealth of understanding about avian health and populations. Many of these veterinarians have returned to their home countries to train the next generation of veterinary professionals and develop their own version of The Raptor Center.

In 2001, The Raptor Center’s international veterinary team included (top row, from left) Dr. Ruediger Korbel, from Germany; Dr. Yasuko Suzuki, from Japan; Dr. Arnaud Van Wettere, from Belgium; and Dr. Pat Redig, from the United States. In the bottom row, from left, are Dr. Miguel Saggase, from Argentina; Dr. Jalila Abu, from Malaysia; and Dr. Richard Jones, from Wales.

Veterinary residents
- Dr. Roberto Aguilar, Mexico, 1990-1992
- Dr. David Howard, Minnesota, 1991-1993
- Dr. Jeff Cooney, Oregon, 1992-1995
- Dr. Elizabeth Stone, Massachusetts, 1993-1997. Stone also completed a graduate program at the College of Veterinary Medicine. Her thesis: Reproductive Behavior and Endocrinology of the Cockatiel: Insights for Captive Breeding of Parrots
- Dr. Janette Ackermann, California, 1995-1998. Ackermann also completed a graduate program at the college. Her thesis topics were surgical repair of elbow luxations in raptors, the use of propofol anesthesia in raptors, and avian tuberculosis in raptors
- Dr. Jalila Abu, Malaysia, 1996-2002. Abu also completed her Ph.D. at the college. Her thesis topic: the use of bone grafts to repair fractures in avian species
- Dr. Arnaud Van Wettere, Belgium. Van Wettere joined TRC as an intern in 2000 and was a veterinary resident from 2001-2003, when he completed his master’s degree. His research involved analyzing the elements and configuration of the tie-in fixator for fracture repair and optimizing the hardware used in the device.
- Dr. Miguel Saggase, Argentina. Saggase joined TRC as an intern in 2001 and was a resident from 2002-2004. He also earned his master’s degree at the college, conducting research on West Nile virus vaccines in birds and the use of raptors for West Nile virus surveillance.
- Dr. Luis Cruz-Martinez, Costa Rica. Cruz-Martinez joined TRC as an intern in 2005 and was a veterinary resident from 2007-2010, when he earned a master’s degree at the College of Veterinary Medicine. His research included investigations of lead exposure from ammunition sources in bald eagles and stress hormone analysis in great horned owls.
- Dr. Irene Bueno-Padilla, Spain. Bueno-Padilla joined TRC as a clinical intern in 2008 and was a veterinary resident from 2010-2013. She also earned a master of public health degree in 2013.

TRC’s international visitors have also included a number of veterinary interns, including Dr. Chikako Akaki from Japan, (1998-1999), Dr. Yasuko Suzuki from Japan (2001), Dr. Olga Nicolas from Spain (2008-2009), Dr. Paula Castano from Colombia (2009-2011), Dr. Carol Ewbank from Brazil (2011-2013), Dr. Ling-Min Wang from Taiwan (2013-present), and Dr. Irene Galan Lecona from Spain (January 2014 to present).
Veterinary residents: In their own words

I learned so much
What I remember most about my time at TRC was the overwhelming kindness shown to us by the staff, volunteers, and falconry community. As complete strangers, we were welcomed into our new home with open arms and never wanted for anything. There are far too many very special friends to mention individually, sadly some of whom are no longer with us, but you know who you are, and for all you did, we will be forever grateful. As long as I can remember, for everything he has done for falconry, avian medicine, and conservation, Dr. Pat Redig has been a hero of mine, and although that could potentially be hard to live up to, he did so — and way, way more — and just confirmed (as if I needed persuading!) that this was indeed what I wanted to do for the rest of my life. I learned so much during my residency, which I feel so grateful and privileged to have been able to attend. If I can ultimately achieve a tiny percentage of what TRC has done in my little corner of the UK, I will be a very happy man! — Dr. Richard Jones, Wales

Jones was a veterinary resident from 1999-2001. His graduate work focused on the development of a surgical process to perform endoscopy-guided vasectomy in immature birds. This process is now used in hybrid falcons to prevent reproduction and in young male cockatiels to prevent behavior problems.

Unique, amazing, and life-changing
If I would describe my experience at TRC in three words I would say: unique, amazing and life-changing.

It was quite unique because it is hard to find a place in which the passion for working with animals is a pillar. It was also unique because I had the pleasure of working with many international vets and vet students that became friends. Finally, getting to know and interact with so many dedicated volunteers made my experience unique. It was amazing because it was very fun and rewarding, yet challenging, and I had many opportunities to do impactful work.

It was life-changing in many ways. Dr. Redig opened my mind to a new world of research, to be critical yet objective, to be humble, passionate, and to strive to be as good a scientist as a family person. From working side by side with great people like Dr. Mitch, Jane, Lori, Gail, Juli, and many others, I experienced dedication, hard work, and passion firsthand.

In a nutshell, working and having fun with TRC staff and volunteers is something I’ll keep dear to my heart because you became family. — Dr. Luis Cruz-Martinez, Costa Rica

Cruz-Martinez joined TRC as an intern in 2005 and was a veterinary resident for 2007-2010. His research projects included investigation of lead exposure from ammunition sources in bald eagles and stress hormone analysis in great-horned owls. He recently earned his PhD in ecotoxicology from the University of Calgary.

An extraordinary team of people
I always had a fascination for raptors. Since vet school back in Spain, my dream was to go to the worldwide leading center in avian medicine and surgery, The Raptor Center at the University of Minnesota. I had the amazing opportunity of not only doing a two-year internship, but also of pursuing the residency program combined with a master in public health. This unique experience made me become a competent raptor veterinarian, at the same time that I was able to get an education in ecosystem health, fulfilling my strong interest in studying the interface between wildlife, humans, and the environment. During my time at TRC, I also discovered how much I enjoy teaching. This, combined with my passion for research, drove me to pursue the PhD that I am currently working on.

Aside from the invaluable experience as a professional, I could not have accomplished all of this without the extraordinary team of staff and volunteers that make TRC such a unique place. I feel really honored for having been part of TRC for five incredible years of my life, and I am deeply thankful to everybody that made it possible. — Dr. Irene Bueno-Padilla, Spain

Bueno-Padilla was a clinical intern for two years and a veterinary resident for three years ending in 2013. She earned her master of public health degree at the University of Minnesota in 2013 and is currently in the veterinary medicine graduate program at the College of Veterinary Medicine.
A legacy of research and conservation

By Amber Burnette

Throughout our 40-year history, The Raptor Center has been immersed in research and conservation efforts at the intersection of humans and wildlife health. We understand the importance of collaboration with professional peers as well as the public to improve our understanding and develop the tools to address the environmental challenges we all face. Our staff is actively involved with collegiate as well as international efforts to develop models for dealing with conflicts in ecosystem health.

Most of our friends are aware of the work done by Dr. Patrick Redig and Dr. Harrison (Bud) Tordoff in the restoration of the peregrine falcon’s rightful place in the sky. However, their efforts were largely successful due to their understanding of the human element of conservation, not just the natural biology of peregrines. As with most conservation efforts, stakeholders at all levels – federal, state, interest groups, and private citizens, to name just a few – need to be involved. The pioneering work of Drs. Redig and Tordoff fostering relationships early in that project ensured its success at all levels, then and now. Using a species as a focal point to link humans and their environment was an early blueprint for the path that TRC still walks today.

TRC expanded our focus on the environment when we were asked to be involved in the critically important ecological work in the Galapagos Islands. Our expertise was in the care and management of the endemic Galapagos hawks throughout the invasive species eradication activities. However, our contribution widened to engaging stakeholders, working with partners, and following up with a holistic surveillance of ecological factors. A healthy ecosystem, even in transition to a sustainable equilibrium, involves humans understanding the many complex aspects involved.

Raptors are often TRC’s lens as we look into broader environmental and health problems. In the mid-2000s, we were part of a West Nile virus study in an effort to develop a vaccine to protect birds from the virus, and we have conducted research into the ecology of avian influenza in wildlife. We continue to look at diseases that affect wildlife and agricultural animals, with one ongoing project focused on Newcastle disease. TRC staff members are involved in the College of Veterinary Medicine’s One Health initiatives, which recognize that human, animal, and ecosystem health are all linked.

Each clinic patient we receive—from a critically endangered California condor to a Minnesota bald eagle suffering from lead poisoning—offers a chance to learn more about the world humans and raptors share. Science and research guide us to collect information; TRC then works with our partners and the public to make this data meaningful and help us all understand what we can do to keep our world and healthy and sustainable.

Amber Burnette is TRC’s program associate.

From the archives — Joining forces to restore the peregrine falcon

Drs. Pat Redig of The Raptor Center and Bud Tordoff of the Bell Museum of Natural History launched the Midwest Peregrine Falcon Restoration Project in 1982. The project ultimately involved 11 states and many more collaborators. The peregrine falcon was removed from the endangered species list in 1999, but continues to be monitored today.

Lead and eagles: building on our history

Since the late 1970s, TRC has studied lead poisoning in bald eagles, often working with partners such as the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. Having established the link between lead poisoning in bald eagles and spent ammunition in deer carcasses, we are currently working on grassroots education efforts to support the use of nonlead forms of ammunition, such as copper, for use in deer hunting.
A new home for raptors, a destination

By Amber Burnette and Dr. Julia Ponder

The Raptor Center’s heart and soul has always been the birds and the people who care for them. But we couldn’t offer aid and education to either without a bricks-and-mortar location. From a basement room in a University building 40 years ago to the new outdoor space we will be unveiling this fall, The Raptor Center has gone through many changes.

When TRC was known as the Raptor Research and Rehabilitation Program, Dr. Pat Redig, Dr. Gary Duke, and a crew of dedicated volunteers worked in a building called Temporary East of Hacker on the St. Paul campus of the University of Minnesota. The building’s animal holding areas were modified into flight rooms, and wooden cages held increasing numbers of sick and injured raptors.

In 1987, the program moved into Gabbert Raptor Center, a state-of-the-art building specifically designed for medical care of birds of prey and public education. Thousands of people visited every year. When TRC’s robust education programming necessitated adding more winged ambassadors to our team, the education courtyard was modified.

As we continued to develop professional education and training workshops for our peers, it became clear that we also needed to make our physical location into more of a destination. While TRC is recognized by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as having set the standard on captive raptor management, our education raptor housing and the holding pens for our rehabilitation birds no longer met our own strong criteria.

More than three years ago, we launched a capital fundraising campaign for the new construction we are now undertaking, and our longtime friends and community helped us realize our dreams. The older, worn wooden facilities and stairs will be removed, and the outdoor spaces will be rebuilt, using more contemporary materials to create an environment more conducive to Minnesota’s weather challenges. This facility will provide increased living and rehabilitation spaces for the raptors in treatment with us as well as for our permanent resident educational birds. With an enhanced gathering place and additional exhibits, visitors will be able to view the birds in every season and from one vantage point.

Raptors captivate us all, and we look forward to more and better ways to engage with others who care about raptors and come to see the birds up close. So much of what we do is advancing raptor health and conservation and teaching stewardship regarding raptors and their environment. This facility will provide a great forum for these discussions with our visitors.

Amber Burnette is TRC’s program associate. Dr. Julia Ponder is executive director.

With our thanks

“We are so grateful to all the people who stepped up and supported this campaign. This is such an important project, and it will not only provide for the care and comfort of our injured and healing raptors, it will enable The Raptor Center to continue to play a strong and more expansive role in helping us all to understand that, in the end, we are all connected to the same ecosystem and ultimately dependent upon it for our future. When our raptors are strong and vital, we are strong and vital.”

Teresa Daly
Member, TRC Board of Advisors
ion for people

The Raptor Center’s original education courtyard was an outdoor area constructed mostly of wood and completely open to the elements, which meant that it could only accommodate visitors when the weather was nice.

Open house planned
The Raptor Center is planning an open house to welcome visitors to the new space once it is completed (date to be determined).

The architectural plans and rendering for the new construction, which will include an education bird mews and rehabilitation mews.

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From the archives — A dream come true
TRC cofounder Dr. Pat Redig visited the construction site of Gabbert Raptor Center the March before the building was dedicated in November 1988.
Donors make it happen

By Ellen Orndorf and Bill Venne

Donor profile

Mary Katynski-Johnson and Dennis Johnson

In 1987, Mary Katynski-Johnson and Dennis Johnson had their first experience with The Raptor Center.

“I came home from work and there was this strange sound coming out of our window well,” Mary recalls. “It sounded like ‘too-too-too.’” It turned out to be a young northern saw-whet owl, which most likely hit a window, then fell into the well.

“I knew about The Raptor Center from various University of Minnesota publications, and we brought the owl there the same day,” says Mary, a University of Minnesota graduate. “We spoke with a technician who was working with a trumpeter swan suffering from the effects of lead poisoning and various injuries. We were so impressed with the depth of knowledge and the caring, compassionate way the staff helped the birds that we began donating to the annual fund right away. Organizations that help wild animals are on a very tight budget, so my family and I wanted to do our part to help.”

Mary later learned that the owl she brought in was dehydrated. After some care in the clinic, the bird was released over the Thanksgiving holiday weekend in the St. Croix Valley area.

“It was a great feeling knowing we had helped this bird,” Mary says.

Mary and Dennis continued to support The Raptor Center during their very busy years of working and raising their family, always knowing that when they had more time they would love to volunteer at TRC. When they retired, they were able to make this dream a reality.

“Right now, Dennis and I are helping with the Recycling for Raptors program, which involves recycling used inkjet printer cartridges,” Mary says. “The project enlists individuals, organizations, and businesses to collect used cartridges for recycling. The Raptor Center in turn receives a contribution for each cartridge. It also keeps these items out of the waste stream.”

Mary and Dennis are also active with TRC’s transport crew, a team of volunteers that transport injured and sick raptors to TRC for medical treatment.

Mary recalled an experience they had just after starting with the transport crew. They had rescued a red-tailed hawk and were on their way back to TRC when the hawk escaped from the box.

“The staff told us to secure the box firmly, and I thought I did,” Mary says. “Luckily, we were on a country road, not a highway, and pulled over to secure the bird.”

Shortly after Mary and Dennis retired, they wrote their will.

“We really wanted our estate plans to demonstrate our values,” Mary said. “Currently we support various causes, including international refugees and human rights, the Guthrie Theater, and The Raptor Center. Although we appreciate that The Raptor Center helps all these injured birds, I think the significant work is what we are learning about populations of birds and the environment. We look forward to many more years of supporting the organizations we love, including The Raptor Center.”

Ellen Orndorf is The Raptor Center’s current giving and stewardship coordinator. Bill Venne is chief development officer with the University of Minnesota College of Veterinary Medicine.
Planned giving benefits you and TRC

You know how critical it is to support The Raptor Center. And you’d like to help in the most meaningful way possible. But while you may have a nice nest egg, you may be concerned about how much of that you will need over your lifetime to cover your own expenses or provide security for your family.

Planned giving offers a solution. The most common option is to make a gift from your estate to support The Raptor Center, yet retain the use of your assets during your lifetime, and allowing you to modify your gift over time as your circumstances change.

Estate gifts can be made through your will or revocable (living) trust agreement. Using the appropriate beneficiary designation forms, you can name The Raptor Center as the beneficiary of your retirement plan or IRA, life insurance policy, bank accounts, or stock portfolio. For all of these gifts, you can choose the area of The Raptor Center that is most meaningful for you to support.

Become a member of the Dean’s Circle or 1947 Club

The Raptor Center is fortunate to have thousands of committed supporters, including those who give leadership gifts and are part of the College of Veterinary Medicine’s Dean’s Circle. Understandably, these major donors are sometimes confused about why the college is honoring their gift to The Raptor Center.

Because The Raptor Center is part of the College of Veterinary Medicine (did you know Dr. Juli Ponder is a faculty member at the college?), TRC donors receive the same benefits as donors to the college. For instance, all donors with total giving of $10,000 or more are invited to the annual Dean’s Reception in May, when the leaders of the college, including Dr. Ponder and TRC co-founder Dr. Patrick Redig, update supporters on our recent successes and aspirations for the future.

TRC donors with annual gifts of $1,000 or more are automatically enrolled in the 1947 Club, which is named for the year the University established the College of Veterinary Medicine. 1947 Club members receive mailings with insider information from Raptor Center leadership. These donors are also invited to the annual Dean’s Reception in May.

The Raptor Center depends on major gifts to deliver quality care to injured raptors, conduct environment education to the next generation of leaders, and educate future wildlife veterinarians. For more information on how to become a Dean’s Circle member or a 1947 Club member, contact Chief Development Officer Bill Venne at 612-625-8480 or venne025@umn.edu.

The next generation of donors

Two daughters of TRC volunteer Amy Simso Dean opened a lemonade stand with their friends to raise funds for TRC.

“The Raptor Center is one of the places that means the most to me because I go there a lot,” says Ellery Dean, 8.

“I wanted to give them more money for the raptors,” adds Thea Dean, 6.

Generous donations from Don and Louise Gabbert funded the construction of the Gabbert Raptor Center, a state-of-the-art facility for birds of prey, in 1988. Don’s interest in The Raptor Center was inspired by his wife, who told him about an educational presentation she had seen at the Minneapolis Women’s Club.
Volunteers: a labor of love

By Dr. Julia Ponder and Nancie Klebba

Why do so many busy adults spend their precious free time preparing raptor food and cleaning cages at The Raptor Center? Why do more than 250 volunteers commit hours, days, and years of their lives to the mission of The Raptor Center? What drives the amazing people who have come in to work with our clinic staff or education team every week for more than 20 years? Where do they find the energy after a long day at work to show up at The Raptor Center and give something back to the community?

The answers to these questions lie in volunteers’ strong and pervasive commitment to The Raptor Center’s mission. At a deep and personal level, our volunteers know the power that these majestic birds have to capture our attention and teach us about the natural world. They are enamored by raptors and all these birds represent about our natural world. They have experienced the thrill of knowing that they made a difference, reaching children and adults with powerful messages about how their actions can change the world. In a world with many grand challenges, our volunteers are testament to the fact that they can influence a corner of it. They come back week after week to clean cages, prepare food and medications, exercise birds, and teach the public.

In addition to knowing they are leaving a mark on the future, our volunteers often tell us how much they enjoy working with their fellow volunteers. With a shared purpose and a vision for making a difference, there is camaraderie around their common experiences at The Raptor Center. As they go through their tasks, they revel in the uniqueness of each day and the opportunity to learn – just how does a raptor fly? How do they hunt? How do they raise young? How do they adapt to a changing environment?

Our accomplishments would be so much less and our reach so limited without the richness of our volunteer community. We are forever in debt to these wonderful people who share our passion for raptors and make a difference every day of our lives.

Dr. Julia Ponder is executive director of The Raptor Center. Nancie Klebba is volunteer coordinator.

By the numbers

5 Volunteers who have been with The Raptor Center more than 25 years.

15 Volunteers who have been with TRC for more than 20 years.

270 Current active volunteers at The Raptor Center. They donate time equivalent to 11 full-time staff members.

170,000 Inkjet cartridges

Recycling for Raptors volunteers have helped recycle since 2003. The program continues to grow, with more partnerships added each month.

298,866 Hours logged into The Raptor Center’s volunteer database as of March 2014. A formal process for recording hours was established in 1990.

Welcome to The Raptor Center
By Sue McCarthy

I have learned many skills since starting as a volunteer at The Raptor Center: how to gut a rat, tie a falconer’s knot with one hand, feed a hungry owl with my right hand while holding it on my left arm, put Emu cream on a peregrine falcon’s feet, and help preschoolers through senior citizens learn about the magnificent birds that share our world.

“Welcome to The Raptor Center,” I say. “We have some exciting things to tell you about some very special birds. Today, you are going to see birds that are called raptors. Raptors are birds that only eat meat and hunt with their feet. But you usually don’t see birds inside a building, so let’s find out why they are here in the first place.”

The 3- and 4-year-olds sit on the carpeted steps in the Falcon Room, smiling with anticipation of seeing live birds.

“All of the birds that I am going to show you have been injured or were sick and were brought into our clinic, which is in the basement of this building. There are some special doctors down there who treat our injured birds. Does anyone know the big long name of the kind of doctor who treats animals?”

The room is quiet, and I think I am going to have to introduce the word “veterinarian” to the children. But all of a sudden a small boy leaps to his feet and shouts, “I know … a vegetarian!” I chuckle to myself, as do the other adults in the room, and add to my list of things I have learned while being a volunteer: that kids really say the darnedest things!

Sue McCarthy is an education volunteer.

In their own words

“Talk to a kid about vulture vomit or let an adult feel an owl talon, and you’ve got them hooked. I see this every week on the education crew. Hearing ‘wow’ and ‘really?!’ throughout a tour or program proves how perfectly these animals connect people to the natural world. Parents and kids at my children’s school even stop me in the hall to tell me their stories and ask questions. I started volunteering to increase my knowledge, but quickly discovered that sharing my love of raptors is infinitely more fulfilling.”

Amy Simso Dean
Education Volunteer
TRC breaks ground on new construction project, celebrates 40th anniversary

April 24 was a landmark day for The Raptor Center. TRC broke ground on a major construction project—the renovation of its outdoor bird housing—and celebrated its 40th anniversary at Eastcliff, the official residence of the president of the University of Minnesota.

Dr. Julia Ponder, executive director, stands by with Pi, a bald eagle, as TRC friends and supporters Kate Nielsen, Lizzie Nelson, Wendy Dayton, Ellen Andersen, and Rachel Hollstadt break ground.

Volunteers introduce St. Paul Mayor Chris Coleman to a great horned owl and red-tailed hawk.

College of Veterinary Medicine Dean Trevor Ames and St. Paul Mayor Chris Coleman stop for a photo with Drs. Pat Redig and Julia Ponder.

Gail Buhl, education program manager, displays a bald eagle for donors, above, and with Dr. Julia Ponder and Karen Kaler, right, as Mike Billington, interpretive naturalist, holds another eagle.

University of Minnesota President Eric Kaler welcomes TRC donors to Eastcliff. Photos by Sue Kirchoff

CONTACT US

The Raptor Center directory

Donations
Gifts, endowments, estate gifts, and grants:
Ellen Orndorf, 612-624-8457 or eorndorf@umn.edu

Adopt-a-Raptor program:
Amber Burnette, 612-624-3391 or burne018@umn.edu

Educational programs
Field trips, outreach programs, and events
612-624-2756
raptored@umn.edu

E-communications
Want to receive e-communications? Go to www.TheRaptorCenter.org and click Connect with Us.

E-mail
raptor@umn.edu

Events calendar
TRC public events calendar
http://tinyurl.com/TheRaptorCenterCalendar

Fax
612-624-8740

Front desk
Injured raptors; general information
612-624-4745

Gift shop
TRC’s online gift shop offers raptor-themed items such as clothing, books, toys, and jewelry. Go to www.TheRaptorCenter.org and click on Shop.

Mailing address
1920 Fitch Ave.
St. Paul, MN 55108

Recycling for Raptors
To learn about drop-off locations, e-mail trcink@umn.edu.

Social media
Facebook: www.facebook.com/TheRaptorCenter

Blog:
www.TheRaptorCenterNews.blogspot.com

Volunteer opportunities
Volunteer positions and upcoming training sessions
Nancie Klebba, 612-624-3928 or nklebba@umn.edu

Website
www.TheRaptorCenter.org

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Executive director
Dr. Julia Ponder

Editorial team
Lori Arent, Gail Buhl, Amber Burnette, Sue Kirchoff, Nancie Klebba, Dr. Julia Ponder

Design
Sue Kirchoff

Please notify us of your change of address or duplicate mailing.
Call 612-624-7624, e-mail cvmadmin@umn.edu, or write to Advancement Department, College of Veterinary Medicine, 1365 Gortner Avenue, St. Paul MN 55108.
Celebrating four decades of dedication to raptors

40*

things you can do for raptors

TOP 10

1. Learn, learn, learn — and educate.

2. Habitat is everything. Preserve -- protect -- build.

3. Reduce use of household chemicals (in and and out of the house).

4. Change to energy-efficient lightbulbs and appliances.

5. Go for a hike (without earbuds).

6. Support a local nature center, trail, or rehabilitation center.

7. Recycle, reuse, repurpose.


9. Teach others.

10. Know what to do if you find an injured raptor. (Learn more at www.TheRaptorCenter.org.)

*Find 30 more things you can do at www.TheRaptorCenter.org