

# WINGBEATS

April | May | June | 2025 Newsletter

Celebrating 47 Years

## Springtime is Nesting Time

### The Raising of Our Local Raptors

By Taylor Luken

In the spring and summer of 1936, 1937, and 1938, a man named Victor Coles went in search of turkey vulture nests. Having set off into the veritable wilderness of Hocking Hills, a region in central Ohio popular for its scenic hills, caves, gorges, and ravines nestled within peaceful Appalachian woodland, Coles searched for vulture nests in “every conceivable hollow within the rocks.” His goal? To come to intimately understand the nesting habits of Ohio vultures and to share his findings in the American Ornithological Society’s peer-reviewed scientific journal, *Ornithology* (known back in the 1930s, however, as *The Auk*).

Coles discovered many nests in the cool, dark recesses and crevices that abound in the cavernous topography of the Hocking Hills region. These nests, being not much more than simple scraped depressions in leaves, bark, or dirt, tended to be home to 1-3 eggs, white with brown and pale lilac dots. These eggs would hatch into fuzzy, downy vulture chicks that remain in their nest, both parents caring for them, for eighty days or more. Because turkey vulture parents in Ohio typically incubate their clutches until May or June, young vultures may not take their first flights (or fledge) until August.

Coles concludes his account of studying turkey vulture nests with a note about these carrion-eaters’ hygiene, saying, “Conditions of comparative cleanliness surrounded the nests which made working with these birds a pleasure rather than an obnoxious task.”

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*Turkey Vulture (Vickie Villavicencio)*



# Raptor Reality

## Bringing Birds of Prey Into the Classroom with Live Feeds

By Charlene Howell

Can't get outside with your students to check out birds of prey in their natural habitats? No worries! There are plenty of free live cams where you can watch eagles, hawks, owls, and other raptors up close. Technology makes it super easy to bring real-life animal behavior right into the classroom.

Using live cams can spice up your lessons and connect what you're teaching to real-world experiences. With your support, students get to act as scientists by asking questions, making observations, and gathering information about the life cycles of these awesome birds. It's a hands-on way of learning that will keep the students curious for years to come.

You can also encourage students to write in journals or have discussions to create a fact corner or photo gallery. How about letting them express through art or poetry what they see via live cam? It's great to view the live cam regularly, whether daily or a few times a week. The students might even come up with fun project ideas, like writing a play about what they learned, making a chart of what the young birds eat, or guessing when the chicks will leave the nest.

Getting students ready for this experience is important. Show them how to use the live cam and tell them what to expect, plus teach them some key vocabulary—this way, they'll be better equipped to ask questions and dive deeper into their research. Consider putting together a vocabulary board in class which lists important terms.



*Eagle and Offspring in Nest (Cardinal Conservancy Eagle Cam)*

Nature is unpredictable, so stay flexible. Even when an activity like hatching eggs, or feeding young, is anticipated at a specific time, nature may have other plans. Surprise is part of the teaching attraction here and it can enhance a memorable learning experience.

Don't forget to keep the administration and parents in the loop about which live cam you're using. And make sure your lessons fit in with what the school district expects.

With so many incredible live cams available, locating the ideal one for your classroom should be a piece of cake!

## Springtime is Nesting Time

Continued from Page 1

It is thanks to the work of curious, dedicated scientists like Victor Coles that we know not just when all of Ohio's native raptor species are nesting, but where they prefer to nest and what is going on in those nests from egg incubation through the young fledging. We know, for instance, that a monogamous great-horned owl pair may find a suitable tree cavity or utilize an old hawk or eagle nest to lay eggs as early as late January, and then care for their young for several months (even after they leave the nest in May or June). We know that both barred owls and red-shouldered hawks have a penchant for nesting in sycamore trees (among other old, large trees like beeches and oaks), and that the female of both species is the one to incubate her eggs (versus other species, like turkey vultures and bald eagles, which split this duty between the male and female).

Mature members of all of our native raptor species are focused on the paramount occupations of courtship, nesting, and parenthood in the springtime to early summer. They may be

teaching their offspring the skills of survival even later into the year. It's a stressful, hormonal, and energy-expensive time for raptors – a time that involves not only feeding and caring for new life, but defending that life from predators and competitors.

Humans can mitigate excess stress for raptors during this time by not bothering nests, and also by refraining from certain birding practices, such as playing audio recordings of bird calls, so as not to perturb an already tired (but still fiercely territorial) parent who might interpret the recording as a nearby, imminent threat. Luckily, these days, even those of us who aren't ornithologists like Victor Coles still have ample opportunities to witness the miraculous adventure that comprises the raising of baby raptors, without risking human interference. For example, livestreams of local bald eagle nests and the peregrine falcon nest on the Mercantile Library building downtown have been posted in the past, and no doubt will be again.

# Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza Spreads

## Poultry and Wildlife Fall Victim

By Cindy Alverson



HPAI (ODNR)

You may know about HPAI (Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza) because of its impact on poultry and the resulting higher egg prices. Sadly, the devastating effect of the disease extends to our mission to rescue, rehabilitate, and release raptors.

The H5N1 virus causes HPAI. That virus leads to severe illness and death in birds, raptors, waterfowl, and poultry. The disease can affect mammals, too, and there are even a few reports of HPAI infections in humans. The US Department of Agriculture is closely monitoring the virus as it evolves.

### Current Situation in the US.

HPAI has brought higher egg prices as millions of chickens were culled from poultry flocks. Populations of raptors, waterfowl, and other wild birds have suffered, too. The infection has also appeared in dairy cattle, domestic cats, opossums, red foxes, raccoons, and skunks.

In each species, signs of the disease include seizures, loss of balance, walking in circles, nasal discharge, and respiratory issues. While ducks and geese may carry the virus without showing symptoms, it is often fatal to raptors. The University of Minnesota Raptor Center achieved rare remedial success in 2022 when a great-horned owl survived after testing positive for avian influenza.

### Historical Context and Impact on RAPTOR Inc.

We've been here before. In 2015, some Kentucky poultry flocks reported low pathogenic avian influenza. With that, the Ohio Department of Agriculture banned live bird exhibitions. That ban had RAPTOR Inc. cancel 63 programs and lose thousands of dollars of revenue. This current HPAI outbreak is even more severe. There is widespread devastation among waterfowl and raptors, including

black vultures, eagles, red-tailed hawks, and great-horned owls. To date, we judge the current regulatory response from Columbus to be less extreme than its reaction in 2015.

### Protective Measures at RAPTOR Inc.

With these health threats, we implemented strict precautions to guard our educational ambassadors. A recent change was the imposition of strict separation between education and rehabilitation activities, to prevent cross-contamination. Now, we also disinfect with supplies that stop the HPAI virus. Each of our educational birds has a labeled water bowl, which stays in the mew. In addition, strict cleaning and disinfection protocols are in place, and staff members wear protective gear to protect themselves and the birds.

### Challenges in Rehabilitation Efforts

An ongoing challenge for our RAPTOR team is turning away birds that show the classic symptoms of HPAI. Infected birds pose a risk to the birds already in our care. In these matters, we let the best practices of virology experts at the US Fish and Wildlife Service and the Ohio Department of Natural Resources guide us. So far, only three birds—a red-tailed hawk and two black vultures—have been turned away as a result of our new protocol. Our follow-up investigation found that each bird died within 24 hours, highlighting the rapid progression of the HPAI in raptors as well as validating the protocols we now follow.

This highly contagious and deadly virus remains in flux. We, and other organizations like us, remain vigilant and determined to balance our work to care for wildlife with the need to protect humans and animals from this evolving threat.



## Hello RAPTOR Inc. Family and Friends,

It is with heavy emotions that I announce my decision to step down as Director of Education at RAPTOR Incorporated. I have absolutely loved my time here. The mission is close to my heart, and the staff, birds, board, and community have been tremendously supportive partners in that mission.

This decision comes after battling cancer for over a year. (Get your annual exams!) I was diagnosed in January 2024 and underwent radiation and chemotherapy. Unfortunately, in December 2024, scans confirmed the cancer was still present.

I am undergoing chemotherapy again to extend my life, but the treatments have been daunting, both physically and emotionally. So, I have made the difficult decision to take a step back from work to focus on my health and family in the coming months.

We are in the process of hiring a new Director of Education. I will do everything I can to ensure the new Director gets off on the right track.

I am so grateful I had the opportunity to work with such a passionate, skilled, dedicated group of people, and I'm so proud of what we have accomplished. I'm sure it's just the beginning of the great things yet to come for our tiny but mighty organization.

Thank you to everyone who has supported me in my role. It was truly a pleasure to partner with you to conserve these magnificent birds and educate the people of our community.

*Jackie Bray*



Me and Rufous (Bray Family Archives)



Open House (Bray Family Archives)

## TRIBUTES

In Memory of  
Raymond Sonoff

From

Livia Boyadjian, Fred Held, Susan Herman, Judith Noelker,  
Karen Thompson, Elisabeth Sonoff, Judy Toebber, Maryann  
Pietromonaco, R. Braudy, and Karen and Thomas Gamel

In Memory of  
Ann Oliver

From  
Lauren Coleman





# Remembering Eli

By Jackie Bray

Our bald eagle Avian Ambassador, Eli, was always a tremendous fan favorite. Sadly, Eli suffered a sudden acute illness that resulted in multiple organ failure. Pathology reports are still pending which will hopefully shed additional light on his illness.

Eli was found near Lake Erie when he was about 2-½ years old. He was in very poor physical condition and had a severe right-wing injury. He was admitted to Ohio Bird Sanctuary on May 26, 2015, where a partial amputation of the right wing was necessary to save his life. He spent the next 8 months recovering at their raptor center. Unfortunately, his wing injury prevented him from being able to be released back to the wild, so Ohio Bird Sanctuary had to find him a permanent home. On January 21, 2016, RAPTOR Inc. committed to caring for Eli and he was transferred to our facility to serve as an Avian Ambassador.

During his years of service at RAPTOR Inc., Eli helped educate thousands of visitors about the importance of eagles to the environment. Bald eagles are a valuable indicator species of the health of their habitat. In the 1960's and 1970's, it was discovered that the pesticide DDT was bioaccumulating in raptors, causing their eggshells to be thin. This discovery and other observations contributed to the eventual banning of this chemical.

We were so blessed to have years with Eli. Our hearts go out to all of the staff, volunteers, and community members who undoubtedly share in our grief. He may no longer reside in our mews, but Eli will always live in our hearts. We will miss him deeply.



# 2025 PUBLIC APPEARANCES

[Contact Sponsor for details and to see if reservations are required]

Date	Time	Sponsor	Location
7-Jul	6:30pm-7:30pm	Salem Township Library	535 W Pike St, Morrow, OH 45152
8-Jul	2pm-3pm	Walnut Hills Library	2533 Kemper Ln, Cincinnati, OH 45206
10-Jul	2pm-3pm	Symmes Township Safety Center for the Library	8871 Weekly Ln, Cincinnati, OH 45249
11-Jul	2pm-3pm	College Hill Library	1400 W North Bend Rd, Cincinnati, OH 45224
14-Jul	2pm-3pm	Hyde Park Library	2747 Erie Ave, Cincinnati, OH 45208
15-Jul	2pm-3pm	Monfort Heights Library	3825 W Fork Rd, Cincinnati, OH 45247
16-Jul	3pm-4pm	St. Bernard Library	10 McClelland Ave, Cincinnati, OH 45217
17-Jul	11am-12pm	Erlanger Railroad Depot Park	3313 Crescent Ave, Erlanger, KY 41018
18-Jul	6pm-8pm	Rapid Run Park Nature Day at Rapid Run	4450 Rapid Run Rd, Cincinnati, OH 45205
18-Jul	6pm-9pm	Cincinnati Nature Center Hoots & Hops	4949 Tealtown Rd, Milford, OH 45150
19-Jul	2pm-3pm	Little Miami Conservancy River Center	211 Railroad Ave, Loveland, OH 45140
24-Jul	2pm-3pm	North Central Branch Library	11109 Hamilton Ave, Cincinnati, OH 45231
27-Jul	1pm-4pm	<b>RAPTOR Inc. Open House</b>	<b>961 Barg Salt Run Rd, Milford, OH 45150</b>
31-Jul	6:30pm-8:30pm	Caldwell Nature Preserve	430 W North Bend Rd, Cincinnati, OH 45216
1-Aug	4pm-7pm	Schmidt Recreation Complex Outdoors for All Expo	2944 Humbert Ave, Cincinnati, OH 45226
5-Aug	10am-12pm	Warren County Armco Park Tech-Free Tuesday	1223 OH-741, Lebanon, OH 45036
16-Aug	2pm-3pm	Little Miami Conservancy River Center	211 Railroad Ave, Loveland, OH 45140
31-Aug	1pm-4pm	<b>RAPTOR Inc. Open House</b>	<b>961 Barg Salt Run Rd, Milford, OH 45150</b>



Venmo Now Accepted



RAPTOR Inc. can now accept Venmo for purchases or donations. Our user name is @RAPTORInc.

## RAPTOR WISH LIST

RAPTOR Inc. needs the following items for our bird care facility. To donate any of these items, please email RAPTOR at: [raptor@raptorinc.org](mailto:raptor@raptorinc.org) or call 513-825-3325.

- Dog food (dry, for large dogs)
- Duct tape
- UDF gas gift card
- Latex or nitrile exam gloves (XL)
- Office Max gift card
- Paper towels
- Stamps (Forever)

Thank you for all of your donations, including those who donate through the Amazon Wish List! Due to changes at Amazon, we unfortunately no longer receive information on the names of wishlist donors.

## AMAZON WISH LIST

RAPTOR Inc. is listed on the Amazon Wish list. For a complete listing of all of the items we use for rehabilitation, and to provide our volunteers with all of the necessities they need to care for our birds, please visit our website, [www.raptorinc.org](http://www.raptorinc.org). Click on the tab, Support Us (top, right of center), then Support, then scroll down the page to the Amazon Wish List icon midway down the page. This will take you directly to the RAPTOR Inc. Wish list.

Any Wish List items you buy are shipped directly to our RAPTOR Inc. facility in Milford. How easy is that?

# FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Thanks to the following individuals and groups for their financial contribution to RAPTOR Inc., for the first quarter of 2025.

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Cincinnati Zoo and Botanical  
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## Peregrine Falcon

### \$500-\$999

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## Gifts \$100-\$499

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The Board of Trustees generally meets the third Wednesday of each month, at 7:00 P.M. All RAPTOR INC. members are welcome to attend.  
Contact [president@raptorinc.org](mailto:president@raptorinc.org) for meeting time and location.

## Thank You To Our Veterinarians!

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email the article to:  
[director@raptorinc.org](mailto:director@raptorinc.org)  
or by mail to:  
RAPTOR Inc.  
961 Barg Salt Run Road  
Milford, Ohio 45150

To report an injured raptor in  
the Greater Cincinnati area call  
RAPTOR Inc.: (513) 825-3325

## Mission

"Conservation through raptor  
rehabilitation, education,  
research, and community  
engagement."



RAPTOR Inc.  
961 Barg Salt Run Road  
Milford, OH 45150

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## Sponsor a Banded Raptor

Since the fall of 1994, RAPTOR Inc. has been banding most rehabilitated birds released back into the wild. Over a long period of time, this will help us determine how successful our rehabilitation efforts are. You can get involved with our "Sponsor a Banded Raptor" program. Sponsors will receive a fact sheet on the selected species and a certificate with the following information:

- Species and date of release
- Weight at time of release
- U. S. Fish & Wildlife band number

If the bird you sponsor is recovered, you will be notified of the date and location of the recovery.

Yes, I would like to sponsor a banded bird of the species checked below:

- ☐ American Kestrel: \$50
- ☐ Eastern Screech Owl: \$50
- ☐ Cooper's Hawk: \$50
- ☐ Barred Owl: \$50
- ☐ Red-shouldered Hawk: \$50
- ☐ Great Horned Owl: \$50
- ☐ Red-tailed Hawk: \$50

Name:

Address:

City:  State:  Zip:

Phone:  Email:

In the event your selection is not available, we will contact you to arrange an alternative. Sponsoring a bird is tax deductible. All proceeds benefit RAPTOR Inc. Complete this form, enclose a check or money order, and mail to: RAPTOR Inc., 961 Barg Salt Run Road, Milford, Ohio 45150

Thank you for your support of RAPTOR Inc.!