

WINGBEATS

Issue 2026 #1



RAPTOR Inc. has a measurable impact on local wildlife every year, but a 1997 rescue highlights just how far that impact can reach and demonstrates the lasting value of our rehabilitation efforts. See the story on page 3.

SOARING HIGHER, STILL

After 25 wonderful years volunteering in many roles at RAPTOR Inc., I have officially retired. I'm stepping back from daily responsibilities but will continue volunteering whenever needed. It's been an honor and privilege to serve this incredible organization that inspires raptor conservation.

You know the famous quote, "Choose a job you love, and you will never have to work a day in your life." From my early days volunteering on Saturdays cleaning the mews, to becoming RAPTOR Inc.'s first Executive Director, and later Director of Avian Operations, I've had the pleasure of working alongside passionate staff and volunteers who freely give their time for the love of the birds and the mission. I've truly loved my time here, but I'm ready for the next chapter—no alarm clock for me!

My 33 years working in a hospital, surviving inspections, writing procedures, implementing new protocols, and training staff, gave me valuable experience. Still, RAPTOR Inc. challenged me to learn even more, and I'm so grateful for the coaching and patience I received. As an introvert, giving educational presentations was initially daunting, but seeing guests' smiles while meeting the birds reminded me of the power and purpose of raptor education.



Photo: Marc Alverson



Photo: Marc Alverson

I view rehabilitation differently now than when I began. It's not just about healing a bird. It's also about the caring people who find it, and everyone in the organization who follows its recovery. By the time a bird is admitted, it may already be a social media "celebrity," and as it heals, it becomes a "miracle bird" to us all.

Thank you to everyone who has supported me over the past 25 years and helped make RAPTOR Inc. the best raptor rehabilitation facility in southern Ohio. I look forward to watching the continued growth of this amazing organization I've been so fortunate to serve.

Cindy Alverson

SECOND CHANCES

By Jim Rahtz, RAPTOR Volunteer

One of my favorite nature-related stories tells of a large storm that hit a beach area. Strolling there afterwards, a man saw that thousands of starfish had been washed up during the storm and were now stranded on the sand. Up ahead, a young boy was picking up individual starfish and throwing them back into the ocean.

Shaking his head, the man said, “You’re wasting your time. There are too many, and you can’t possibly make a difference.”

The boy smiled, picked up another starfish, heaved it out into the sea, and replied, “It made a difference to that one.”

The old man and the boy spent the rest of the afternoon tossing starfish back into the water.

Here at RAPTOR, Inc., we are able to make a huge difference for birds of prey in the tristate area. In 2025, volunteers and staff answered the call for 365 birds, with 64% of the treated birds released back into the wild. That’s a great success story in and of itself, but some of these birds have extraordinary individual tales to tell.

Most birds that RAPTOR works with have an identification band placed on a leg before their release back into nature. If later recovered, these bands can reveal insights into the lives of these winged wonders.

In October, 1996, RAPTOR volunteer Jeff Hays picked up a red-tailed hawk with a broken wing from Sycamore High School in Cincinnati. With such a severe injury, this bird (band #1387-18838) spent the entire winter being rehabilitated. Still, it was ready for release the following March. Once again in the wild, the hawk used its repaired wing to fly all the way to Michigan, where it lived another four years.

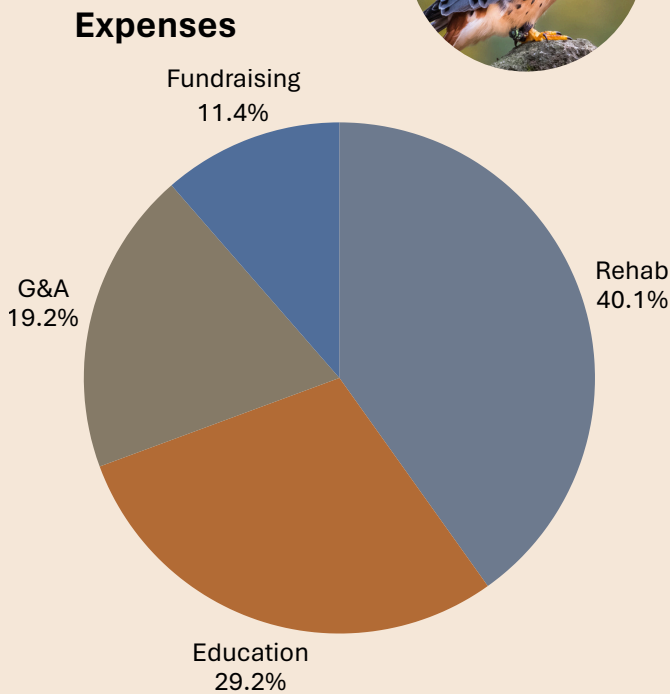
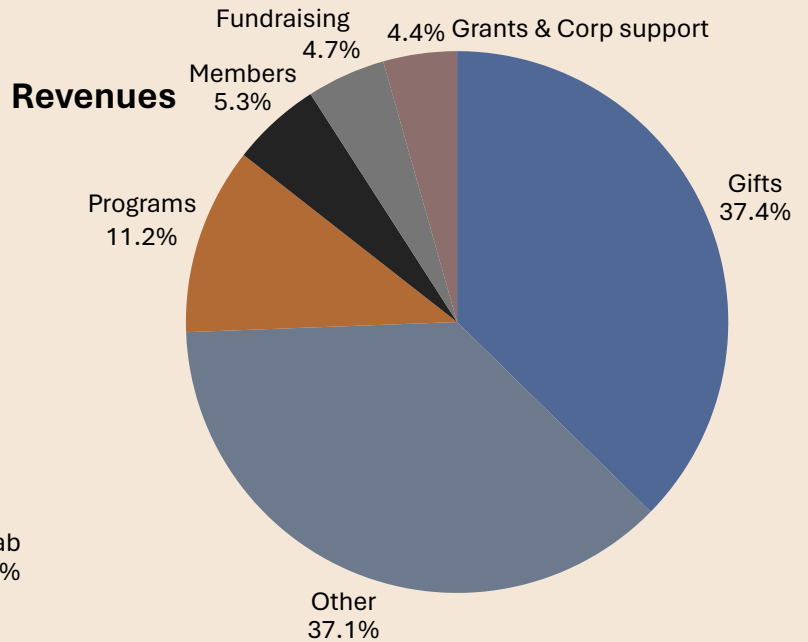
Continued on Page 11.



A mother great horned owl keeps a watchful eye over her surroundings while protecting her sleeping puff ball of an owlet. Unlikely as it is, it's not hard to imagine this 2021 photo by Jordan West could be #608-67162 and one of her young.

2025 BY THE NUMBERS

THE STORY OF OUR IMPACT



2025 ADMISSIONS

Species	# / %
Red-tailed hawk	86 / 24%
Great horned owl	60 / 16%
Red-shouldered hawk	54 / 15%
Cooper's hawk	45 / 12%
Barred owl	36 / 10%
Eastern screech owl	26 / 7%
American kestrel	24 / 7%
Turkey vulture	14 / 4%
Black vulture	7 / 2%
Bald eagle	4 / 1%
Broad-winged hawk	2 / 1%
Peregrine falcon	1 / 0%
Common nighthawk	1 / 0%
Osprey	1 / 0%
Sharp-shinned hawk	1 / 0%
Short-eared owl	1 / 0%
Snowy owl	1 / 0%

AMAZON WISH LIST



Just scan the QR code to access our Amazon Wish List. Everything you order for us will be delivered to RAPTOR Inc. Need other ideas? You can be sure we always need -

- paper towels
- old newspapers
- nitrile gloves (m)

THE STORY OF OUR IMPACT

 **1978**

The year RAPTOR Inc. is **incorporated**, as a nonprofit. Our origin dates to a group of passionate birders in the early '70s.

Youth under 18 attending RAPTOR Inc. conservation education programs in 2025.

10,028 

 **8,443**

Greater Cincinnati **adults attending** RAPTOR Inc. conservation education programs in 2025.

Total service **hours** of RAPTOR Inc.'s 128 Volunteers in 2025.

6,409 

 **128**

Active RAPTOR Inc. **volunteers** in 2025.

The percent of RAPTOR's treated **birds released** back into nature in 2025.

64% 

 **33% - 40%**

The average **U.S. release rate** for raptors reported at rehabilitation facilities across the US.


The number of **orphaned, sick, and injured raptors** admitted to the RAPTOR Hospital ICU in 2025.

365 

 **6,543**

Orphaned, injured, and sick raptors admitted to the **RAPTOR Hospital ICU, 2001-2025.**

Raptor **species** admitted to the RAPTOR Hospital ICU in 2025 and total 2021-2025, respectively.

17 & 24 

 **419**

The number of active RAPTOR Inc. **members** as of December 31, 2025.



Counties in OH and KY that RAPTOR Inc. admitted birds from in 2025.

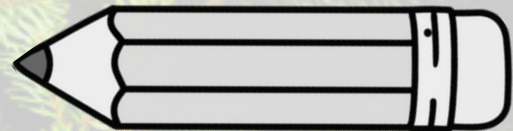
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The colors of these pages are inspired by the American kestrel.



A Naturalist's Notes

By Jordan West



(1) A barred owl peeks out from its towering beech condo. (2) A gorgeous arctic visitor has taken a liking to perching and hunting within the woodlands on this afternoon. (3) An adult male red morph Eastern screech owl wakes up to the warmth of the morning sun in one of the most perfectly snug cavities imaginable. (4) A barred owl emerges at dusk to hunt. The owl, using its extremely dialed sense of hearing, eventually located a vole beneath the surface of the snow. (5) A great horned owl awakes to a face full of fresh powdery snowfall dropping down from the weighted pine needles. This was a beautiful scene on a -6° morning, and I'm still feeling the effects, but experiences like this make enduring the bitter cold worth it.

OWL PROWL

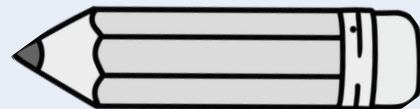


Sax-Zim Bog, MN: Above, a great grey owl takes the plunge. This iconic and mysterious bird awoke, slipped from its roost, and began its silent hunt as the bright winter sun faded behind gathering clouds. Who isn't impressed by every encounter with this remarkable species? Each sighting leaves a lasting impression.

On the left, the owl's size and piercing eyes command attention. This one had been preening its talons from a lichen-covered perch before gliding off to hunt.

A Naturalist's Notes

By Jordan West



MEET SHANNON FRANTZ

RAPTOR Inc. is excited to welcome Shannon Frantz as our new Director of Rehabilitation. Shannon joined us in October 2025 and has worked side-by-side with Cindy Alverson through Cindy's January 31st retirement. Shannon has 13 years of experience in veterinary medicine, including emergency, specialty surgery, and urgent care. She brings deep clinical experience and a calm, capable presence as we approach baby season. Welcome, Shannon.

Shannon came to RAPTOR Inc with experience triaging critical patients, running lab work, administering fluids, managing wound and bandage care, and assisting in other advanced procedures, including CPR and stabilization of unstable animals. Shannon has coordinated a surgeon's service at a regional specialty veterinary hospital, tracking inpatients, writing treatment plans, guiding families through medical and financial decisions, and mentoring veterinary support staff.



Shannon rescuing a bald eagle at East Fork State Park on January 1, 2026, the first bird admitted in 2026.

She has extensive experiences across a wide range of animals, small and large, with duties that at one time extended to managing the daily care and medical treatments for more than 30 horses.

Those duties sharpened her instincts and decision-making, which clearly prepared her well for working with eagles, hawks, owls, and vultures.

While raptors are a new chapter for Shannon, her years of experience proved to be a great training ground in anticipation for becoming our Director of Rehabilitation. She's committed to continued avian and wildlife rehabilitation training and is eager to grow in this field.

Her blend of technical skill, leadership, and compassion will strengthen RAPTOR Inc.'s ability to care for every injured bird that comes through our doors.



Shannon with turkey vulture ambassador, Orion.



IN MEMORY OF ...

PENNY ALDRIDGE from Gay Bullock

LEE HARDY from Michael Hardy

IN HONOR OF ...

JEANNE MENKE
from Edward Balogh

CINDY ALVERSON
from Dayle Deardurff

Bald Eagle - \$10,000 or more

Cincinnati Zoo
Robert Schiff, Jr

Osprey - \$1,000-\$9,999

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Peregrine Falcon - \$500-\$999

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In-Kind

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Tracy Hayden
Robert & Wendy Leach

These supporters sustained RAPTOR Inc.'s mission with generous gifts in the fourth quarter of 2025.

Second Chances, cont. from Page 3

Even more amazing is the great horned owl with band #608-67162. This bird was found in April, 1997, in Fairfield, Ohio, tangled in string. Coincidentally enough, Jeff Hays also responded to this call. Freed from the entanglement, the owl, which was at least one year old at the time, made the most of this second chance. The band was not recovered until the owl was brought to a veterinarian last April. This owl had lived at least 29 years in the wild, the longest known lifespan of any great horned owl outside of captivity. This owl was a homebody as well; it was found less than ½ mile from where Jeff had released it all those years ago.

Your providing that owl with an extra 28 years of survival is impressive enough, but that's not even the whole story. In a long-term study of great horned owls in the Greater Cincinnati area, it was determined that the average successful nest produces 1.7 chicks per year. Based on that study, there's a good chance that this owl had a hand in raising over 40 owlets -- all to the benefit of our local environment. I'd also like to think that this wise old owl passed along lessons learned from its long experience to help its young survive, (and to stay away from string). That's just two of the thousands of birds that RAPTOR staff and volunteers have allowed to reach their full potential. Imagine the amazing stories they could tell (and sometimes do).

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RAPTOR INC.
OPEN HOUSE
ON MARCH 29
1 PM - 4 PM**

COMING PUBLIC APPEARANCES

RAPTOR Inc. travels throughout our region offering free public conservation education events with live raptors. Scan the QR code on the right for a list of upcoming events.



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D.J. Haeussler, DVM
J. Peter Hill, DVM
Vanessa Kuonen Cavens, DVM
Paul Levitas, DVM
Ann Manharth, DVM

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Sponsor a Banded Raptor

Since the fall of 1994, RAPTOR Inc. has been banding birds released back into the wild. Each tiny band is a symbol of recovery and a new beginning, and every return offers clues to the our rehabilitation work and the resilience of the birds we return to nature. Through our **Sponsor a Banded Raptor** program, you can join that story. Sponsors receive a personalized certificate with the bird's unique band details (sent to the US Geological Survey's Bird Banding Lab) and a Fact Sheet that reveals what makes the species remarkable.

Yes, I would like to sponsor the banded raptor species indicated below, and you will contact me to arrange an alternative if the selection(s) is (are) not available. **My \$250 payment (check or card information) is enclosed.**

- American kestrel Barred owl Cooper's hawk Eastern screech owl
- Great horned owl Red-shouldered hawk Red-tailed hawk

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