



HAWKS ALOFT, Inc.

Conservation, Avian
Research & Education



Wingspan Gala A Celebration of Flight

**Stephanie Schulz
Marketing Specialist**

WOW! What a joyous evening we had!

We are so grateful that so many of you joined us to celebrate 30 years of Hawks Aloft.

There were a lot of nerves leading up to the gala, as it had been about six years since the last big HAI event and, for myself, a first time in my professional career being on the planning side of it all. Working as a photographer for so long, I've typically been solely on the vendor side of events, so this was a whole new experience for me! I really enjoyed creating graphics and marketing materials for our event and working with our educators, Liz Roberts and Jenny Sternheim, and volunteer, Pat Hawley, to make our silent auction come together beautifully.

Thank you to our fabulous group of volunteers that helped with last-minute tasks and day-of-duties. We appreciate all your hard work, Evelyn McGarry, Ruth Latta, Amelia Thompson, and Pat Hawley!

We especially thank our amazing event planner, Calle Poindexter of [High Point Nonprofit Services](#), for keeping us on track and making this event possible.



Visit the link below to view more photos from our event.

Photos by Stephanie Schulz.

[PHOTO GALLERY](#)



**The Owl Whisperer
Lisa Morgan**

**Gail Garber
Executive Director**

We have received calls about injured birds since our inception, likely because of the first word of our name, Hawks Aloft. Upon finding an injured bird, callers began seeking help for that animal, and they called us. At our inception, we had not intended to become a rehabilitation organization. Our mission statement focused on education, research, and collaboration with other organizations.

It was just over 10 years ago that Lisa Morgan joined our team. Tiny and dynamic, she dramatically changed the path of Hawks Aloft. Lisa came to us with extensive rehab experience, gained from her many years of work in Florida, followed by additional years at the New Mexico Wildlife Center (NMWLC), our destination of choice for the injured birds that did come our way.

Newly arrived to Corrales, Lisa, like many of us in the organization, became a volunteer! It was not long before we learned of her many skills, a woman of many talents. She even brought her own incubator with her! When calls came in, she was there to help stabilize birds through the first critical hours, volunteering remotely with NMWLC by caring for birds that found their way to us.

But, with rehabilitation not part of our mission, there was zero funding available for such a position. Instead, Lisa became a seasonal field technician, surveying for birds in the bosque and the Jemez Mountains. Along the way, she acquired more medical equipment, and medications. Injured birds kept on arriving, too! It was almost as if they somehow knew we had this amazing rehabilitator! Lisa began working with volunteers, building a cadre of rescuers, willing to drive all over the state to deliver injured birds to care.

Lisa had a magical bond with each bird that came her way, but owls were her particular passion. The more serious the injury, the more she poured her inner strength into that bird, working medical miracles, along with the guidance and support of our veterinarians. As the program grew under her leadership, she earned the name, "Owl Whisperer". Although we have other amazing rehabbers on our team, nearly all owls are directed to Lisa for care.

Lisa's direct passion, her baby, is the most direct way we help birds of prey. The raptor rescue program operates year-round, seven days a week during daylight hours, although many late night rescues also occur. This month we say goodbye to Lisa, who has devoted herself to this arm of Hawks Aloft. Ten years! I think of Lisa as my sister now, and I, along with all of you, will miss her terribly when she moves to Minnesota to be closer to family. Please join me in giving her a big thank you for her dedication.

Are you interested in joining Team Hawks Aloft? We particularly seek well-rounded individuals that can support our mission. Please visit our website for available paid and volunteer positions.

Photos by a variety of Hawks Aloft staff or volunteers.

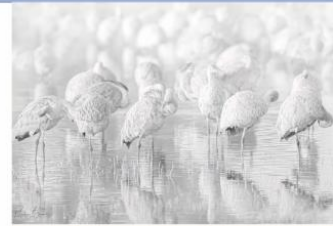


Celebrating Doug and Kristin

Doug and Kristin Brown came to Hawks in 2008, after longtime volunteer David Powell, introduced all of us. They have been the primary drivers of our extensive photo library built photo by photo. We celebrate their contributions over these last 16 years!

[Doug Brown Photography](#) [Kristin C Brown Photography](#)

Doug and Kristin Brown



We celebrate the work of Kristin and Doug, both internationally recognized, award winning photographers and active volunteers at Hawks Aloft. They have generously donated their images to us since 2008.





A Weekend in the Mountains!

by Jenny Sternheim
Education & Outreach Coordinator

The drive to Monte Vista, Colorado was, as always, beautiful. On almost every telephone pole a [Red-tailed Hawk](#) sat perched, their distinct football shape forming a shadow against the sun. We also were able to spot a few [American Kestrels](#), tails waving in the wind. As the city got closer, dark clouds rolled in but, thankfully, held off until we arrived at the hotel. We were graced with an intense snowstorm that night, with almost 4 inches of snow covering the ground and our cars.

The first day of the [Monte Vista Crane Festival](#) was very busy but very rewarding. Hundreds of people of all ages approached our booth, eager to see the birds and learn about them.

One attendee who really impressed me was a young girl of about 9 or 10 who stayed close to our booth for nearly two hours. She knew a lot of information already but asked questions about what the birds ate, how their behaviors differed around us from more natural behaviors in the wild, and how they interacted with each other. She reminded me of a younger version of myself. Growing up, I researched a lot of facts about animals but still had an insatiable curiosity to learn from people who took care of those animals.

Another young woman stuck close to our booth for an extended period, even longer than the young girl. She sat quietly, closely observing the behavior of the birds, but rarely asked questions. She reminded me of an older version of myself, someone interested in animal behavior and why those behaviors happen, but secure in her knowledge about basic facts.

Most people who visited our booth stayed for a few minutes, asking one or two questions but then moved on, which is why these two girls distinctly stood out. Their extended interest in our birds made the day worthwhile. It is always a rewarding feeling to know that our avian ambassadors inspire the same feelings in people as birds they see in the wild. This is what brings us back to Monte Vista year after year.



The Raptor Field Season

Begins

Dr. Trevor Fetz Research Director

March was a stressful month for me, as I rushed to finish up the last of the annual reports. But the upside to March was the slow trickle of breeding season field work starting up. Surveys for the Bosque Nesting Raptors project began in early March. The activity in my survey area (the north half of the Corrales bosque) was relatively light. By the end of the first survey period, I had only detected four active [Cooper's Hawk](#) territories, which is about half of the normal number of active nests I ultimately find. The highlight was a [Common Black Hawk](#). I suspect it was only a transient bird, but I'll be closely looking for signs of nesting activity. It was disappointing not to find any active Great Horned Owl nests, but there could be owls using cottonwood cavities that I have not yet located.



Surveys for the Valles Caldera Long-term Owl Community Study also often begin in late March, but logistical conflicts pushed us back to an April start date. Jessalyn Ayars and I were able to get two survey nights completed during the first week of April. All roads in Valles Caldera remain closed due to snow, except for the main entry road. So, most of our call points remain inaccessible.

Among the nine call points we have been able to access so far, most require long walk-ins over varying terrain ranging from bare ground to 3-4' deep snow drifts. Too much bare ground for snowshoes and drifts too deep to comfortably walk through. It is not enjoyable hiking, especially in the dark. We did detect 14 total owls and four different species during the first two nights of surveys, including [Northern Pygmy-Owl](#), [Northern Saw-whet Owl](#), [Long-eared Owl](#), and [Great Horned Owl](#). We also detected one "winnowing" [Wilson's Snipe](#), the earliest we have ever detected that species on the Preserve. The intensity of owl surveys will increase as the roads on Valles Caldera begin to open up. In the meantime, we are doing a lot of hiking to reach the call points that are currently realistic to access.

*Common Black Hawk photo by Tony Thomas
Long-eared Owl photo by Larry Rimer*



Thank you for LEAFing us a note!

Our talented Liz Roberts created this lovely tree for our gala guests to write notes about why they support Hawks Aloft. We'd like to share some of our favorites with you below. Click on the image to view larger.

We thank each donor who contributed to our live and silent auctions! Thanks to your generous contributions, we raised \$3,265 in our silent auction and \$9,255 in our live auction!!!



Thank you Auction Donors!

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Larry Rimer©2024

Gorge-ous Nest Searches on the Rio Grande Gorge

Jessalyn Ayars
**Raptor and Songbird Field
Technician**

Hello from the field! Spring has sprung (although the cold, wind, and precipitation seem to say otherwise), and we have begun monitoring raptor nests in the bosque in Albuquerque, mine sites in Western New Mexico, and the Rio Grande Gorge. I spent the last few days of March on the Rio Grande Gorge with project manager, Susan Harrelson, and volunteer, Susan Coulter, scouring the cliffs for stick nests, scrapes, and territorial raptors.

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) contracts us to do this work to protect nesting raptors from human activity. We survey from Pilar north to Southern Colorado, prioritizing

known previous nest sites. The high-desert plain is dominated by low prickly pear cacti, grasses, sagebrush, and dark volcanic rock, with snow-capped mountains looming in the distance. The gorge appears suddenly as a deep crack in the plain. Raptors prefer to nest on tall, sheer cliffs in the gorge, which reduce the accessibility of their nests to mammalian predators. [Golden Eagles](#) and [Red-tailed Hawks](#) build stick nests (Photo 1, a stick nest that looks like it might slide off the cliff), while [Peregrine](#) and [Prairie Falcons](#) use scrapes or alcoves in the cliffs. We managed to visit a good number of sites, despite our trip being pushed back by a winter storm and shortened by high winds.

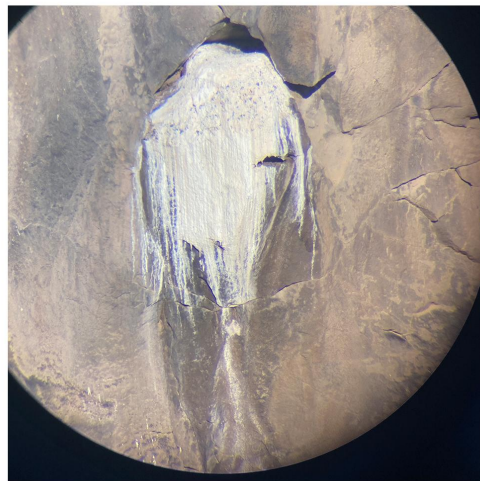


Likely due to the late winter storms, we saw few raptors or nests with fresh material added. However, we did observe a Prairie Falcon in an area where they have previously nested. As we searched the cliffs for activity and fresh materials on nests, the falcon flew in and perched, calling at us. It never moved to a nest or scrape, but its irritation at our presence indicates that it will likely nest in this area, perhaps in this large, heavily white-washed alcove. We also saw a Golden Eagle, several Red-tailed Hawks, a Peregrine Falcon, and a [Turkey Vulture](#)!



Stay tuned for updates as the season progresses!

*Golden Eagle photo by Larry Rimer
Prairie Falcon photos, digiscoped by
Jessalyn Ayars*



JOIN OUR TEAM! Now Hiring

RAPTOR RESCUE COORDINATOR & WILDLIFE REHABILITATOR
Full time Permanent Position

SONGBIRD AND RAPTOR FIELD TECHNICIAN
May 1 – July 30 (Start and End Dates Are Flexible)

MARKETING/FUNDRAISING SPECIALIST
Part time permanent position



Voracious Verdins!

by Nate & Jeanne Gowan
Guest Authors

When you travel to southern New Mexico be sure to look out for tiny gray birds with yellow heads. The [Verdin](#) has been described as a bundle of energy and, while camping at Caballo Lake State Park, we were treated to our first sighting of them. Both sexes resemble each other, but immature Verdins almost look like a

separate species as they are overall gray. As they mature they develop their characteristic yellow head and rufous shoulder patches.

Scientists first placed Verdins in the same family as chickadees but now believe its closest relatives are several species of birds found in the Eastern Hemisphere. Taxonomically, they are the only member of their family in North America. Verdins are permanent residents in southern New Mexico deserts where the habitat best accommodates their nesting habits.

Verdins build oval shaped nests above ground, often in thorny shrubs. They use nests for both breeding and roosting. Compared to the size of the bird, the breeding nests are quite large. The roosting nests are much smaller. The male might have to build several nests before the female finally chooses one to lay her pale green and red-brown eggs. The nests are artfully constructed and may last several years in the dry desert. Verdins place the nest entrance low on one side enabling cooling breezes in summer and away from colder wind in the winter. They insulate their nest cavities with feathers, grasses and leaves. But in both cold or warm temperatures, Verdin remains an active bird.

Voracious hunters, Verdins hop from branch to branch to capture spiders and other

insects that comprise most of their diet. They also feed on fruits, seeds and nectar from flowering plants and cacti. Verdin also have been found on hummingbird feeders, something we witnessed first-hand while living in western Arizona.

We miss seeing these animated and beautiful birds and look forward to traveling again to southern New Mexico to witness their antics. If you want to attract one to your yard or campsite, just put out some orange halves. They love them.

All Photos by Nate Gowan

Taking Flight

**by Stephanie Schulz
Marketing Specialist**

It is bittersweet to make the choice to leave Hawks Aloft, but April will be my last month here. I am being called to go back to my roots in photography and art so I am taking a chance on myself.

I am grateful to Gail for seeing my potential and giving me the opportunity and space to learn new skills. I have a lot of respect for this small team of hard-working staff and volunteers that make Hawks Aloft what it is. Their care shines bright for the birds they rescue and rehabilitate. I want this organization to thrive and hope to be back around to photograph some of the success along the way. I also leave with memorable moments of rooming with two [Red-tailed Hawks](#), a [Barn Owl](#), and a couple [American Kestrels](#)! Not everyone has an experience like that!



You can keep up with my photography [here](#).

**Thank you and see
you later!**

Hawks Aloft Tours



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**Birding Costa Rica
with
Hawks Aloft &
Holbrook Travel
February 9 - 19, 2025**

From \$3,625.00

It will have been 10 years since our inaugural visit to the wonders of Costa Rica, with its incredible biodiversity found in 12 different climate zones and numerous ecosystems packed into a small country. We are excited to return again!



We will begin our journey with a stay at Selva Verde Lodge, owned by Holbrook Travel since the mid-1980s. The lodge protects 500 acres of primary forest in the Sarapiquí region. It was after a visit to explore Costa Rica that Andrea Holbrook wanted to take an active part in preserving the country's natural resources. As a result, visitors might view some of the country's 900-plus bird species, including toucans, macaws, motmots, quetzals and trogons. Our journey will take us to the cloud forest, Caribbean lowland rainforest, arid mountain peaks, and dry Pacific forests.

Costa Rica's natural wealth is no accident. In the mid-20th century, leadership determined that conservation was the future of the nation. Now, 23 percent of Costa Rica's land mass is under preservation. Rather than developing a military, officials instead built educational and social security programs. Despite the ensuing growth of tourism, the country remains peaceful, friendly and open. Costa Ricans continue to exude appreciation and joy for the treasures of their country.

Highlights include:

- Take guided hikes in the private rainforest reserve at [Selva Verde Lodge](#), home to more than 350 bird species, including the endangered [Great Green Macaw](#).
- Ascend the 328-foot suspended walkway at [Tirimbina Biological Reserve](#) for the

chance to see species that spend their time high within the forest canopy layer. Enjoy an evening talk about the lives of bats!

- Bird the trails of the world-renowned [La Selva Biological Station](#), where more than half of Costa Rica's species have been recorded, including the [Great Tinamou](#), [Ornate Hawk-eagle](#), [Pied Puffbird](#), and [Spectacled Owl](#).
- Spend a full day in [Carara National Park](#), an ecologically diverse hotspot due to its location at the convergence of northwestern tropical dry forest and humid southern Pacific rainforest with perhaps its most famous inhabitants, not birds, the enormous American crocodiles that lounge on the banks.
- Search for the [Resplendent Quetzal](#), [Slaty Flowerpiercer](#), [Ruddy Treerunner](#), and other high-elevation species in the cloud forests of the [Talamanca Mountains](#).

[Click here for more details and a complete itinerary.](#)

We want to thank Doug Brown and Kristin Brown for providing numerous bird photos from their previous trips to Costa Rica.

*Resplendent Quetzal and Spectacled Owl
photos by [Doug Brown Photography](#).*



Brazil!
**Natural Wonders of the
Pantanal**

**With Hawks Aloft, Inc. & Holbrook
Travel**

Oct 15, 2025 - Oct 29, 2025

From \$12,450

Two Spots Left!



Join Hawks Aloft for the expedition of a lifetime! The Pantanal in central-western Brazil is the world's largest freshwater wetland and one of the most biodiverse habitats on the South American continent.

The star residents are jaguars that roam, hunt, and lounge on the forested riverbanks. [Hyacinth Macaw](#), the world's largest parrot, is abundant in the Pantanal with about 3,000 individuals that dine on fruits and nuts and nest in naturally hollow manduvi trees.

Our exceptional 15-day adventure also includes close range views of ocelot, giant anteater, maned wolf, capybara, tamandua, giant otters and more. Birdlife is extraordinary with species like the [Jabiru](#), [Greater Rhea](#), and [Toco Toucan](#). We will explore on foot and small-boat excursions, with several nights aboard comfortable floating accommodations that put us in the heart of the action.

This trip was developed especially for Hawks Aloft based on your member requests. It has been four years in the planning and included a personal visit by Pelin Karaca, vice-president of Holbrook who has traveled the world. Her words to Gail Garber, following her visit were, "It WAS the trip of a lifetime!"

[Click here for full details and for registration information.](#)

Jaguar and Giant River Otter - photos by Pelin Karaca

Hawks Aloft Merchandise



T-shirts (both long and short-sleeved) are \$30 and can be ordered on our website or can be picked up at the office. Ladies sizes are available in short sleeves; all long-sleeved shirts are unisex, and we also have youth sizes in short sleeves available for \$25.

[Order yours today!](#)

**Donate Your Old Car
to Hawks Aloft!**



Your old car might just be taking up space in your garage--but it could make a huge difference in the lives of New Mexico's native birds, natural landscapes, and the many people who delight in these things.

Car donation is simple. And in fact, it might just make your life *easier*.

[Here's the link to donate your old vehicle!](#)

Call our office if you still have questions: **505-828-9455**.

**Thank you,
One Community Auto!**



Where Everybody Wins!

Support Hawks Aloft by Shopping at Smith's

Many of you have long been Hawks Aloft supporters, and a good number of you have also been longtime Smith's shoppers. For those not in the know, the grocery chain has a program that provides a small kick-back quarterly to nonprofits when their supporters link their shopper's cards to the organization.



The company recently changed their policies regarding the program—so even if you've signed up in the past, you may need to do it again! The good news is that it is easy to do so.

1. Go to [Smith's Foods](#)
2. Either create an account or sign-in to an existing one
3. Once logged in, click on "**Account Summary**" on the left sidebar
4. From there, scroll down to "**Inspiring Donations Program**" and click "**Enroll**"
5. A searchable list will come up, you can either search for "**Hawks Aloft**" or enter our ID number for the program, "**GL430**"
6. Shop using your card and know that every time you do, you help out Hawks Aloft!

We appreciate your ongoing support in this, and so many other capacities!

Adopt A Raptor

**Meet Shadow
Western Screech-Owl**

Shadow came to Hawks Aloft in August of



2013 from the Santa Fe Raptor Center, where he had been in care since December 2012. We aren't quite sure how Shadow was injured, but it is very possible that he was hit by a car or flew into a window with enough force to severely injure his wing. Somehow, over the years, his name expanded to "Shadow Man"! Now retired, he is at the upper age limit for his species and is much beloved by everyone who works with him.

Western Screech-Owls are non-migratory and stay in their breeding range year round and are found throughout the western United States, from New Mexico all the way up to Alaska. They're known for their flexible choice of habitat, from deciduous forests to tall cottonwoods, and beyond. And they don't seem to be too bothered by being close to us humans, either.

When you adopt a Hawks Aloft raptor you receive:

- A one-year Hawks Aloft membership
- An adoption certificate
- An information sheet about the individual bird you have adopted
- Exclusive access to video updates about your bird
- Your choice of:
 1. A professional 8×10 photo of your bird, or
 2. A stuffed Audubon Bird with realistic vocalizations (if available for that species)

[Click here to learn more about our Avian Ambassadors](#)

Photo by Larry Rimer



Photographer's Monthly Gallery

Keith Bauer

Keith is an Albuquerque, New Mexico nature photographer and instructor. His Extensive background in photography started with traditional black and white darkroom work, continued through college in a professional studio specializing in portraits, weddings and commercial photography and has continued with

his passion for nature photography and education.

Keith will be leading/co-leading workshops to Bosque del Apache NWR in December 2024, Yellowstone National Park in January 2025, and a Florida birding trip in March 2025. [Details are available on his website.](#)

Keith is the co-author of the popular e-book, *The Complete Video Guide to LightRoom for*

Nature Photography. If you would like to take your LightRoom skills to the next level, [click here for more information](#).

[View more of Keith's photos on his website.](#)

Image 1: Moose - Grand Tetons National Park

Image 2: Bald Eagle - Yellowstone National Park

Image 3: Moose - Yellowstone National Park

Image 4: Ground Fog - Lamar Valley, Yellowstone National Park

Image 5: Red Fox - Yellowstone National Park







Keith Bauer
Photography



Keith Bauer
Photography

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Thank You to our February Donors, Members, and new Volunteers!	Our Veterinarians and Rehabilitators	March Calls and Intakes
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ALL of your support!**

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Conservation Education, Avian Research, Raptor Rescue
& Collaboration with Others

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Linda Contos, *DVM, Triage
Veterinarian*
Brian Dykstra, *Surveyor*
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