



# HAWKS ALOFT

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



## **Costa Rica A Hawks Aloft & Holbrook Travel Adventure**

**By Tom Mayer  
Surveyor, Volunteer, Donor**

After 10 years, Hawks Aloft returned to Costa Rica in February 2025 for some of the best birding in the world. Costa Rica provides a great variety of habitats for resident tropical and migratory birds from North America. The country is bordered by both the Atlantic and



Pacific oceans, separated by a range of high volcanic mountains, all of which give it 12 climate zones differing by elevation, precipitation, forest type, etc. The diversity of habitats hosts over 800 species of birds, including about 90 endemic or near-endemic species, in an area less than 20% of New Mexico. Seasons in the tropics are usually wet and dry (or less wet) periods. We were there in the “less wet” season.

Gail Garber of Hawks Aloft and Holbrook Travel put together an itinerary that would take us to a number of habitat types to give us a representative sample of the birds that thrive in these different habitats. Our group consisted of twelve enthusiastic folks from NM, CO, and CA, with experience ranging from beginner to expert. Our guide, Cristhian Urena, was a delightful fountain of information about the birds, flora, fauna, weather, and whatever else we wished to learn about Costa Rica.

Our destination for the first three nights, the renowned [Selva Verde Lodge](#), sampled the Caribbean lowlands. Typical birds of this hot, humid habitat include [Scarlet Macaw](#), [Red-lored Parrot](#), [Red-headed Barbet](#), [Montezuma Oropendola](#), [Silver-throated Tanager](#), [Bare-throated Tiger-heron](#), toucans, kingfishers, and, of course, many hummingbirds. This extended stay allowed us time to visit the nearby [Tirimbina Biological Reserve](#) and the [La Selva Biological Station](#). Tirimbina is a private reserve with a long, suspended walkway up into the canopy where much of the rainforest life resides. The evening also included an informative talk on the lives of bats. La Selva is a center of biological research for scientists around the world and welcomes groups of birders like us. Highlights included [Semi-plumbeous Hawk](#), [Chestnut-backed Antbird](#), and [Snowy Cotinga](#).

Our next destination involved a long drive to the Central Pacific Coast, including a stop at the mouth of the Tarcoles River. There we embarked on a boat tour to search for water and shore birds, as well as the enormous American Crocodiles that lurk in the river and lie on the banks. Tarcoles hosts an amazing diversity of wildlife including many mangrove species such as the [Mangrove Hummingbird](#), [Mangrove Warbler](#), [American Pygmy Kingfisher](#), as well as many shore birds, Scarlet Macaws, and the main attraction for tourists – the crocodiles.

After the boat tour we climbed a torturous dirt road to the remote [Macaw Lodge](#). Located in a transition zone between tropical humid forest and tropical dry forest, more than 350 species of birds are found in the area. This elegant lodge is set among lovely ponds and gardens on a farm that produces sustainable cacao and fruit. Two nights gave us the opportunity to hike the forest trails and leisurely check the gardens for forest and water



TOP PHOTO (L-R): EDEL MAYER, TOM MAYER, GERRY SWANSON, LINDA CONTOS, RICHARD PERHAM, NANCY THONEN, STACY SACCO, MARGARET PERHAM, GAIL GARBER. NOT SHOWN: DOROTHY STERMER, JEANNINE KINZER. PHOTO BY VIRGINIA EDLEY.

TOM MAYER CROSSING THE WATERFALL, PHOTO BY GAIL GARBER

birds. Delightful sightings included [Scarlet-rumped Tanager](#), [Grey-cowled Wood-Rail](#), [Least Grebe](#), [Northern Jacana](#), [Green Ibis](#), and more.

Our final destination for three nights was the [Suenos del Bosque Lodge](#) in the remote Savegre Valley, high in the cloud forest. Originally settled in the 1950s as a hunting and fishing retreat, this valley now attracts many birders with a single goal – the [Resplendent Quetzal](#). A large group of birders staring into the forest was a giveaway that Quetzals were near. Two long tail feathers sticking out of a hole in a tree indicated a nest with a male inside. Patiently waiting, we were eventually rewarded as the bird came out and a female appeared. Eventually another pair was located nearby. The day after, a pair was spotted flying near the lodge. Cristhian somehow found them perched in the forest nearby, giving us wonderful views of both male and female in their preferred habitat. With attention focused on the Quetzal, we saw fewer species in this habitat. But some that caught our eyes include [Ruddy Treerunner](#), [Louisiana Waterthrush](#), [Torrent Tyrannulet](#), [Black-capped Flycatcher](#), and [Long-tailed Silky-flycatcher](#).

It's a lot to pack into nine days of birding. All told we collectively logged about 180 species.

But the trick is to enjoy everything around you and not stress over finding the most species. There is a lot more to enjoy after all: Coatis, agoutis, frogs, insects, spiders, snakes, even poisonous ones, and the peace, quietude, and beauty of the rain forest. We learned of the country's commitment to conservation, sustainable farming and ranching practices, maintaining clean water, and green energy production. Costa Rica has thrived in recent times by encouraging ecotourism and welcoming people like us to come and enjoy their country. Enjoy we did! Perhaps enough to return again and again to sample even more of the country's beauty and abundant birdlife.

*Cover Photo Above: Semiplumbeous Hawk, photo by Gail Garber*

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CLOCKWISE FROM UPPER LEFT: RED-HEADED BARBET, PHOTO BY TOM MAYER; VOLCANO HUMMINGBIRD, PHOTO BY NANCY THONEN; CINNAMON WOODPECKER, PHOTO BY TOM MAYER; FIERY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD, PHOTO BY NANCY THONEN.

We thank the Avangrid Foundation for their very generous funding in support of our efforts to establish a raptor veterinary hospital in the Albuquerque metro area and Raptor Rescue New Mexico.



*Help Us Find A New Home!*



# HAWKS ALOFT

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

*The office where we have been housed for more than 20 years will be sold next year. Do you know of an available building to rent? We are looking for a space that can house a raptor veterinary clinic and our offices. The location must be in the general vicinity of the Albuquerque and surrounding communities.*

*Call us! 505-828-9455*



**We thank the Edward F. Zimmer Community Fund for their very generous funding in support of our efforts to establish a raptor veterinary hospital in the Albuquerque metro area and Raptor Rescue New Mexico.**





## **Charles (Chuck) Brandt In Memoriam**

**February 27, 1938 – February 10, 2025**

Chuck, as he was known to those of us who knew him well, was a part of Hawks Aloft before our organization existed! We met him sometime around 1990 when all of us were volunteers for the now defunct, local HawkWatch group. Passion for and about raptors was central to his being, following his retirement from the U.S. Forest Service. He gave of himself tirelessly as he immersed himself in the world of raptors, learning everything imaginable about this group of birds.

When HawkWatch moved their operation to Utah in 1994, Chuck was one of the founders of Hawks Aloft, Inc. He and his fellow raptor aficionados, Jim Place and Jerry Hobart, developed our very first research study, Raptor Driving Surveys of the Rio Grande Valley. In the largely open and agricultural lands, south of Albuquerque, they established 20 mile long driving routes with stops every mile to survey for raptors, using methods similar to that of the N.A. Breeding Bird Survey protocol. An unfunded citizen science study, volunteers continue to survey six routes in the Rio Grande Valley and two in the Estancia Valley. The data collected provide important information about population trends of different species. In 2025, New Mexico trend data were reported to the national [Prairie Falcon](#) Working Group, showing a decline in winter abundance of the species in two of our primarily grassland routes.

Chuck was our first long-term monthly donor! He exemplified 'whatever needed to be

done' from doing public outreach with our avian ambassadors to stitching on the annual raffle quilt. Visitors to our outreach booth responded to Chuck's passion by staying far longer near him and the falcon he held than with other volunteers. Back in our fledgling years, he encouraged us to send out a newsletter, to 'keep folks informed', and his initiative led to the HAI Flier you read today.

Chuck was very fortunate in the exceptional care provided by his daughter, Timothea Elizalde, and son, John Brandt. Following a stroke last fall, they took turns trading off at the rehab center so that one of them was present daily to advocate for his care. His family requests that, in lieu of flowers, a donation to Hawks Aloft would be very much appreciated.



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We thank Nusenda Credit Union for their very generous funding in support of our Living with the Landscape education program for Title 1 elementary school and our efforts to establish a raptor veterinary hospital in the Albuquerque metro area and Raptor Rescue New Mexico.

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## Summarizing the Winter Field Season

By Trevor Fetz, Ph.D.  
Research Director

The end of February also brought the end of the winter field season for the Middle Rio Grande Songbird Study. After documenting lower than normal overall bird numbers in December and January, avian abundance increased a bit during February. Activity increased substantially during the last couple weeks of February, as birds began preparing for the breeding season.

Among resident species, individual pairs became more noticeable and flocks less common. For example, on multiple occasions, I observed species such as [Western Bluebird](#), [Downy Woodpecker](#), [Hairy Woodpecker](#) and [White-breasted Nuthatch](#) paired up and investigating potential nest cavities. Similarly, larger [Bushtit](#) flocks were replaced by individual Bushtit pairs and [Lesser Goldfinch](#) males were displaying more frequently and pairing up with females. Singing among wintering species that don't breed in the bosque also picked up in February, especially among species such as [American Goldfinch](#), [Song Sparrow](#), and [White-crowned Sparrow](#).



We did not have many particularly unusual detections during the winter field season, but our survey team did have a few. Probably the most unusual was a [Gray Catbird](#) at one of our transects in the Albuquerque South Valley. Also notable were [Harris's Sparrow](#) detections in Rio Rancho and the Tingley Beach area in Albuquerque. We had three [Winter Wren](#) detections and one [Pacific Wren](#) detection in dense vegetation along the



Corrales drain. We also documented a fairly consistent small flock of [American Tree Sparrows](#) along the Corrales drain.

We did document robust sparrow diversity this winter. The nine sparrow species we observed included [Chipping Sparrow](#), American Tree Sparrow, [Dark-eyed Junco](#), White-crowned Sparrow, Harris's Sparrow, [White-throated Sparrow](#), Song Sparrow, [Lincoln's Sparrow](#), and [Spotted Towhee](#).

I am extremely grateful for the help provided by our volunteer survey team this winter. David Buckley, Nate Gowan, and Tom Mayer were vital in making this a successful winter field season. Their help allowed us to survey nine additional transects this winter. We need all of the qualified help we can, because Gail and I can only cover so much ground.

*Gray Catbird and Winter Wren, photos by Alan Murphy.*

## Three Volunteer Opportunities

Join the planning team for the Hawks Aloft benefit gala to be held in the spring of 2026.

A limited number of bosque nesting raptor survey routes are open. Monitor a patch of the Middle Rio Grande Bosque in the Albuquerque area. Must be familiar with use of a GPS unit.

Join the search team for a new location for Hawks Aloft, that will enable us to set up a raptor hospital.

If you have the capability and are interested, please contact [Gail Garber](#).



**Three Bird Stories  
& a Mystery**

at \$10 a Day

By Gail Garber  
Executive Director

The traumatic final three months of 2024 challenged our rehab team. Nearly all patient intakes resulted in death within 24 hours, euthanasia, or failure to thrive. In other words, there was lots of heartbreak for our human caretakers. In fact, none of the 11 patients that arrived in November survived. It is hard to keep a positive attitude and outlook among so much loss. January 2025 continued with traumatic injuries as well. So far, in 2025, we have received 27 patients, of which 17 died or were euthanized. Keep in mind that if a bird dies or is euthanized within 24 hours of admission, nothing could have been done that would have changed that outcome.

In late January, the severity of injuries began to lessen. It was January 29, 2025, when the little [Western Screech-Owl](#) was found grounded in the front yard of James Salazar. It was apparent that this little owl had suffered head trauma that we treated with pain medications and anti-inflammatory medications. Slowly, it began to improve.

Then the Rio Rancho Wastewater Treatment Facility became the unexpected swimming pool for a [Great Horned Owl](#) who arrived soaking wet after being fished out of the pond. Head trauma caused unequal pupils in her eyes, and she also was treated with the same protocol as the little owl.

Head trauma patients may or may not survive to release. It is impossible to predict which bird will successfully overcome the damage to the brain or vision. Once both owls seemed to recover well, they were examined by Candace Auten, DVM, at [Eye Care for Animals](#). Many thanks to Amelia Thompson and her husband, Ethan, for managing the vet visit and taking photographs. Dr. Candace gave both owls a passing grade and they were then slated for release to the wild.

Next on February 3, 2025, we got the call about a [Golden Eagle](#) found along the railroad tracks west of Grants. Michael Judd, who was inspecting the line, found the eagle hopping along the tracks in the middle of nowhere New Mexico! Lucky for the bird, Michael managed to catch him and drive him in his specialized railroad vehicle all the way to Albuquerque and into the waiting arms of Linda Contos, DVM, Larry Rimer, Amelia Thompson, and yours truly. The big guy was severely emaciated and weighed less than five pounds. He also had a very large open sore on his right knee that extended all the way to the bone. Fortunately, he didn't seem to have any fractures. We immediately began emaciation protocol and placed him into the large incubator to help him maintain his body temperature. Susan Skyler, DVM, joined in his care the following day and administered subcutaneous fluids before we moved him into the large eagle crate atop a heating pad. Emaciation protocol specifies that only clear fluids are given the first 24 hours via gavage if the bird can stand and hold its head up, or via injection into the inguinal areas. We continued this treatment regime for 24 hours before adding Carnivore Care, a liquid electrolyte and food supplement. This continued for several days until the eagle was strong enough to tolerate a vet visit.

We sincerely thank [Petroglyph Animal Hospital](#) for always opening their medical facility to our birds. On February 10, Dr. Kariana Atkinson (assisted by Larry Rimer and Amelia Thompson) examined the eagle, took X-rays, and drew blood. No fractures were found! Dr. Kari cleaned and stitched the knee wound and recommended an additional 10 days of antibiotics. She said the knee wound was so severe that it could have prevented the eagle





from hunting.

We moved the eagle into our large flight cage where he settled on the shelf about four feet above the ground. He immediately began eating whole food voraciously. To say he was 'hangry' would be an understatement! He gobbled down everything that was placed in front of him, 4-5 rats, quail and chicks a day. While he continued feasting on everything, he never moved from his perch on the shelf. Later, blood results showed no sign of lead or rodenticide toxicity, and he was negative for highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI).

**It costs \$10 each day to feed the Golden Eagle. That is a lot!!!**

Now, nearly a full month after his admission, he weighs 7.75 pounds, a gain of three pounds. He continues to pound down enormous quantities of food from his original perch and never attempts to move to a higher spot.

The mystery deepens. We know what is NOT wrong, but we don't know what IS wrong. That took us back to Dr. Kari this week for more tests, a specialized angled X-ray and a CT scan. More blood was drawn. Now, we wait . . .

**Please consider donating to our Golden Eagle Food Drive!  
Every dollar helps!**

*Screech Owls and Dr. John release of Great Horned Owl by by Kristin C. Brown Photography; Great Horned Owl in Flight by Doug Brown Photography; We especially thank Dr. Kari who came in on her day off to treat the eagle - shown here with her daughter; Golden Eagle images by Gail Garber.*

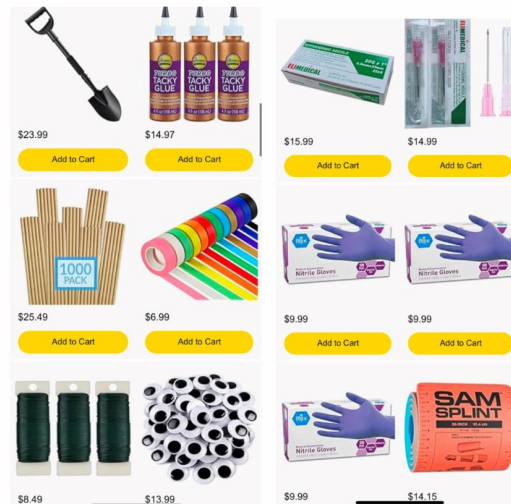
**DONATE**



We thank McCaughin Mountain Foundation for Empowerment for their ongoing support of Living with the Landscape conservation education program. This school-year-long program serves every student at selected Title 1 schools in the Albuquerque area. For the 2024-25 school year, we are

## Check Out Our Amazon Wishlist!

Want to give to Hawks Aloft, but also know exactly where your money is going? Consider buying something off our Amazon Wish List at:



[https://www.amazon.com/hz/wishlist/ls/2RKBK1WZR458Y?ref\\_=wl\\_share](https://www.amazon.com/hz/wishlist/ls/2RKBK1WZR458Y?ref_=wl_share)

Everything on our list will be used for either office work, raptor rescue, or education. Our education department uses gardening tools, crafts, and art supplies for various school programs and to develop new interactive and engaging games.

Big or small, we are extremely grateful if you are able to support us in any way possible!  
Thank you for considering us!

*The image is an example of some of the items found on our wishlist.*



**Greater Roadrunner**  
The Official Bird of New Mexico!





**By Nate & Jeanne Gowan**  
**Guest Authors**

The [Greater Roadrunner](#) is a member of the cuckoo family. Like other species of the family *Cuculidae*, they can be “brood parasites”, meaning that they will lay their eggs in the nests of other avian species for the hosts to raise (i.e., cuckoldry). While they do not especially resemble their cuckoo relatives in appearance,

they do make a call that sounds like a “coo”. Although they are primarily terrestrial birds, they are able to fly in short bursts. They can run up to 15 mph, and while not as fast as a coyote (with a nod to Warner Brothers), they can run faster than most other birds. And because most of their prey is on the ground, they do not have much reason to fly. They will fly enough to escape a predator, catch an insect or even reach a branch.

Roadrunners look very similar to dinosaurs, their remote ancestor. They even run in much the same fashion. The oldest known roadrunner fossil is over 30,000 years old. They originally inhabited forests but adapted to desert environs around 8,000 years ago. Humans and roadrunners cohabitate quite easily. Their appetite for insects and rodents is a benefit to humans. Many people try to lure roadrunners into their yards for free, natural pest control. However, humans should be reminded that roadrunners are pretty fierce predators and do attack other birds and small mammals. So, be cautious with your household pets.

The Greater Roadrunner has an elaborate mating ritual. Courtship begins with the male chasing the female on foot. He will then put on displays to attract the female to mate. Often the male will dangle a food offering such as a lizard or snake. Other times he wags his tail while making whirring or cooing sounds before jumping in the air onto his mate. The female will then accept the “gift” after mating has been completed.

On March 16, 1949, The New Mexico State Legislature adopted the Greater Roadrunner as its official state bird. No other bird is more closely connected to the people of New Mexico. Legend has it that early settlers believed if you were lost, the roadrunner would lead you back to your path. Many Native Americans believe that the spirit of the roadrunner has supernatural powers. For example, the Hopi tribe use the “X” on their Kachina figures to confuse evil spirits because the “X” footprint of the roadrunner doesn’t reveal which direction the bird is traveling. This unique “X” track is made by the bird’s two toes that point forward and the other two toes that point backwards. The scientific term for this trait is “zygodactyl”. Some believe this gives a roadrunner additional stability when running.

This legendary bird is always exciting to see. We often find one in our backyard water feature, enjoying his drink in solitude. The other birds are smart enough to let him enjoy the drink and be on his way. Beep beep!

*Photos by Nate Gowan.*

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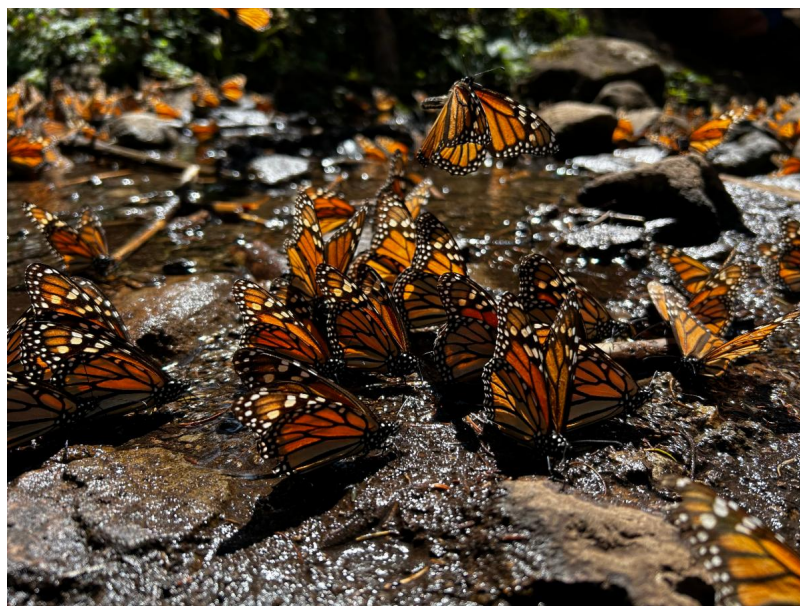




## **Monarch Madness**

**by Heather Rissi  
and Liz Roberts  
HAI Education  
Team**

We waited in silence, eyes trained to the dark patches along the branches and tree trunks. The dark areas clumped together like invasive mistletoe in the pines back home in New Mexico. But this was not New Mexico, nor were these clumps of a parasitic species.



As we watched, the dark brown bunch stirred and gradually exposed orange and gold coloring thus affirming the creatures were not simply dead leaves. After a time, the sun shone through parts of the thick woods, and suddenly, the creatures erupted from one branch, and then another, spilling out over the forest all around us.

As the sun shone on more tree branches, more and more monarch butterflies took flight,



flapping and gliding through the sky, some landing near the stream to drink water or on nearby wildflowers to sip sweet nectar to replenish their energy reserves.

Awed and speechless, we watched the butterflies and felt like we were in what can only be described as a real-life snow globe. Only this globe was full of hundreds of thousands of glittering monarch butterflies. Despite the crowd of nature and butterfly enthusiasts, it was so quiet that we could hear the millions of wings (like a meandering creek) as they left the colony and moved through the air.

These monarchs make up just one of the colonies that overwinter in Mexico. In March they will travel north, lay their eggs, and die. What is truly unique and bewildering about this insect is their multi-generational migration. The first descendants of the overwintering butterflies are not the same butterflies that will overwinter in Mexico the following year. The progeny of the overwintering butterflies will travel further north and produce a second generation, which will do the same. The fourth generation will then make the trip to Mexico and often roost in the same area as their great grandparents the previous year!

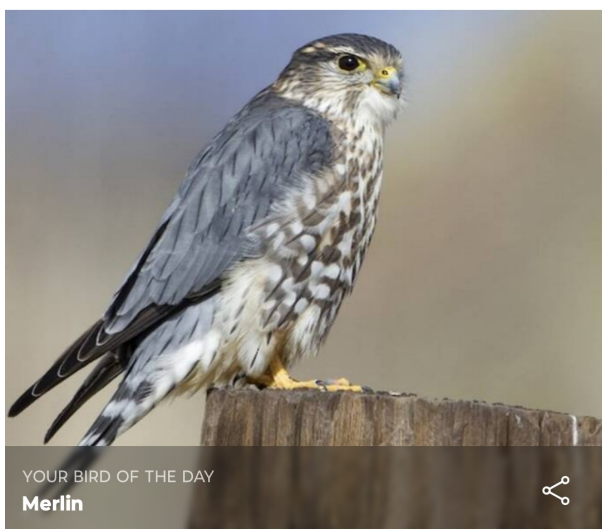
Liz and I were excited to join a Holbrook Travel group to see the butterfly colonies in person this winter. Monarch butterflies are an important pollinator species that is declining due to a multitude of reasons such as destruction of overwintering habitats, climate change, increased usage of herbicides and pesticides, and loss of food sources (milkweed). As classroom educators, we delve into a lot of these specific issues and how they affect not only raptors, but other species (like insects) and their relationships to the environment. Our Living with the Landscape conservation projects also focus on pollinator gardens, so this trip provided us with a much richer understanding of threats that pollinators face in today's world.

Since returning from Mexico, many have asked what I thought about the monarch butterfly colonies. I have tried—and likely failed—to adequately convey the powerful emotions we felt during such a captivating experience. I truly believe you must be present to fully appreciate the beauty of the monarch colonies and their migration.

*Stay tuned for Part 2 to hear more about our Holbrook Travel trip to Mexico to see the monarch butterfly migration.*

*Photos by Heather Rissi.*





IDENTIFY A BIRD



Step by Step



Sound ID

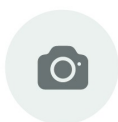


Photo ID

## A Comprehensive Avian Field Guide in Your Pocket

By Pat Hawley  
Editor

It's Magic and it's Free! One of the most wonderful public resources for birders is the [Cornell Lab of Ornithology](#). Cornell is a small private Ivy League university founded in 1865 in Ithaca, NY. Arthur Allen joined the faculty in 1915 as a professor of Ornithology. As professors often do (including me), he put a sign near his office claiming it a "Laboratory of Ornithology". Today the Cornell Lab of Ornithology has evolved into a thriving 501c(3) that serves as a global center for avian studies. You will find its website to be a valuable, extensive, and colorful resource.

One of the most impressive modern developments coming out of the lab is the Merlin Bird ID app. The idea was hatched in 2009 to create an "interactive tool" for bird identification. The [National](#)

[Science Foundation](#) with donors (like you!) funded a massive repository for data from birders, photographers, and audio recordists.

During the early years of this app, Merlin was slow and clunky, requiring the user to answer a series of questions "Choose Your Own Bird" style as well as being inaccurate much of the time. However, 15 years later, it is our go to app for identifying birds by sound! Using your phone's microphone and geolocation, Merlin is pretty accurate in providing ID suggestions. Our bird surveyors use it in the field as a back up to their own expert birdsong skills. Merlin can and does note quiet unobtrusive calls that can easily be overlooked. It also can confirm our own ID for species with similar calls. If you haven't done so already, getting Merlin on your phone is free and easy. Go to your phone's app store and search for "Merlin" and "Cornell". Download it and provide your email address when it asks. The app will send you a confirmation email immediately, and you simply click to "confirm" and subscribe.

The rest is magic. Its vast data store (based on over 750 million observations, photos, sounds, locations, seasons, etc) allows you to identify a specimen through a photo, description, or audio recording of calls and songs from your phone. Because your phone – and the app – knows where you are (when you allow it), it can tell you the list of species you are likely to encounter.

The first "bird pack" it offered me when I signed on for the first time included birds from Arizona and New Mexico. I clicked "install". Merlin also offered me Continental US and Canada as well. The Hawks Aloft Costa Rica travelers, downloaded the pack for that country prior to departure, using it often to help with ID. Merlin now also provides a photo of the identified bird. It is a wonderful way to learn birding by sight and sound.

Now comes the fun. The very easy to navigate screens offered me 3 options to "Identify a Bird": Step by step, Sound ID, or Photo ID. I will choose "step by step" because I am not



outside birding right now but am at my desk writing this article.

*Where did I see the bird?*, it asks. I confirm it was Santa Fe, though it offers me an interactive map option as well.

*When did I see the bird?*, it asks. I confirm that it was today, March 5.

*What was the size of the bird?* It offers me a 7-point scale anchored by silhouettes that range from a sparrow to a goose. Some subjectivity here! I am aiming to identify a woodpecker that frequents my feeder so I choose the 3<sup>rd</sup> point on the scale, “robin-sized” it says. Ok, I will proceed.

*What were the main colors?* It offers me a palette with 9 colors. I chose black, white, and red.

The next screen asked me, “*Was the bird...?*” and then offers activities and locations: Eating at a feeder, swimming or wading, on the ground, in the trees or bushes, on a fence or wire, or soaring or flying. I chose feeder.

Tada! Merlin offers me 3 species in my region with images. My visitor appears to be a male [Ladder-backed Woodpecker](#). Right away I can read a brief description, hear recordings of calls, and view its year-round home range. I can even save it to my “list” of local identified birds.

It's true, modern life can be overwhelming. But why not embrace threads of it to have some fun! For enthusiastic avian hobbyists and professionals, this is a great place to start.

*Ladder-backed Woodpecker, Photo by Doug Brown Photography.*







**Presenting  
The Hawks Aloft  
2024-25 Raffle Quilt!**

We are super proud that we again present our newest raffle quilt. Designed by Gail Garber and Cynthia Figueroa-McInteer, our quilt team stitched up this New Mexico themed quilt over the course of a few weeks. It was machine quilted by Tisha Cavanaugh.

*Thank you* to everyone who helped make this year's raffle quilt a reality: Tisha Cavanaugh, Ed Chappelle, Mary Chappelle, Barbara Deshler, Rick Deshler, Vicky Harms, Cynthia Figueroa-McInteer, Carol Meincke, Liz Roberts, and Carolyn Sanborn.

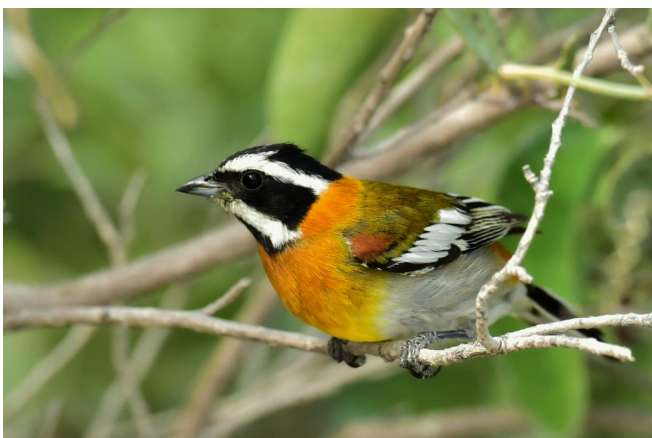
[Click here to purchase tickets.](#)

The drawing will take place on the first Saturday of December 2025 !

*Photo by Bob McInteer.*

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**Hawks Aloft Upcoming Tours**



## **Cuba A Journey to the Extraordinary**

**January 31 – February 9,  
2026**

**From \$4,295/person**

At long last we can finally offer you a special 10-day tour that not only

appeals to the bird lover in you, but also satisfies your curiosity about the culture and history of this singular country that consists of over 4,000 islands and cays in the northern Caribbean Sea. First inhabited by the Guanahatabey and Taino peoples, Cuba was colonized (and named) by the Spaniards after the arrival of Christopher Columbus in 1542. Even still, the people embody a mix of Indigenous, Spanish, and African heritage. Did you know mambo was created here? Also, ever since the 1959 revolution, Cuba is still under Communist party rule. That will certainly add an interesting layer.

Aside from Cuba's unique cultural history, its biodiversity is astonishing. There are 6 terrestrial ecoregions (moist forests, dry forests, pine forests, wetlands, cactus scrub, and mangroves) that are home to over 17,000 animal species and over 9,000 species of plants.

Highlights for bird fans include the Cuban Trogon—Cuba's national bird, known locally as the Toco-ro-ro—and the world's smallest bird, the Bee Hummingbird. We will visit prime birding hotspots and encounter the lively spirit of the Cuban people as we learn from residents. Reptile lovers will enjoy looking for turtles on both land and sea and catching a glimpse of the Cuban crocodile. We may even see manatees and cabybara!

We have partnered with Holbrook Travel, to create a very special adventure to Cuba, a land where time seems to stand still amidst a vibrant cultural tapestry from its stunning natural beauty to its diverse ecosystems. It's a place where every moment is a new discovery.

[Click Here for complete details and for registration information.](#)



## Hawks Aloft Waitlisted Tours

Please visit our website for details and to be added to the waitlist



### **Brazil! Natural Wonders of the Pantanal**

**With Hawks Aloft, Inc. &  
Holbrook Travel  
Oct 15, 2025 - Oct 29, 2025**

**From \$12,450**

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

[Hyacinth Macaws](#) - 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*.

[Donate your old vehicle](#)

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

**Thank you,  
One Community Auto!**



## 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 Dulcita!

Last month we featured Circe our 'foster' [American Kestrel](#), and this month we are featuring a another avian ambassador who also does





double duty. You may be familiar with Dulcita, the Great Horned Owl, if you have attended any of our outreach events. But did you also know she helps foster our rescue owlets as well?

Dulcita is a fantastic foster mom as you can tell in this picture taken from a previous year! Her wonderful temperament might be how she earned her name (which means "little sweetie") from a wildlife rescue organization in Glorieta, New Mexico that rescued her after she was hit by a car in

2013. She suffered a vestibular injury from that impact, and tends to have poor balance and poor proprioception (i.e., spatial awareness) due to that. Despite that, she is an important ambassador for the future of her species. Please consider sponsoring her!

**When you adopt a Hawks Aloft raptor you receive:**

- A one-year Hawks Aloft membership
- An adoption certificate
- An information booklet about the individual bird you have adopted
- Exclusive access to video updates about your bird
- Your choice of:

A professional 8×10 photo of your bird, or

A stuffed Audubon Bird with realistic vocalizations (if available for that species)

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

## Photographer's Monthly Gallery

### Virginia Edley

Virginia has been interested in photography since she was a teenager in the era of film and a darkroom. Once she was able to retire from her career in engineering and travel more with her wife Nancy, Virginia has been able to spend more time honing her photography skills, especially wildlife photography.

Living in Colorado provides many opportunities for photographing beautiful scenery and animals. We've traveled with Gail to Ecuador and the Galapagos, Iceland, and Costa Rica, and have thoroughly enjoyed those trips and the chance to see new birds and photograph them. A beautiful photo cements the memories of a trip in nature or to another country. I believe photography is something you never master; you just continue to learn new skills. When I'm not out with my camera, I'm on the golf course chasing birdies.



*These images below are only a small subset of the incredible photos taken by Virginia and*

Nancy. We share trip photos via the free app, Tripcast, which is a private photo-sharing mechanism for trip participants.

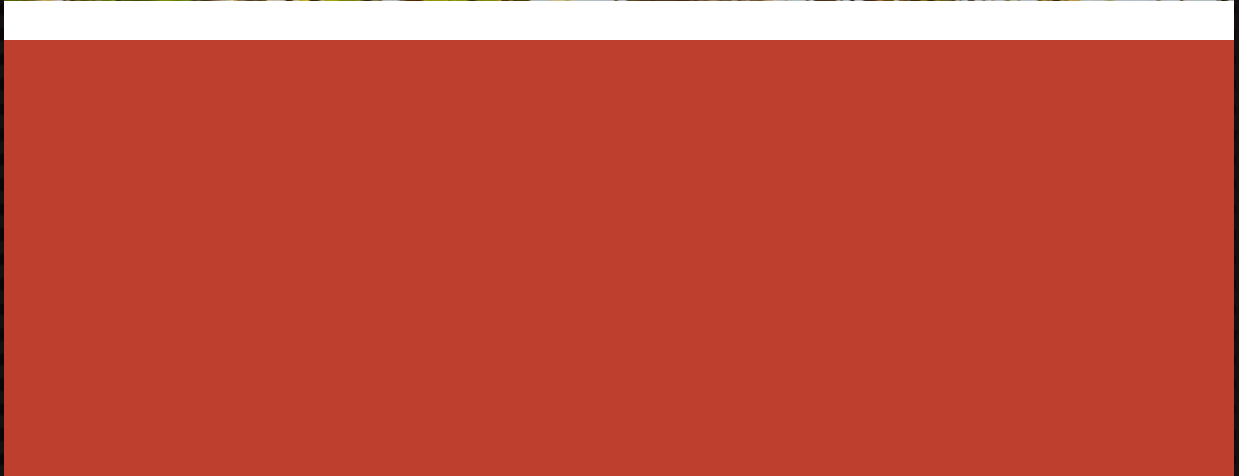
1. [Blue-throated \(Emerald\) Toucanet](#)
2. [Talamanca Hummingbird](#) (formerly Magnificent)
3. Scarlet Macaw
4. [Laughing Falcon](#)
5. [Green Kingfisher](#)







*Virginia Edley ©*









## DONORS, SUPPORTERS, AND VOLUNTEERS

[Donate to Hawks Aloft](#)

[Become a Hawks Aloft  
Member](#)

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**February 2025 Donations  
& Memberships**

Olivia Benoit

**Our Veterinarians  
and Rehabilitators**

**Raptor Rescue Calls  
and Patient Intakes  
February**



Camil Blackburn  
 Niels Chapman & Ruth Burstrom \*  
 Terrell Dixon & Linda Walsh  
 Carol Emerson  
 Andrew Faust  
 Gail Garber \*  
 Teresa Garcia \*  
 Patricia Hawley \*  
 Beth Herppich (In Memory of  
 Ken Duckert)  
 Tanner Himmelman  
 Holbrook Travel, Inc.  
 Wayne London  
 Kelsey Leighton  
 Sue Lyons \*  
 Cheryl Maracich  
 John & Mary Mims \*  
 Andrew Orr  
 David Parsons \*  
 PayPal Giving Fund  
 Lee Rottler \*  
 Ashley Rugge  
 Carolyn "Sami" Sanborn  
 Allison Schacht \*  
 Dorothy Stermer \*  
 United Way of North Central New  
 Mexico

\* indicates recurring monthly  
 donor

Would you like to join our team  
 of recurring monthly donors?  
 Every little bit helps, even if its  
 only \$5 a month. [Contact Gail](#)  
 to set up your recurring monthly  
 donation.

Kariana Atkinson, DVM  
 Candace Auten, DVM  
 Calista Veterinary  
 Hospital  
 Mary & Ed Chappelle  
 Linda Contos, DVM  
 Coronado Animal  
 Hospital  
 Desert Willow Wildlife  
 Rehabilitation Center  
 El Paso Zoo  
 Eye Care for Animals  
 Tim Fitzpatrick, DVM  
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 Care  
 Sherry McDaniel  
 Mike Melloy, DVM  
 Matt Mitchell  
 Milan Airport Animal  
 Clinic  
 New Mexico Wildlife  
 Center  
 On a Wing and a Prayer  
 Petroglyph Animal  
 Hospital  
 Santa Fe Raptor Center  
 Samantha Holeck, DVM  
 Amelia Thompson  
 Wildlife Rescue of New  
 Mexico

**2025**

Hotline Calls: 29  
 Patient intakes: 10

- American Kestrel,  
Physical Injury
- Golden Eagle,  
Neurological &  
Nutritional Disease  
and Physical Injury
- Cooper's Hawk,  
Physical Injury
- Cooper's Hawk,  
Fractured Femur
- Great Horned Owl,  
DOA (Trauma &  
Physical Injury)
- Cooper's Hawk, DOA  
(Wearing a Telemetry  
Monitor)
- Great Horned Owl,  
Head Trauma
- Ferruginous Hawk,  
Physical Injury
- Cooper's Hawk,  
Physical Injury
- Great Horned Owl,  
Trauma to Wing & Leg

## Raptor Rescue Team

Michael Balassone  
 Brandon Borquist  
 Wendy Brown  
 Mary Bruesch  
 Ed Chappelle  
 Mary Chappelle  
 Charles Cummings  
 Gary Eilar  
 Chris Gibson  
 Lee Hanks  
 Carole Heimann  
 Denise Inight  
 Devona Jensen  
 Jeannine Kinzer  
 Ruth Latta

Megan Lemmo  
 Evelyn McGarry  
 Matt Mitchell  
 Jenee Moore  
 Eliane & Johnny Notah  
 Stephanie Otts  
 Chellye Porter  
 Steve Priola  
 Dianne Rossbach  
 Susan Shook  
 Jim Taulman  
 Amelia Thomspen  
 Lars Wells  
 Tamryn Wiedeman  
 Vicki Wilmarth

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Anonymous

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Cottonwood Environmental Consulting

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Summit Construction

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US Army Corps of Engineers

USDA Forest Service - Jemez Ranger District

Valles Caldera National Preserve

Wild Birds Unlimited

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[Volunteer](#)

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## Hawks Aloft, Inc.



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

Contact Us



### Who We Are

Gail Garber, *Executive Director*  
David Buckley, *Avian Surveyor*  
Linda Contos, *DVM, Consulting Veterinarian*  
Trevor Fetz, *Research Director*  
Jeanne Gowan, *Guest Author*  
Nate Gowan, *Surveyor*  
Roger Grimshaw, *Raptor Surveys*  
Pat Hawley, *Editor*  
John Heidrich, *DVM, Triage Veterinarian*  
Jerry Hobart, *Project Manager, Raptor Driving Surveys*  
Tom Mayer, *Avian Surveyor, Guest Author*  
Evelyn McGarry, *Office Manager, East Mountain Representative, Raptor Rescue Dispatcher*  
Calle Poindexter, *Marketing*  
Larry Rimer, *Project Manager*  
Heather Rissi, *Education Coordinator*  
Liz Roberts, *Senior Educator/Naturalist*  
Dallas Steele, *Bookkeeper*  
Scott Waters, *Graphic Design*

### Our Board of Directors

Claudette Horn, *Chair*  
Terry Edwards, *Treasurer*  
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Christine Fiorello, *DVM, Director*  
Nate Gowan, *Director*  
Joan Morrison, *Director*



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