



# Peregram

Velma Morrison Interpretive Center News

Summer 2011

## Meet the New Curator of Birds — Connie Stanger

We asked our new Curator of Birds, Connie Stanger, to tell something of herself. This article shows she has an amazing background, a great love for animals, and finds great enjoyment in teaching others about birds of prey.

I was born in Santa Anna, California. I was a resident of southern California 23 years, moved to Chino Valley Arizona 1989, relocated to Idaho Falls 1991 where I have resided for twenty years. I am married to husband Reed Stanger and we have one son, Kaden. My fascination with birds of prey began in early childhood. At the age of 6, I watched a falconry film about hunting Red Grouse with falcons in Scotland. From that point my interest in falconry began. I read all the information I could find at the local library. There was not much published at that time. I devoured titles such as Webster and Beebe's *Falconry and Hunting Hawks*, Mavrogordato's *Hawk for the Bush*, and apEvan's *Falconry for You*. I also read several fiction stories, *Bright Hunter of the Skies*, *Birds that Hunt*, *Ice Falcon*, and *The Golden Hawks of Genghis Kahn*.



Connie, age 10, with an American Crow

I was known as the "bird girl" in my neighborhood. Anything that fell out of a nest or hit a window was transported to my door. I began raising pigeons at the age of six. I had a loft and an aviary for small psittacines. My room was full of all sorts of critters I had collected from nearby fields and streams. My mother told me in recent years how disappointed she was to have had a child such as myself. She wanted a girl she could put in frilly dresses and give dolls to. Instead she got a tom-boy who wanted to dress up like an animal of some sort, play in the dirt, climb trees, collect frogs and lizards, and play race cars with the neighborhood boys.

I acquired my first kestrel at age 9. It was a bird that had been accidentally shot by a local dairy farmer while hunting pigeons. It did not live long from the injuries sustained. I was then more determined than ever to own a kestrel. I built a homemade Bal-Chatri noose trap out of hardware cloth, and made nooses out of fifteen pound test fishing line. I tried for some time to catch birds unsuccessfully. The kestrels would come to the mouse in the trap and run all over the top, but not get caught (at the time I tied the nooses wrong). So I designed a better trap. It was a kind of a box trap arrangement with a long fishing line attached, whereby I could pull up the door when the bird went inside to catch the mouse. I was successful trapping a few kestrels. I had one particular bird for five years. She flew to my fist free and caught lizards and mice I flushed for her by lifting



Connie, age 16, with an American Kestrel

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debris out in a vacant field behind my home. I met my first licensed falconer at the age of 17 while on vacation. He directed me as to how to become a legal falconer. He explained that I would need a sponsor, a license, and he spent a lot of time talking to me about various birds.

I passed the exam and received a falconry license in 1985. During my first mews inspection I was also granted a rehab license for the miscellaneous birds that were already in my possession. While I was an apprentice, I worked with several Red-tailed Hawks, a Prairie Falcon and American Kestrels. I worked closely with an avian vet learning about raptor medicine and treatment. Upon becoming a General Falconer, I flew a Harris Hawk for two seasons. I then acquired my first Goshawk starting a passion for accipiters that consumed nearly twenty years of my falconry experience.



Connie, about 20 yrs, with Harris Hawk and prey, a Black-tailed Jackrabbit

In later years I became interested in flying falcons and the potential of working with many exotic species. This interest evolved into captive propagation of small falcons. I currently breed Merlins, American Kestrels and hybrids. I have worked with natural pairs and imprints. In recent years, I worked for the City of Idaho Falls, first as an animal control officer, and most recently as a Zoo Keeper at Tauthphaus Park Zoo. At the zoo I had the opportunity to work with many species of African and Asian passerines, a penguin colony, primates, and other mammals. I established the zoo's first flying bird program and was responsible for training docents in bird of prey handling classes each year.

Coming to work for The Peregrine Fund is a dream come true. I enjoy working with many species of birds. I enjoy teaching people about the adaptations of each species and the importance of raptors in our environment. I especially enjoy the look of wonder on young children's faces when they see a raptor close up. It is fun to teach adults who may not have seen a bird of prey so close in their lives.

Many people think of hawks and falcons as something that live far away in remote places. They are surprised to know how close birds of prey are to us. Opening people's eyes to nature and the natural world around us is so important in this age of ever increasing technology. Many children are growing up without an understanding of how animals live in our environment, how food is produced, where it comes from, and other simple things that society used to be more connected to. Education is so important, as it sparks the imagination and ignites passion. Without passion there is no dedication to the cause, you must understand it, and value it before it becomes worth saving.



Connie, now, showing visitors the newest education bird, an Aplomado chick. See the last page for more photos.

# U P C O M I N G E V E N T S



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### July 23, Saturday– “Raptors and Rails” – Thunder Mountain Line

The Thunder Mountain Line is partnering with the Interpretive Center to feature a scenic trip along the Payette River to the rail station of Banks and a live bird presentation at the station. The train ride is 3.0 to 3.5 hours (round trip). See article in this issue for more details.

### August 6, Saturday — Kokanee Outdoor Day

Trish Nixon, Raptor Specialist, will be participating in festivities in Idaho City by presenting a live bird and talking with festival visitors about watching birds of prey. Festival events take place in Idaho City at John Bogan Park from 11 am to 6 pm.

### August 12, Friday – Meridian Movie Night

Meridian Parks and Recreation will be presenting the free movie Guardians: The Owls of Ga Hoole. Staff and volunteers from the Interpretive Center will have a table and do a live bird presentation. The movie is an animated feature, that is rated PG with a run time of 97 minutes. Go this web site for more details: [http://www.meridiacity.org/parks\\_rec.aspx?id=1109](http://www.meridiacity.org/parks_rec.aspx?id=1109)

### August 26, Friday – Volunteer Training

Volunteers should plan to attend a presentation by Anne Halford, Restoration Ecologist, from the BLM on the Stage Steppe Ecosystem in the Morley Nelson Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area and how the BLM is restoring it. There will also be a training component that goes along with the new exhibit and the interpretive trail.

### August – January – East Africa Photo Essay

This exhibit will feature photographs by Munir Virani from our Pan Africa Conservation Program about project work in East Africa.

### September 3, Saturday – International Vulture Awareness Day

The Interpretive Center will feature presentations and family activities related to vultures. This is an annual event that is observed by many conservation organizations world wide. See the article in this issue for more details.

### September 5, Monday – Labor Day

The Peregrine Fund’s World Center for Birds of Prey will be open.

### September 8, Thursday – Volunteer Barbeque

Volunteers should save this date for our annual fall volunteer appreciation event. More details will be coming soon.

### September 9-10, Friday – Saturday Project Wild Class for Educators

This workshop is provided for teachers who have taken Project Wild. The workshop is presented by the Idaho Department of Fish and Game in partnership with The Peregrine Fund’s World Center for Birds of Prey and the BLM.

### October – Thursday - Sunday – Frequent Flyers Month

Beginning October 1st, Trish Nixon, Raptor Specialist, and Connie Stanger, Curator of Birds, will be flying birds of prey Thursday – Sunday for five weekends in October. These outside flights are weather permitting.

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## Thunder Mountain Line – Rails and Raptors

Trish Nixon — Raptor Specialist



### THUNDER MOUNTAIN LINE SCENIC IDAHO TRAIN RIDES

**R**iding a classic train through the Idaho mountains, along streams and rivers, through wooded areas is a wonderful experience. While gazing out the windows, you are likely to see wildlife, as well...elk, deer, geese, ducks, raptors. RAPTORS? What varieties of raptors? Funny you should ask. You can find out by riding the Thunder Mountain Line railroad out of Horseshoe Bend, Idaho during one of their special “Raptors & Rails” trips.



Trish Nixon, Raptor Specialist, with Gus, a male Peregrine Falcon in front the poppies at the Banks Train Station.

The Peregrine Fund and Thunder Mountain Line paired up to treat the railroad’s guests to a special opportunity during several summer trips. Peregrine Fund education raptors and staff make the trip to Horseshoe Bend and either take the train to Banks or meet the train in Banks, where they become part of an hour long raptor program. Passengers get an opportunity to learn about the types of raptors they are likely to see during their excursion, how to identify raptors, learn about the conservation projects of The Peregrine Fund, and take photos of the birds participating in that day’s program.

The program is informal and caters to the passenger’s interests, so the topics range from why Osprey like fish, to how to get to The Peregrine Fund’s interpretive center to see more birds of prey. If you have out of town visitors who want to experience a taste of Idaho’s open spaces as well as some of it’s wildlife and share an hour with raptors, this would be a great time to ride the Thunder Mountain Line! To book the next Raptors & Rails excursion on July 23rd, call 331-1184 or go to the website at: <http://www.thundermountainline.com/>



**Save the Date! — September 3rd**

**International Vulture Awareness Day at the Interpretive Center**

**V**ultures play an important clean up role in many ecosystems world wide. The populations of many species are threatened or facing extinction. International Vulture Awareness Day (IVAD) was created to make people all over the world aware of the importance of vultures. This year IVAD is being celebrated on Saturday, September 3rd at several venues in countries such as Poland, Spain, Africa, India, and the United States.

The Interpretive Center will be hosting an IVAD celebration on September 3<sup>rd</sup> that will feature presentations by Peregrine Fund field biologists who work with California Condors, Asian Vultures, and African Vultures. There will also be fun family activities that explore the many interesting aspects of vultures.

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Munir Virani, head of Pan Africa Project

Karyn deKramer, a local artist who has observed the vultures in Africa, will be mentoring kids who want to help paint a mural with vultures as the main subject. The public will be able to take advantage of reduced admission. Volunteers will have the benefit of free admission. This is a great opportunity for volunteers and the public to hear presentations by Chris Parish, chief field biologist for the California Condor program, and Munir Virani, chief field biologist for the study of Asian and African vultures. Both biologists will also be answering questions during and after their presentations. It is not often that the public is afforded access to these very busy scientists. The Interpretive Center staff encourages everyone to bring their families and take advantage of this unique opportunity.



Chris Parish, Chief Field Supervisor, Condor Project

## Banding Owls with the U.S. Bureau of Land Management

**A**s a follow up to my trip last year to band Ferruginous Hawk chicks (Peregrine Summer 2010, page 5-6), this year I took advantage of a similar trip by the BLM to band Western-Screech Owlets in the Morley Nelson Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area. Once again, I spent a great day successfully banding a group of owlets, traveling through the high plains of southern Idaho, observing a great number of birds, and learning about the fauna and flora of this distinctive area.



The Western Screech-Owl Immature  
*Megascops kennicottii*

The trip was again organized by Barbara Forderhase, Education Specialist/Volunteer Coordinator for the BLM District Office in Boise. Our guide and chief bander was John Doremus, retired BLM Biologist for the Conservation Area. We met at BLM by the airport at 8 am on clear Saturday morning in late April and drove southeast toward the C.J. Strike Reservoir on the Snake River near Grandview, ID. This day, our group included Pat Hovland, a volunteer at the World Center for Birds of Prey and Allyson Woodard, a Partnerships Program Biologist for The Peregrine Fund. Allyson also brought her Dad along.

We were barely out of the parking lot when we saw our first raptor; a Swainson's Hawk, soaring over the field in front of us. Traveling south on Simco Road we witnessed Red-tailed Hawks and a couple of Northern Harriers soaring and swooping over the open fields as they hunted for prey. Our first stop was at a site where Boise State University Raptor Research Center had installed several artificial burrows for Burrowing Owls. These artificial burrows have been found to be successful for avoiding construction effects and mitigating loss of habitat. I learned from John Doremus that the darker bird was the female and the lighter bird was the male. The difference is due to the male spending more time in the sun while the female stays in the burrow.



Notice the Nictitating Membrane.

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Our next stop was at the Ted Trueblood Wildlife Area where we observed American White Pelicans, Double-crested Cormorants, Great Blue Herons, Canada Geese, Ruddy Ducks, Cinnamon Teal, Wood Ducks, American Coots, Long Billed Curlews, and American Avocets. There were probably more, but as I am not an expert on water fowl, I had a hard time keeping up with John as he identified the different birds for us.



Female (right) and Male (left) Burrowing Owls at their artificial burrow.

We were only able to band owlets at one nest because it was too wet and early in the year to band owlets from any of the other nests that John routinely bands. John schedules three trips per year to band Western Screech Owls and three trips to band Ferruginous Hawks. For the owls, he visits the nest boxes a week or so before the scheduled trips to determine which sites will have young birds large enough to band. Thirty plus years working in the NCA have given John a pretty good feeling for when the banding should be scheduled.

The box we visited proved to be well populated with the cutest, softest birds you can imagine. Each of the “volunteer banders” got a chance to climb the ladder to view and take pictures of the owlets in their box. Next, John removed each owlet and handed it to one of the volunteers for banding. Each volunteer got a chance to hold the owlets, take as many pictures as he or she wanted, and to assist in the actual banding process. The bands for the owls are made of aluminum and include a unique identifier so that if the owl is found sometime in the future, its age and



Allyson Woodard checks the box.

origin can be established. The bands are placed on the ankles of the owlets in a way that will not impact the owlet’s ability to fly and hunt. Although the females of the species are generally larger than the male, it was not possible to tell the difference between the owlets because they were essentially all the same size and their ankles are of similar size; unlike falcons, hawks, and other raptors whose ankles and body sizes make it easy to distinguish a male chick from a female in the same brood. In addition



There actually six owlets in the box.

to banding, John recorded the approximate age of the chicks, the apparent health of the birds, and the location of the nest.

After returning the owlets to their nest box, we made our way to the C.J. Strike Reservoir where we enjoyed our lunches while watching various water fowl hunting, fishing, and feeding on the reservoir. As there were no more owl nests that we could visit, we headed for home. On the way, we stopped at a couple of volcanic cones where Prairie Falcons are known to nest. We did see a couple of these striking birds flying over the cones, but were not able to pinpoint where their nests were. We arrived back in Boise by mid-afternoon. I wish to thank Barbara Forderhase of BLM for organizing the trip, and especially John Doremus, for such an informative and enjoyable time. I would also like to thank the Bureau of Land Management for having such a great educational program that is offered at no cost to the people of Idaho. This is a great way to learn about the natural world we live in but seldom see up close.

The preceding article was written by volunteer Bruce Parks. Bruce took all the images including the one below taken during the owl banding trip. Banding trips are a great way to view the Idaho landscape!



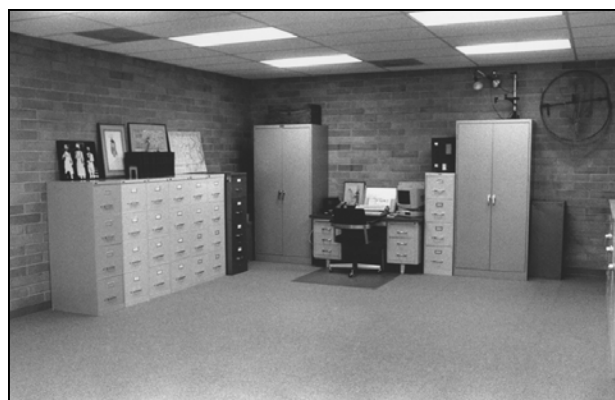
Volcanic cone northwest of Mountain Home, ID.

## The Archives of Falconry Celebrates 25 Years!

by John R. Swift, Curator and David Wells, Administrator

In the early 1980s several individuals realized that our American falconry heritage was being lost as many families were throwing out historic materials after their falconer passed away. Founding curator Kent Carnie along with Bob Collins, Bill Burnham and Robert Berry were among the early advocates and proponents of an organization to collect and preserve these materials. Initial discussions centered on which relevant group should be the sponsoring organization. The Peregrine Fund at the World Center for Birds of Prey was selected due to its special historical relationship with falconers and as a non-profit charitable organization that could recognize donations as tax-deductible.

In 1986 this organizational relationship was established and The Archives of American Falconry was officially recognized as a program partner with The Peregrine Fund. Initially housed in a small room in the Herrick Tropical building, the AAF initiated a capital campaign to raise \$80,000 for a new larger location in the Administration building and moved in 1991. The grand opening was held in 1992 with the dedication of the newly named James N. Rice Wing.



The Archives' founders realized the importance of long-term financial stability and The Peregrine Fund provided initial operating support so that the Archives of American Falconry could build endowment support with an initial goal of \$350,000. The Archives had nearly reached this goal by 1996.

Donations to the Archives of American Falconry started from the first day and have averaged nearly 100 individual gifts each year since. Future curator John Swift began his association with the Archives by donating his falconry book collection after his winning *America's Funniest Home Videos*™ Grand Prize. His contributions of books over the last twenty years provided the foundation and impetus for establishing the largest English-language falconry book collection in the world.

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Many other collectors have contributed unique or rare works and collectibles to make the Archives into a library/museum – one that is unique in the world. By the end of 2000 these falconers' contributions completely filled the library and more space was needed. A new capital campaign was launched to build this facility which would be built in conjunction with the new Herrick Collections library. This facility was built and dedicated in 2002.

Included in the accessions for the following year, 2003, was a donation of what is regarded as the most significant object of falconry history still in private hands. Called "The Thornton Urn," it was awarded to British falconer Col. Thomas Thornton by his friends in 1781 in recognition of Thornton's single-handed success in organizing the first hawking club and thereby reviving the sport of falconry in England. The Urn had not been seen in public for over 125 years until Archives' supporter Robert Berry secured it and donated it to the Archives for the enjoyment of future generations of falconers.



Thornton Urn

The gift of the Thornton Urn and, around the same time, the donation of an authentic Arab majlis tent, complete with carpets and cushions, highlighted the expanding scope of the collections to include international treasures, so the name was then changed to The Archives of Falconry.

A gift was made in 2005 to construct a new 3,000 square-foot addition to house the goat-hair hunting tent and other displays to honor the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, a falconer and first President of the United Arab Emirates. This new wing had a special pre-opening in 2006, also sponsored by the UAE, with a special presentation to 157 international guests from thirty-four different countries who were flown in for the day from the NAFA Field Meet in Kearney, Nebraska. The official opening was held at the Archives' 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration in March 2007 at which time founding curator Kent Carnie passed the title and responsibilities of the office of curator to John Swift.



Goat-hair Hunting Tent Display

With the gift of a new wing from the UAE plus matching funds for the endowment to maintain the facility into the future, the Archives now had enough self-sufficiency to hire its first full-time staff. David Wells, a professional librarian then volunteering in the visitors' center, was hired as Administrator in late 2005. David is still the only paid staff at the Archives; everyone else contributes their time as a volunteer to the Archives.

In 2006 a Wall of Remembrance was constructed to provide a monument for falconers to be recognized in perpetuity by their family and friends. An annual Spring Rendezvous was then inaugurated in March 2007 in order to provide a time when these families and friends could gather to celebrate and reflect on the lives and contributions of these falconers.



Wall of Remembrance

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As a function of its resources for scholarship, the Archives itself has published four volumes in its Heritage Publication Series:

(1) R. Luff Meredith, *American Falconry in the Twentieth Century*, 1999; (2) John and Frank Craighead, *Life With an Indian Prince*, 2001; (3) Thomas Sherley, *A Short Discourse of Hawking to the Field*, 2004; and most recently, (4) John Swift, *Bibliotheca Accipitraria II*, 2011. The latter is a reference work describing falconry literature in the English language for the last five centuries.

Throughout its twenty-five-year history, the Archives of Falconry has not relegated itself to serving as just a passive repository of donated materials. Rather, all along the personnel involved (curators, associates, and administrator) have been actively involved in promoting the facility through presentations to international, national, and state falconry associations; through publication of news and research articles in falconry magazines; through interpersonal contacts and communications; in recent years through twice-daily public tours as part of the regular experience of visitors to the World Center for Birds of Prey; and most recently through creation of a page on Facebook.



Entrance to the Herrick Collections Library and the Archives of Falconry

Since January 2010, the Archives of Falconry's page on Facebook has grown from a small presence to its current format with several dozen photo albums and video clips highlighting key features of the facility, such as the Arab Falconry Heritage Wing and the Wall of Remembrance, and special collections such as hoods, books, and art.

Growing exponentially with each passing month, one year-and-a-half later, the Archives' page now boasts over 1,900 fans who view our site regularly. We now reach an audience of falconers globally and across generational and gender lines. We can communicate our news and announcements instantly and with widespread effect.

The past twenty-five years have been significant in amassing substantial collections of books, art, equipment, and memorabilia and in establishing the reputation of the facility as a library/museum of international importance. The future holds many exciting possibilities, especially in the areas of digitization, networking, and global sharing of resources.



These girls are modeling our new Red-tailed Hawk wings.



### New Hands-On Fun Stuff

We recently obtained a grant from a local Rotary club that allowed us to replace our homemade bird of prey beaks, talons, and wings. *Buck's Bags*, a local business, made the new ones from durable plastic.

Kaden Stanger, our youngest volunteer, shows off a new bird of prey beak and talons. Kaden is the son of the new Curator of Birds, Connie Stanger



## Aplomado Chick is Newest Education Bird

The newest education bird for the Interpretive Center was born the first week in June. The following photographs document the changes in size and feather structure. The light blue color that appears in the feathers of the 17 day image is blood that nourishes the feather growth. The 22 day image shows a chick tired from playing and ready for a nap. The 25 day image shows how chicks like to use their beak for tactile exploration. The day 29 image shows a chick with fledging on its mind.



Chick stretching shows off its blood feathers



Time to nap after playing with a feather



Connie Stanger, Curator of Birds, put the hood in the chick's box so it becomes used to it. Chicks explore by being tactile with their beaks. The hood will be used when transporting the bird.



The chick is learning to perch and is “branching out.” By 32—35 days it will be fledging or taking its first flights.



Connie has the chick, *Rosa*, sitting on a glove and wearing a hood.