

Of all the birds, our Creator chose the Eagle to be the leader



Sky Hunters

Raptor Education and Rehabilitation

NOTES FROM THE NEST

WINTER 2013

GREETINGS and HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

The breeding season has come to an end, babies have fledged, and we are enjoying the slow down. We have taken in about 175 birds this season, but the year isn't quite over yet and I bet we will hit 200!

We also helped Animal Services this year with birds trapped at California Least Tern nesting sites. The Least Tern is endangered, and needs human help to increase their populations. Raptors that are preying on the terns and their young are

captured and released away from the tern site. This year, these raptors were mostly Cooper's Hawks, a bird-eating raptor called an accipiter.

I attended the annual California Council for Wildlife Rehabilitators Symposium in November. Entitled "Saving Wildlife, Serving Nature, there were great speakers and new ideas about assessing raptors before release and making education programs even better. Good to learn new things!

We have had a nice turnout of visitors touring our facility this year, meeting lots of great people that have a passion for raptors and wanting to learn more. Our education programs for the year have come to a close, but we are always looking forward to next year. Each year, we meet hundreds of people at events and special tours, and so many visitors are grateful for the experience of getting to see these amazing birds up close and personal.

Blessings,
Nancy and John Conney

— Seventeen Years Ago —

In 1996, we took a call from the public out in the east county. They had a hawk that had been sitting on their fence for a week. It never seem to fly or hunt. We sent two of our team members to assess the situation. They walked up to the bird, got it contained and returned back for an evaluation. When Sky Hunters gets a new bird, it gets a physical, but before we had a chance to evaluate this bird, it hopped on the team member's arm!

Continued on Page 2 -



Nancy with Red-tailed Hawk

All Photos by Earl S. Cryer



— *Seventeen Years Ago* —

Continued from page 1 — We were suspicious but went on with the physical. The bird was emaciated— we always check the breast bone, called the keel. If you can feel the keel, the bird is thin and this thin bird had not had a meal for many days.

We set the hawk up in an enclosure and started twice a day feedings. Whenever it would see us it would vocalize, begging for food. So someone must have illegally taken this beautiful hawk out of the nest—since there were no reports of lost falconry birds and it didn't know how to hunt. An illegally taken bird that either got away or was let go—We will never know. And we don't know exactly how old she is because when found, she already had her red tail. A Red-tailed Hawk doesn't get a red tail until it's a year old. They molt twice a year and after the second molt the rusty red tail feathers come in. What an injustice that someone would do this to a healthy bird.

When we get a young bird, maybe fallen out of the nest, we wear a camouflage outfit and use a puppet to feed the youngster so it doesn't imprint on humans. As soon as it can pick up food on its own, the bird goes into our flight cage with others of the same species. With exercise for good strength and learning to catch live little prey, after about 45 days the young bird is returned back to nature!

But this beautiful female was not prepared to be in the wild, and has remained with us for nearly 18 years now. She has some quirks! While she is great posing for photos, if someone has sunglasses or a hat on, she won't sit still and she may lean over and quickly snatch the hat! She only allows Nancy, John or volunteer Lara into her enclosure to clean—others are chased out.



She is a large female, about two feet tall with a four foot wingspan. She goes out about 24 times a year, to campgrounds, nature centers, and local parks to help us teach others about raptors and their conservation.

What a privilege to have this remarkable bird as part of our education program for all these years!

Get to Know Sky Hunters Education Raptors

RED-TAILED HAWK

The Red-tailed Hawk has a raspy scream that sounds exactly like a raptor should sound. At least, that's what Hollywood directors seem to think. Whenever a hawk or eagle appears onscreen, no matter what species, the shrill cry on the soundtrack is almost always a Red-tailed Hawk. It's one of the largest birds in North America, yet even the biggest females weigh in at only about 3 pounds.

This species has a wide range of coloration—mostly brown above and pale below, with a streaked belly and, on the wing underside, a dark bar between shoulder and wrist. The tail is usually pale below and cinnamon-red above, though in young birds it's brown and banded. "Dark-phase" birds are all chocolate-brown with a warm red tail. "Rufous-phase" birds are reddish-brown on the chest with a dark belly.



Red-tailed Hawk
(*Buteo jamaicensis*)



Courting Red-tailed Hawks put on a display—soaring in wide circles at a great height. The male dives steeply, then shoots up again at an angle nearly as steep. After several of these swoops he approaches the female from above, extends his legs, and touches her briefly. Sometimes, the pair grab onto one another, clasp talons, and plummet in spirals toward the ground before pulling away. Red-tailed Hawks have been seen hunting as a pair, guarding opposite sides of the same tree to catch squirrels. Mammals make up most of the diet. The oldest known Red-tailed Hawk was 28 years 10 months old—a captive bird; in the wild, the life span is about 4 years. This species has a large range and is listed as a species of Least Concern by the International Union for Conservation of Nature.

Thanks to Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology for species information—http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Red-tailed_Hawk/id and the IUCN for status information— <http://cms.iucn.org/>

Your Help Counts! Sky Hunters Depends on You!

Donations keep Sky Hunters going in our mission to rescue and educate about raptors. Here's how you can help:

Purchase: We have screech owl and barn owl boxes, tee shirts, and greeting cards with our birds' pictures for sale. They make great gifts! Give us a call at 619-445-6565.

Donate: Use Pay Pal by going to our website at: <http://skyhunters.org/funding.html> Click on the funding link and scroll down to the **Make a Donation** button.

Sponsor: Fill out the application on this newsletter to join or sponsor at the support level that's right for you!

DONATIONS ARE TAX DEDUCTIBLE!





Sky Hunters RAPTOR EDUCATION & REHABILITATION

Member and Sponsor Application

RETURN TO SKY HUNTERS
c/o Nancy Conney
PO Box 1275
Lakeside, CA 92040

Visit our website @
www.skyhunters.org
THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!!

Name _____
Street _____ Apt # _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____
Phone _____
Email _____

Enclosed is my tax deductible gift!

- Member**
_____ \$15 Student/Senior
_____ \$25 Individual
_____ \$75 Family

- Sponsor** **CHECK ONE RAPTOR OF YOUR CHOICE IN THE CATEGORY**
_____ \$ 75 _____ Kite _____ American Kestrel _____ Burrowing Owl _____ Screech Owl _____ Pygmy Owl
_____ \$100 _____ Red-tailed Hawk _____ Harris' Hawk _____ Peregrine Falcon
_____ \$100 _____ Great Horned Owl _____ Barn Owl
_____ \$250 _____ Bald Eagle _____ Golden Eagle



SKY HUNTERS
c/o Nancy Conney
PO Box 1275
Lakeside, CA 92040