

WINGBEATS

The Winter 2021 Newsletter of RAPTOR Inc.

Celebrating 43 Years

The Joys of Raptor Release

By Virginia Blum

He rustled impatiently in his cardboard box. For months, this juvenile male red-tailed hawk had been held captive at RAPTOR, Incorporated's Red Barn, as the devoted and talented staff treated him for what was likely a head injury caused by collision with a vehicle.

The two sisters who one morning had found him clinging to their porch ledge, live on a busy street. The hawk seemed indifferent to their presence, they reported. He wouldn't fly away or even move. When I delivered him to the rehabilitation facility, his condition appeared doubtful. Months passed, and I presumed he wouldn't make it.

Then one day, out of the blue, I received a text on my cell phone from Cindy Alverson, RAPTOR, Incorporated's Executive Director, informing me that this grievously injured bird that I had transported so long ago was ready for release. "When are you available?" she asked. It's difficult to convey the combination of my gratitude, astonishment, and delight. "It was touch and go for a long time," Cindy told me as we discussed the timing of the release.

The release was a group celebration. Family members and friends of the finders traveled long distances to share in what we all understood to be among the rarest of experiences—watching the release of a rehabilitated raptor back to its home in the wild.

"Wild" is the key term here, and there is no creature on earth wilder than a wild raptor. It is precisely this wildness that is recovered in the release, not only for the bird but for us as well—as though something deep in human consciousness momentarily fuses with the raptor's intense relationship to the natural world.

Often, the injured raptor has spent weeks (and sometimes months) confined while it is nursed back to health and vigor. When the raptor explodes from the box, we feel as though we, too, are transported above the trees, back to its wild life. What does the bird feel on this occasion? We can only imagine, only project (and likely anthropomorphize). But still, I am convinced that something between human and bird briefly intersects—on the human side, perhaps some primitive

emotional knowledge of an otherwise elusive freedom. Often, the raptor pauses on a nearby branch, a transitional moment during which the bird seems tremulously to hover between human and wild worlds. Just as often, however, they shoot away so fast and so far, it's hard to recall that just seconds earlier they were confined to a cardboard box.

At a park on the Ohio River, everyone gathered around, cameras at the ready as I opened the box. I warned them in advance that events likely would unfold quickly, and indeed they did. The young hawk surged from the box in a heartbeat. As he landed on a nearby tree, we shouted our encouragement and hugged each other in celebration.

All wild raptor releases are exhilarating but the ones I recall best have involved groups of humans joining together for the momentous event.

On December 27th, I joined another such group which gathered in Embshoff Woods to observe the release of an adult male (based on his weight) red-shouldered hawk back to his home territory. This was

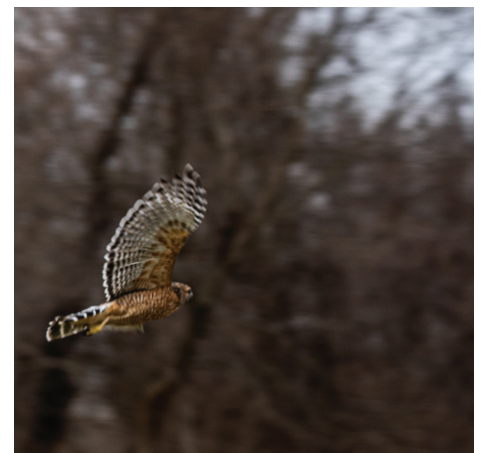
See Joy, on page 2



Inserting new feathers into feather shafts.



The moment of release.



Up, up, and away!



Mission: Since 1978, RAPTOR Inc. (Regional Association for the Protection and Treatment Of Raptors) has been dedicated to "the rehabilitation and return of raptors to their natural environment, the education of the public on the importance of raptors, and the preservation of their natural habitat".

Joy (continued from page 1)

one lucky hawk. In mid-December the finder, Ichika, was walking in her neighborhood when she was startled by the appearance of a large hawk on her neighbor's front lawn. She had never seen a raptor on the ground, and she instantly recognized that the bird was in trouble. Something appeared to be hanging from the bird's tail. As Ichika approached, she saw that the creature was struggling with a glue mousetrap. The hawk had descended on the trap to snatch the mouse already affixed to it and, horrifyingly, wound up trapped as well.

He could not have survived long in such circumstances. This apex predator was now himself easy prey for local dogs, coyotes, foxes, or even raccoons. He could have further damaged his wings in a desperate effort to extricate himself, damage that would have exceeded the scope of any rehabilitation. If no one had found him, he would have slowly starved to death.

Ichika rushed to alert her veterinarian neighbor, Dr. Bill Obert, who was able to sedate the panicked raptor before cutting his tail from the trap. Subsequently, the bird was transported to the RAPTOR, Incorporated facility for rehabilitation.

Still, this red-shouldered hawk had lost a sizable chunk of his tail feathers in the process, and now flying would be impossible without an intervention.

Marc Alverson, board trustee, is expert at a reparative technique called imping, whereby new feathers, harvested from deceased birds of the same species, are shaped and inserted into the shafts of the broken feathers.

Before starting, Marc had carefully compared for size each feather that was going to be transferred from the deceased to the living hawk. The procedure is painstaking, and hawks are especially vulnerable to a fatal stress-related condition called capture myopathy due to their rapid metabolism. Thus, it was

critical that the imping be performed as quickly as possible. Easier said than done.

I was simultaneously anxious and deeply impressed as I observed the speed with which Cindy and Marc repaired this bird. The hysterically flapping hawk was instantly calmed upon Cindy's covering his head with a towel. Her hands encased in heavy rehab gloves, Cindy held still the bird's clenched talons as Marc deftly attached new feathers. When the hawk was released into his mew to test the stability of his new tail feathers, he rushed about so urgently that I couldn't even get a photo. Having been so effectively managed by everyone involved, this high-strung bird survived.

A group of about fifteen of us gathered to witness the red-shouldered hawk's return to his home territory, including the finder, Ichika, with her family, and Dr. Obert, who saved the raptor's life. Marc placed the box on the ground in an elevated location and gently tipped it over on its side so the bird could walk out if it chose to launch from the ground. As Ichika carefully began to pull apart the flaps of the box, a single wing extended. The hawk was ready. We all backed away to give him space. Cameras were trained on the box opening as we held our collective breath. And then it happened. He was gone in a flash. He shot toward the trees on the other side of the park as our group cheered him on.

Those who find injured wild raptors, as well as those of us who volunteer for RAPTOR Incorporated to transport them, are privileged to participate in the incredible experience of releasing recovered birds to their wild habitats. Such releases offer us an evanescent yet precious glimpse into the deep-seated attachment to the natural world that we share with them.

There is nothing like it.

Help Us Achieve "Top-Rated Status" With GreatNonprofits.org

By Jackie Bray

GreatNonprofits is a leading provider of nonprofit organization ratings and reviews throughout the United States. They host reviews of organizations of all sizes regionally, nationally and internationally. GreatNonprofits' mission is to "help inspire and inform prospective donors and volunteers, enable great nonprofits to harness their most authentic and most effective advertising and promote greater nonprofit excellence."

Reviews written through GreatNonprofits also appear on our organizational profiles through GuideStar, JustGive, and several other nonprofit rating formats. Donors depend on these rating systems when they are deciding who should receive their donations. These reviews have a powerful impact on our reputation and our ability to raise funds.

If you love our work, then tell the world! You have an opportunity to help us make an even bigger difference in our community. Won't you help us boost visibility for our work by posting a brief personal story of your experience with us?

All content will be visible to potential donors and volunteers. It's easy and only takes 3 minutes. Go to <https://greatnonprofits.org/org/raptor-inc> to get started!

If you have submitted a post in the past, thank you! Please consider submitting a new post each year to help us reach our annual goal.



Young Bald Eagle Flies Again!

By Jackie Bray

On July 13, 2020, a young bald eagle was admitted to RAPTOR Incorporated's Rehabilitation Center from a gravel quarry in Lynchburg, OH. The eagle was brought in by Randy Morgan, ODNR's Indian Creek Wildlife Area Manager. He was assisted with the capture by Fallsville Wildlife Area staff members. On examination, the eagle was found to be suffering from an open humeral fracture of the left wing near the shoulder, and an infestation of ectoparasites. The bird was treated with fluids, antiparasitic medications, wound care, and immobilization of the wing.

The next morning the eagle was seen by Dr. Peter Hill at PetCare Animal Hospital. His exam confirmed a left humeral spiral comminuted wing fracture with 2 large floating bone chips. Surgery was immediately performed, where an intra-muscular pin and three wires were placed to stabilize the fractures. Luckily, no joint invasion was involved. The wound was sutured closed and the bird was given antibiotics and pain medication. Oral antibiotics were continued for ten days.

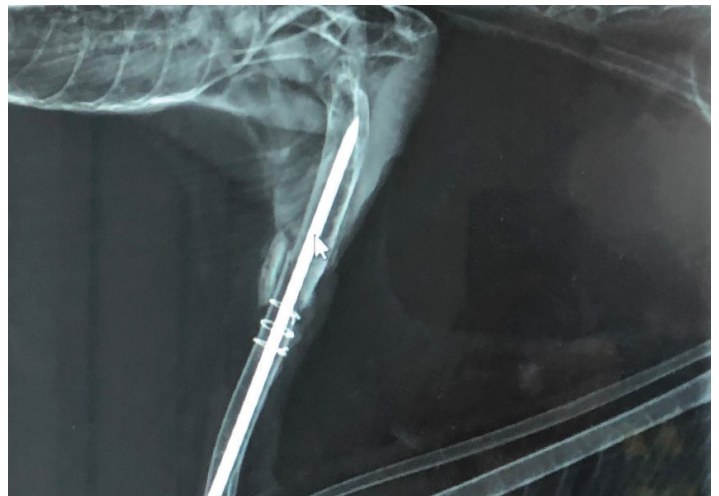
On August 4th, the eagle was seen by Dr. Hill for a recheck. The fracture site was stable and the stitches were removed. No replacement wing wrap was needed, so the eagle was cleared to go outside to a small enclosure to limit mobility for one week. After that, the eagle could go in a larger enclosure for exercise and physical therapy.

On September 1st, the eagle was seen by Dr. Hill for a second and final recheck. The pin was removed and x-rays confirmed the fracture had healed nicely. The eagle was given medications for pain and inflammation and moved to the large L-shaped flight enclosure for conditioning. Available perching was kept low to prevent a possible re-injury. One week later, the eagle was seen using a stick to climb up to a five-foot perch. On camera the wing looked droopy, so the eagle was re-examined. The fracture site was stable and the feathers that were dropped at the injury site were confirmed to be coming in.

On September 16th, the eagle was seen on camera taking short flights from the ground to a five-foot perch, so the thirteen-foot perches were raised in the enclosure to encourage the eagle to exercise. A few weeks later the eagle was seen on a thirteen-foot perch, and on October 14th it was flying the entire length of the large L-shaped enclosure, perch to perch!

On November 1st, the young bald eagle was released into its home territory by Alice McCaleb, with thirteen witnesses in attendance, including several representatives from RAPTOR Incorporated, Kathy Garza-Behr, ODNR's Communications Specialist, and Highland County Wildlife Officer James Carnes.

The eagle flew strongly into the high winds, circled above the release site and then headed out over the small nearby lakes toward a large stand of trees. Thanks to the wonderful dedication and collaboration between ODNR, RAPTOR Inc., and Dr. Hill, this magnificent bald eagle gets a second chance to live wild and free!



X-ray showing surgical placement of pin and wires. By Jackie Bray.



Alice McCaleb releasing eagle where it was found. By Marc Alverson



Eagle soaring high after release. By Marc Alverson

End of Year Bird Care Report for 2020

American Kestrel	27	Saw-whet Owl	0	Rough-legged Hawk	0	2020 Dispositions Released 67% Euthanized 20% Died 9% Transferred 3% Under Care 1%
Merlin	0	Snowy Owl	0	Northern Harrier	0	
Peregrine Falcon	1	Short Eared Owl	0	Turkey Vulture	22	
Eastern Screech Owl	22	Sharp-shinned Hawk	2	Black Vulture	4	
Barred Owl	33	Cooper's Hawk	33	Osprey	2	
Barn Owl	2	Broad-winged Hawk	2	Golden Eagle	0	
Great Horned Owl	37	Red-shouldered Hawk	49	Bald Eagle	4	
Long-eared Owl	0	Red-tailed Hawk	79	Total	319	

67% - Another record-setting release rate in 2020!

The usual number of young (nestlings and fledglings) were admitted, 95 in all, but we did not receive the usual number of young birds admitted in the fall, who were experiencing problems due to their lack of experience of catching prey. Fall admissions account for our second busiest time for admissions, but we did not receive the usual influx. The decrease in the number of fall admissions favorably impacted our release rate.

Notes from the Field: Observations on Winter Roosting Sites of Barred Owls

By Jordan West

Many years ago Barred owls and Red-tailed hawks were the first two species to spark my interest in birds of prey. Since that time, I have had the pleasure of observing families of both species all year round. I quickly became fascinated with their behavior and how exactly it changes from season to season and year to year.

Raptors are creatures of habit. Often you can observe the same raptors exhibiting the same behavior in exactly the same locations as they did in previous years. I spend a lot of time looking for both nesting locations and wintering locations.

Over time I have found a handful of winter roosts favored by barred owls.



Barred Owl, by Jordan West

What amazes me is that I can check on these specific locations during spring, summer, and fall, and never find an owl in the area. However, as soon as the first snowfall of the season arrives I know to

go check these roosts. For the past few years, it has practically been a guarantee that the snow will prompt these owls to return to these wintering locations.

These roosts are usually large tree cavities or dense pine trees, yet separate from those chosen for the breeding season. This year I had 3 separate barred owls return to these locations during the first snowfall. If you happen to come across a barred owl winter-roosting in the woods, make a note of the location, as the chances are very likely that the same owl will return next year.

There is always something to look forward to, even in the crisp stillness of winter.



Leucistic Hawks: Red-tails Who Aren't Living Up To Their Name

by Alison Bewley

Perched at the top of a slanted ladder in a mew in Milford, a white bird preens in the sun. The mid-morning light reflects off her feathers brightly enough that it hurts to look at her for long, so the single dark spot on the back of her head might go unnoticed in her white plumage. Her talons are ivory instead of black like her next-door neighbor's, and her eyes match the blue of the cloudless winter sky.

Isis doesn't look like a typical red-tailed hawk. Her aberrant snowy plumage is the result of leucism, a partial loss of pigmentation, and her striking coloration has landed her a spot in the hall of fame by way of Wikipedia's "Leucism" gallery. Leucism can occur in many animals, including all kinds of birds, although the condition is rare and dependent on population size: since red-tails and American robins are abundant, both species exhibit relatively high frequencies of leucism.

In leucism, a genetic mutation prevents pigment from being deposited normally on feathers, although a leucistic bird's eyes aren't affected (which explains Isis's blue eyes). And not all affected birds look the same: the degree of leucism can vary from a few white feathers to patches of white to completely white (like Isis, save for that spot on the back of her head).

Leucism differs from albinism in that leucism is only a partial loss of a variety of pigments, where albinism is the complete inability to produce specifically melanin pigments. A bird can be partially leucistic, but there's no such thing as "partial albinism." One easy way to tell a leucistic bird from an albino is by eye color. Since albinos can't produce melanin, albino birds' eyes are incredibly pale, which allows blood vessels to show through and frequently makes their eyes appear pink or red; however, not all forms of albinism result in pink or red eyes, depending on the species. In the wild, albino birds rarely survive to adulthood—most die shortly after fledging as a result of their poorer eyesight and conspicuousness.

Like albinism, leucism is inherited genetically, although if the genes are recessive, leucism may skip a generation. And several other conditions are occasionally lumped under the umbrella term of "leucism," including progressive greying and dilution. Dilution describes birds whose plumage looks "washed out" because, although melanin cells are present, those cells produce less pigment than normal. Progressive greying, on the other hand, occurs over time, when a bird molts progressively lighter feathers as it ages. It's difficult to tell whether a bird is truly leucistic or experiencing progressive greying, without knowing its history.

Regardless of which condition leads to abnormal white plumage—albinism or leucism, dilution or progressive greying—feathers lacking pigment are structurally weaker than pigmented feathers. In some cases, this may even hinder flight, as fragile feathers are more prone to damage and need to be replaced more often. Even birds whose typical plumage is mostly white (usually for environmental camouflage, like Snowy Owls or seabirds) tend to have black wingtips that contain melanin to resist abrasion where wear is highest.



Isis in 2015. Photo by Judy Rosene.



Isis in 2020. Photo by Vickie Villavicencio.

In addition to white feathers being weaker, leucism and albinism make birds who are ordinarily darkly-colored much more conspicuous. Most raptors are countershaded (darker when viewed from above, lighter when viewed from below) in grey or brown and white to aid in camouflaging, a helpful adaptation for hunting. Additionally, birds with aberrant plumage may not be recognized by other members of their own species as a potential mate, and they're easy targets for predators.

But just because survival for leucistic birds in the wild is more difficult, doesn't mean it's impossible. In Madeira, for example, a leucistic red-tailed hawk has been thriving since at least 2015. Over the years, her darker feathers have molted out with the seasons, rendering her progressively whiter and more striking. While Isis has been nearly purely white for her entire life, the Madeira bird exhibited patchier plumage that has gradually molted to snowy. For the past three years, the Madeira hawk has been regularly sighted and reported in March and February, with the most recent sighting reported the spring of 2020.

If you're in the Madeira area, keep an eye out for a big white bird, and maybe you'll see a wild leucistic red-tailed hawk. If you'd like a closer look, visit <http://raptorinc.org/programs/> and come visit Isis!

Mark Your Calendars for our Upcoming RAPTOR Public Appearances

Contact sponsor for details, to see if reservations are required, and to ensure the program is still taking place.

28-Mar-2021	1pm-4pm	RAPTOR Inc. Open House	961 Barg Salt Run Rd, Milord, OH 45150
17-Apr-2021	2pm-3pm	Little Miami Conservancy	211 Railroad Ave, Loveland, OH 45140
25-Apr-2021	1pm-4pm	RAPTOR Inc. Open House	961 Barg Salt Run Rd, Milord, OH 45150
15-May-2021	2pm-3pm	Little Miami Conservancy	211 Railroad Ave, Loveland, OH 45140
30-May-2021	1pm-4pm	RAPTOR Inc. Open House	961 Barg Salt Run Rd, Milord, OH 45150
19-Jun-2021	2pm-3pm	Little Miami Conservancy	211 Railroad Ave, Loveland, OH 45140
27-Jun-2021	1pm-4pm	RAPTOR Inc. Open House	961 Barg Salt Run Rd, Milord, OH 45150
09-Jul-2021	6pm-9pm	Cincinnati Nature Center Rowe Woods - Hoots & Hops	4949 Tealtown Rd, Milford, OH 45150
17-Jul-2021	2pm-3pm	Little Miami Conservancy	211 Railroad Ave, Loveland, OH 45140
25-Jul-2021	1pm-4pm	RAPTOR Inc. Open House	961 Barg Salt Run Rd, Milord, OH 45150
13-Aug-2021	6pm-9pm	Cincinnati Nature Center Rowe Woods - Hoots & Hops	4949 Tealtown Rd, Milford, OH 45150
21-Aug-2021	2pm-3pm	Little Miami Conservancy	211 Railroad Ave, Loveland, OH 45140
29-Aug-2021	1pm-4pm	RAPTOR Inc. Open House	961 Barg Salt Run Rd, Milord, OH 45150
25-Sep-2021	2pm-3pm	Little Miami Conservancy - Great Outdoor Weekend	211 Railroad Ave, Loveland, OH 45140
26-Sep-2021	1pm-4pm	RAPTOR Inc. Open House - Great Outdoor Weekend	961 Barg Salt Run Rd, Milord, OH 45150
16-Oct-2021	2pm-3pm	Little Miami Conservancy - Great Outdoor Weekend	211 Railroad Ave, Loveland, OH 45140
31-Oct-2021	1pm-4pm	RAPTOR Inc. Open House - Halloween Celebration	961 Barg Salt Run Rd, Milord, OH 45150
28-Nov-2021	1pm-4pm	RAPTOR Inc. Open House - Thanksgiving Celebration	961 Barg Salt Run Rd, Milord, OH 45150

RAPTOR Wish List

RAPTOR Inc. needs the following items for our bird care facility. To donate any of these items, please email RAPTOR at: raptor@raptorinc.org or call 513-825-3325.

- Non-latex exam gloves – medium and large (With COVID, it is extremely difficult to obtain gloves!)
- Paper towels
- Office Max Gift Card
- Stamps (Forever)

Thank you for all of your donations!

Amazon Wish List

RAPTOR Inc. is now listed on the Amazon Wish list. For a complete listing of all of the items we use for rehabilitation and to provide our volunteers with all of the necessities, please visit:

<https://amzn.to/3cLHlzo>.

If any of these wish list items is purchased, it is shipped directly to our RAPTOR facility in Milford. How easy is that?

Financial Contributions

Thanks to the following individuals and groups for their recent financial contributions to RAPTOR Inc. for the fourth quarter of 2020.

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Ruth Sherbon, in honor of Mike Woods
Doug Kaplan, in honor of Brian Kaplan
Emily Williams, in honor of Zan Smith
Elizabeth Krone, in memory of
Lisa Pease

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RAPTOR Inc. Staff

Cindy Alverson, Executive Director
 Jackie Bray, Associate Director
 The Board of Trustees generally meets the third Wednesday of each month, at 7:00 P.M. All RAPTOR members are welcome to attend.
 Contact Marc Alverson at marcalverson@cinci.rr.com for meeting time and location.

Thank You To Our Veterinarians!

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Communications

Gary Young, Newsletter Editor
 To submit articles or pictures for consideration in Wingbeats, email the article to: raptor@raptorinc.org or by mail to: RAPTOR Inc. 961 Barg Salt Run Road Milford, Ohio 45150
 To report an injured raptor in the Greater Cincinnati area call RAPTOR Inc.: (513) 825-3325

Mission

Since 1978, RAPTOR Inc. (Regional Association for the Protection and Treatment Of Raptors) has been dedicated to "the rehabilitation and return of raptors to their natural environment, the education of the public on the importance of raptors, and the preservation of their natural habitat".

RAPTOR Inc. Membership

Renewal notices are sent out at the end of the year for annual collection for the following year. Dues paid after September 1 will be credited for the following year.

Please use the form below to become a member or update your contact information. You can also become a member online at our website: www.raptorinc.org

If you don't need the membership form, pass it on to someone who might be interested in becoming a member of RAPTOR Inc.

Your membership dollars provide for care, treatment, and feeding of our birds as well as the continuation of our education programs.

Mark the membership level you request. All membership levels include electronic (default) or postal delivery of the newsletter, as well as an invitation to the Fall Picnic. Members are also invited to attend Board meetings and may nominate candidates to serve on the board.

\$10 Student Membership
 (1 year - up to age 18)

\$25 Hawk Membership
 (1-year)

\$50 Owl Membership
 plus receive stunning Raptor Notecard Set

\$100 Eagle Membership
 plus receive Charley Harper designed T-Shirt

\$500 Lifetime Membership
 plus personalized tour for 5

Eagle and Lifetime Memberships, please indicate T-Shirt Size: (S, M, L, XL, XXL) _____

Eagle and Lifetime Memberships also include perks from the level(s) above.

Date: _____

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City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

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Check if you prefer postal delivery of HackBack

Mail this completed form with your check or money order to:

RAPTOR Inc., 961 Barg Salt Run Road, Milford, Ohio 45150
Attn: Membership

Thank you for your support of RAPTOR Inc.!

Sponsor a Banded Raptor

Since the fall of 1994, RAPTOR Inc. has been banding most rehabilitated birds released back into the wild. Over a long period of time, this will help us determine how successful our rehabilitation efforts are. You can get involved with our "Sponsor a Banded Raptor" program. Sponsors will receive a fact sheet on the selected species and a certificate with the following information:

- Species and date of release
- Age (if known)
- Weight at time of release
- U. S. Fish & Wildlife band number

If the bird you sponsor is recovered, you will be notified of the date and location of the recovery.

Yes, I would like to sponsor a banded bird of the species checked below:

- American Kestrel: \$50
- Eastern Screech Owl: \$50
- Cooper's Hawk: \$50
- Barred Owl: \$50
- Red-shouldered Hawk: \$50
- Great Horned Owl: \$50
- Red-tailed Hawk: \$50

Name: _____
Address: _____
City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____
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In the event your selection is not available, we will contact you to arrange an alternative. Sponsoring a bird is tax deductible. All proceeds benefit RAPTOR Inc. Complete this form, enclose a check or money order, and mail to:

RAPTOR Inc., 961 Barg Salt Run Road, Milford, Ohio 45150

Thank you for your support of RAPTOR Inc.!

