



**HAWKS ALOFT, Inc.**

Conservation, Avian  
Research & Education



**After the Fires:  
Woodpecker Nirvana  
by Gail Garber,  
Executive Director**



Since 2000, wildfires in the Jemez Mountains and Valles Caldera National Preserve (VCNP) have been catastrophic, the result of the clear-cut logging practices of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century as well as the nationwide fire suppression practices since then.

The Cerro Grande fire scorched 43,000 acres, including over 400 homes in Los Alamos, an ominous harbinger of the future if forest management wasn't improved. Thus, in 2009-10, the collaboration that would become the [Southwest Jemez Forest Collaborative Landscape Restoration](#) proposal was submitted and approved, one of only four in the United States with the goal to restore forest resilience to 220,000 acres.

Just as research and restoration work was beginning, the 2011 Las Conchas fire burned 156,000 acres, followed by the Thompson Ridge fire in 2013 that burned 18,527 acres. I remember the first year of conducting songbird point counts on the Valles and the magic of simply being all alone in that vast expanse (89,000 acres) at my 5:30 am start time.

Little did I know that it also would be the last time I would visit the far northeastern corner of the preserve, Obsidian Valley. The Las Conchas fire, a stand replacement incident rendered access impassable until 2021, ten years later, when most of the standing dead trees had either fallen or been cut down. The remnants of formerly majestic conifers still litter the landscape, some standing and others fallen. Signs of emergent life abound in the now open landscape which will not become fully forested again in our lifetimes. Young aspens cover the ground with shoots rising some 15 feet covered with bright yellow-green leaves quivering in the wind. It is; however, difficult to describe the vastness of this landscape, and perhaps comprehending the scale is even more challenging for those folks who have never explored this landscape.

Now, this veritable woodpecker's paradise hosts good numbers of virtually every species known to occur on the VCNP, from the tiny [Downy Woodpecker](#) to [American Three-toed Woodpecker](#), and from [Williamson's Sapsucker](#) to [Lewis' Woodpecker](#). [Hairy Woodpecker](#) and [Red-naped Sapsucker](#), along with the ubiquitous [Northern Flicker](#), drummed their rhythmic breeding songs with detections at nearly every stop. Meanwhile, diminutive squirrels dash to and fro while elk and deer browse at a distance, and crows and ravens call this place home.

Fire can create dense stands of standing dead trees that provide habitat for a variety of wildlife, including Lewis' Woodpecker, the species of greatest concern among woodpeckers within New Mexico forests. Stunningly beautiful, with a bright pink breast and head markings that contrast with a greenish-black back and tail, identifying them by sight is relatively easy as they spend long periods atop a snag watching for flying insects and then flying out to catch them, much like the acrobatics of many flycatchers although they also glean insects from the bark. We mostly identified the seldom seen birds by their distinctive drumming,

Among post burn sites, most bark- and wood-boring beetles depart after 4–5 years with a corresponding decline of beetle-foraging woodpeckers, such as the American Three-toed Woodpecker, whereas those that feed on flying arthropods, such as Lewis's woodpecker, will use a burned forest for more than a decade after the fire as evidenced by their presence in the Valles Caldera.

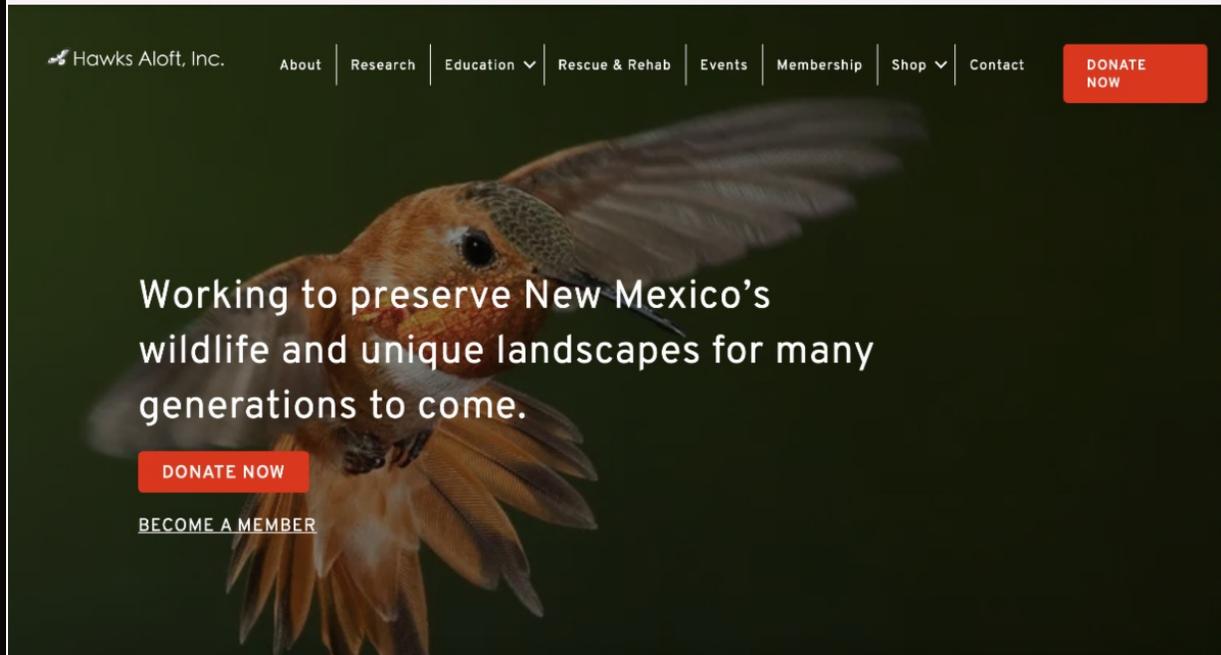
The burn scars of the Las Conchas (2011) and Thompson Ridge (2013) fires provide nutrient rich habitat for a wide variety of birds and bats, as well as mammals large and

small, along with flourishing, diverse vegetation communities. I have included links to Cornell's All About Birds website for each species above that includes their distinctive drumming sounds.

It is an honor and a privilege to be able to study the birds of the Valles Caldera. Thank you Larry Rimer and Chellye Porter for your assistance on these surveys.

*Woodpeckers heard on the VCNP, clockwise from upper left: Williamson's Sapsucker, Lewis' Woodpecker, Red-naped Sapsucker, American Three-toed Woodpecker - Images by Alan Murphy. Aspen landscape by Gail Garber*

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## Introducing Our Brand New Website!

We've been working hard behind the scenes at Hawks Aloft to offer everyone from Raptor Rescue Hotline callers to potential volunteers and everyone in-between easier access to information and our services through a more functional (and beautiful!) website.

After months of work, we are so proud to launch the new and improved site! Created by local web designer, Janelle Gutierrez, the new *hawksaloft.org* is truly a visual feast.

As always, you can find us at [www.hawksaloft.org](http://www.hawksaloft.org).

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## Valles Caldera Owl Surveys

**By Trevor Fetz, Ph.D  
Research Director**

Owl surveys at Valles Caldera National Preserve (VCNP) hit full swing in May, as we were finally able to access all 40 of our call points. With the likelihood of VCNP being closed due to high fire danger in the coming weeks and a need to catch up on surveys at points we

weren't able to access during April, I expanded survey nights to include the last couple of hours before sunrise. My normal owling schedule during May was to survey from sunset until about midnight, try to catch a couple of hours of sleep, and then survey from about 3:30 until sunrise. I followed this schedule for three days a week, which was the most I could do and still remain somewhat functional. The lack of sleep really begins taking a toll by the third night.

The most exciting event that occurred during May, was documenting Mexican Spotted Owl (MSO), which had not previously been confirmed on VCNP. On May 20<sup>th</sup>, Brent Thompson and I were just starting our last survey of the night, a multiple species (MSIM) survey that begins with a two-minute listening period, when we heard something very unexpected. Breaking up the silence was a clear, male, 4-note MSO call from less than 100 meters away. It didn't really register at first, as I thought, "Wait...what?" Then a second 4-note call came and Brent and I looked at each other and said, "No way!" The owl moved away from us and gave several 3-note calls before going silent. We abandoned the MSIM survey and broadcast MSO calls in an attempt to elicit a further response, but the owl stayed silent.

The next morning, we conducted a follow-up survey and found an MSO pair and a

potential nest about 600 meters from our call point. We moused the owls in an attempt to determine their breeding status. The results weren't definitive, but the owls did not engage in any behavior that would have suggested they had either eggs or nestlings. Further, both birds were subadults, and MSO subadults usually don't breed.

A second daytime visit a week later also wasn't definitive, but the owls once again showed no behavior suggesting active nesting. It is likely that this subadult pair recently moved into the area (we didn't detect any MSO during our first two MSO surveys at that point) and is just establishing a territory. The core area they have been roosting in during both daytime follow-up surveys possesses the habitat characteristics MSOs prefer, including multiple potential nest sites. Hopefully, this pair will establish themselves in the area, and maybe next year they will nest.

Thank you to everyone who assists with these surveys: Brian Dysktra, Roger Grimshaw, Sue Harrelson, and Maggie Stein.

*Mexican Spotted Owl photos by Trevor Fetz.*



## **New Constructions by Amelia Thompson Educator & Administrative Assistant**

I have been working off and on for Hawks Aloft for 11 years and, in the back of my mind, I have always thought about having mews (flight cage) at my house and caring for some of the Hawks Aloft educational birds. Last year, I began helping

with Raptor Rescue. We experienced a huge increase in rescues and we needed additional housing for rescued birds. Gail held a Facebook Fundraiser for her birthday to help raise money to buy materials to build a set of two 12-foot mews, one to house education birds and the other as a place for rescue birds to reside in while recovering from injuries and ailments.

I had originally planned to start construction in May but, due to a family crisis the dates were changed, so I hope to begin building as soon as possible. There is another mews at a former volunteer's house that is currently not being used, so we are planning to move that one to my property. I will be building the new mews myself, with the help of my husband, Maggie S., friends, and volunteers. Maggie S. and I have some experience with repairing our older mews, but this will be our first experience building one from the ground up.

While we have raised some money already, the price of lumber has skyrocketed due to high demand, so Hawks Aloft is running another fundraiser to help cover some of the additional costs. We are also looking for any volunteers who would like to help with any aspect of this project.

Please e-mail me if you would like to participate!



## **Celebrate Nature's Hardest Workers!**

**by Julie Lang**  
**Office Manager**

This morning when I awoke there was a calm, yet vibrant feeling to the air. Snuggled in warm and fluffy blankets listening to the soft rumble of my dogs sleepy breathing, it occurred to me that the spring time this year has been more gentle then that of previous years. Outside sipping on coffee, watching my dogs survey the yard, my ears were attracted to a familiar buzz. My eyes roamed the plants to find a match to that happy little sound.

The small yellow and black body of a bee hovered over a tiny white bloom before jetting off to its next destination.

We all know that bees are happy little insects that are mostly regarded as positive in our culture. Think about the phrases, “you’re the bee’s knees”, “busy bee”, “as happy as a bee”. When spring and summer are depicted there is often a little bee buzzing over some flowers. And even when we sweeten our tea (or coffee if you’re a caffeine lover like me) we may reach for a jar of honey and see an illustration of a bee without even remarking on it. But, do we really know how positive of an impact that these little whimsical insects have on us?

Bees make up a large percentage of pollinators. These insects help to pollinate about 75% of the world’s flowering plants. Which is crucial in promoting biodiversity. They are also responsible for the pollination of about 35% of the world’s food crops and supporting the production of roughly 87% of the most highly used food crops. A pretty massive job for something so small.

In 2016, a study by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations found that an increasing number of bee pollinator species are going extinct. As a direct and immediate result, food crops like apples, cherries, and blueberries are at an all-time low. So what are some things we can do in our own backyards to help mitigate this situation? Plant native pollinator friendly plants, provide safe water options for our busy friends, and reduce the use of pesticides. There is a plethora of resources available to us to make

these ideas a reality. So let's celebrate nature's hardest workers and offer them a little support. We could all use some support sometimes. Lets' pollinate on that.

*Bee photos by Warren Lee*



**Life in the Field  
By Maggie Stein  
Education & Outreach  
Coordinator,  
Project Leader -  
McKinley Mine Study**

When I started at Hawks Aloft as the Education and Outreach Coordinator, I had no clue that fieldwork would be in my future. Now, almost two years later, fieldwork is currently one of my biggest job responsibilities. I have been given the opportunity to learn many new skills; from owl surveys, raptor nest monitoring, and even songbird surveys! Of course, once the busy season ends and projects are completed, I will return to focusing most of my energy on our education programs.

For now, I continue to really enjoy the projects I assist with. Here are



some highlights from the last couple of weeks that have been jam-packed with fieldwork!

Recently, one of the coolest things I observed in the field was an American Kestrel pair chasing a Common Raven away from their nesting territory. I have known that kestrels defend their territory, but it was so incredible to see firsthand how ferocious these little guys are in the wild! The pair spent at least ten minutes dive bombing and screeching at this poor, unknowing raven who was just trying to pass through the sky. Ravens are the size of Red-tailed Hawks, which is way bigger than the little kestrels who were determinedly looking for a fight! It was incredible!

The second big highlight was *seeing* a wild Pygmy Owl during one of the MSIM points, otherwise known as our General Owl Surveys. Before this encounter, I had never actually seen an owl in the wild besides Great Horned Owls. We only saw the tiny bird for a brief moment before it flew out of sight, but that glimpse was so exciting and something that I will never forget.

Lastly, the most magical and memorable fieldwork encounter so far was the privilege to see a pair of Mexican Spotted Owls; a threatened species. The two sub-adults have been hanging out on the west side of the Valles Caldera National Preserve. In order to determine if they have a nest nearby, Trevor used a method called “mousing” which entails putting live feeder mice out and watching if the birds take the prey back to a nest. We were able to determine that the pair most likely do not have a nest, because they ate all three mice themselves!

Of course the biggest highlight of all this field work is getting to spend more time with volunteers and staff that I usually do not get many opportunities to work with. I have learned a ton from working with Gail and Trevor especially, and it has been an overall great experience!

*American Kestrel pair defending their territory. Photo by Larry Rimer. Mexican Spotted Owl pair in habitat. Photo by Trevor Fetz.*

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**Babies are Here!**  
by Lisa Morgan  
Raptor Rescue

## Coordinator



Like a whirlwind in the night, the phone calls came in. A tiny Red-tailed Hawk chick had fallen from its cliffside nest and was being held at [Navajo Nation Zoo](#). At the same time, a little Great Horned Owlet was on the ground being hand-fed by humans. It didn't appear to have parents around, or be able to climb in true owlet fashion.

Gail quickly contacted David Biddinger, one of our falconers and a technical climber, to see if he could place the Red-tailed Hawk chick back in his cliff-side nest. Unfortunately, David was out of the country, on his wedding trip to Belize (Best wishes Dave and Pam!). We spent the remainder of Memorial Weekend trying to find another technical climber while folks at Navajo Nation Zoo took care of the chick.

When it appeared that another climber couldn't be found, we knew we had to act quickly to ensure that this chick did not become imprinted in which it only sees humans as its own kind. When this occurs, the imprinted chick grows into a beautiful adult that can never be released and know life in the wild because it will never be able to relate to its own species, or fend for itself. A truly sad existence for a healthy bird of prey!

In true Hawks Aloft fashion, everyone sprang into action. Gail purchased a wireless camera that could be set up in a mews to track the actions/behaviors of the incoming chick and its soon-to-be foster parent – Harlan the educational Red-tailed Hawk and foster parent extraordinaire! Larry Rimer and I spent a good portion of two days working with computers, software, etc. to get the camera in perfect working order before setting it up in the mews before the birds arrived. Chellye Porter, Harlan's caretaker, brought him to my home soon before the chick arrived to get him settled in. Arlette Miller met David Mikesic, director of the Navajo Nation Zoo, in Grants and delivered the chick. All of this had to be timed perfectly to minimize stress to either bird. Luck was on our side!

Before long, Harlan was taking prey to the chick and feeding him. The chick has almost doubled in size since Memorial Day, and our fantastic camera is recording memorable moments. Thank you everyone who helped make this happen! [Click here to watch one of the feeding videos.](#)

Meanwhile, Arlette also arrived with a Great Horned Owlet who obviously had a right leg injury and was emaciated. Dr. Kariana Jones of [Petroglyph Animal Hospital](#) assessed the owlet the day after intake. Radiographs revealed two small fractures in the leg that should heal on their own with rest. He is now doing very well, and is past the point of emaciation. He is resting, gaining weight, and feisty! Within a couple of weeks he should be able to go out in the mews with his soon-to-be foster mom, Dulcita.

Both of these youngsters will eventually be transferred to other rehabilitation facilities where they can continue growing, learning to fly and hunt. Both should be releasable later this year.

Then, just today, June 5, a Western Screech-Owl fledgling arrived via Albuquerque Animal Control. Thus begins the never ending round of orphaned and injured babies, reared by the foster birds that provide parental role models and feeding. As you might expect, the costs to rear these little ones are enormous, beginning with our food bill which will top \$3,000 this month. We need to build four new flight cages this year, including fencing to ensure the safety of the birds that will reside in them. If you have a little extra, please **consider making a donation**. It will strictly be used for caging, medical supplies and food.

*Red-tailed Hawk and Great Horned Owl nestlings. Photos by Gail Garber.*

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## Owls of New Mexico!

Owls of New Mexico features images of our Avian Ambassadors and nearly every single species of owl that might be found in our state. Designed by Scott Lowry, this unique design can now be yours in both short and long-sleeved T-shirts. After all, *whoooo* doesn't love owls?!

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.



[Order yours today!](#)



## Donate Your Old Car to Hawks Aloft!

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

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

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

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



## Check Out our Weekly Video!

**It posts every Monday Morning on our Facebook and YouTube pages.**

Join staff educators Maggie Stein and Amelia Thompson as they present different Avian Ambassadors and educational concepts:

Our next video will cover Life at a Great Blue Heron Rookery that we discovered in the Jemez Mountains while doing other avian studies.

Find us on [Facebook](#)  
Find us on [YouTube](#).

*Image of a nesting Violet-headed Hummingbird, photographed near Arenal Volcano, Costa Rica by Keith Bauer.*



## The Hawks Aloft Raffle Quilt!

90" x 90"

Get your tickets now! \$1 each or  
6/\$5.

We'll draw the winning ticket in  
December 2021

[Click here to purchase tickets.](#)

Thank you to everyone who  
worked on this year's quilt!

# Hawks Aloft International Tours: Announcing Ecuador 2022!

October 1 to October  
17, 2022

*Join us for a birding and  
photography trip through one  
of the world's most biodiverse  
countries*



Despite its small size—that is, roughly the size of Pennsylvania—Ecuador offers a fabulous amount of biodiversity. Despite having just .2% of the planet's physical landmass, it is home to 16% of the world's bird species (not to mention 8% of amphibians, 5% of reptiles, and an incredible 25,000 different species of plants). This has led to the small country being classified as “mega diverse” by Conservation International, along with only 16 other countries the world over.

Join Hawks Aloft, Foto Verde Tours, and experienced guide Paulo Valerio on a trip through the country, from coastal mangroves to mountain cloud forests and everything in-between. This all-inclusive tour offers members the opportunities to spot once-in-a-lifetime species, as well as capture each breathtaking moment on film.

**[Find the full itinerary and reserve your spot here!](#)**

*Andean Cock of the Rock. Photographed in Ecuador by Greg Basco*

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## Adopt-A-Raptor Today!

### Meet Shadow, the Western Screech-Owl

[Click here to Adopt-a-Raptor](#) such as Shadow, affectionately called Shadowman! He found his forever home at Hawks Aloft after being transferred from the Santa Fe Raptor Center in 2013. He was found by a maintenance worker who was blowing leaves in a parking lot. The little owl was unable to fly and was tumbling along with the leaves on the ground. Shadow had an elbow joint injury that has since healed, but he does not fly well enough to survive in the wild. It is possible he was hit by a car, or that he flew into a window hard enough to injure his wing. Western Screech Owls are crepuscular, meaning they are most active at dawn and dusk. This is when shadows are at their longest—hence the name “Shadow.”



Photographed here by Larry Rimer. When you adopt a Hawks Aloft raptor you will receive:

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

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

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## 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.

- 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 now that every time you do so, you help out Hawks Aloft!

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

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## Support Hawks Aloft with every Amazon order!



It's simple and makes a huge impact! Just go to [smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com) and log into your existing Amazon account. Then under the search bar you can select your charity--find us by searching for "Hawks Aloft Inc." ... Save your account settings and shop away!

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## Photographers Monthly Gallery Featuring: Dennis Chamberlain

*Dennis chose to mostly feature the beauty of Common Raven for this monthly article. The all black birds are notoriously difficult to photograph and capturing them with the camera lens during their active lifestyle is an even grater*

[You can see more of Dennis' work at his website](#)



## **Dennis Chamberlain**

**M.Photog.M.Artist.Cr.,CPP, EA-ASP**

My focus is on Southwestern Art photography, selling artwork in galleries and shows in New Mexico, including Albuquerque, Santa Fe, Bernalillo, Madrid and Corrales. My photographic art ranges from pure unedited photographs to extensive Photoshop composites. I am a student of the science of creativity, and I focus on the theories of Shelley Carson of Harvard University.

I am the son of a lifetime Eastman Kodak employee, growing up in Rochester, New York, and I had my first medium format camera (a "hand me down" from my father) when I was seven. Later, I worked at Kodak's Dallas Processing Lab while I was in college, gaining an uncensored view into some of life's most private moments as recorded on Kodachrome film. My father, the plant manager, developed the famous Zapruder film of the Kennedy assassination, becoming forever linked with conspiracy theorists.

I was the Professional Photographers of America's New Mexico Photographer of the Year for 2011 and 2018. I have been a bronze, silver, platinum and diamond medalist in PPA's International Photographic Competition during the past eight years, including 2016 when I was one of eleven photographers worldwide to earn a diamond medal in the Master Artist Category.

The photos below, and others are available for purchase on Dennis' website:

[www.dcpphotoartistry.com](http://www.dcpphotoartistry.com)

1. **The Raven's Windmill**
2. **The Raven of Monument Valley**
3. **Dusk at Bonanza Creek Ranch**
4. **Ravens at the Santa Fe Museum**
5. **Sandhill Cranes and the Sandias**





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**May Log & Intakes**

**Total Calls: 43**

**Intakes: 13**

Great Blue Heron: Illness  
Cooper's Hawk: DOA  
Swainson's Hawk: Head trauma  
Red-tailed Hawk: Blindness; neurological issues  
Common Poorwill: Left wing injury  
Red-tailed Hawk: Right wing injury  
Western Screech Owl: Left eye injury  
Great Horned Owl: Orphaned  
White-winged Dove: Hit window  
Great Horned Owl: Electrocutation  
Great Horned Owl: DOA  
Great Horned Owl: Right foot injury  
Red-tailed Hawk: Orphaned

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**HAWKS ALOFT, Inc.**

Conservation, Avian  
Research & Education

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[Contact Us](#)



### Who We Are

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Larry Rimer, *Project Manager,*  
*El Segundo Raptor Study*  
Maggie Stein, *Education and*  
*Outreach Coordinator; Project Leader*  
*for McKinley Mine Study*  
Amelia Thompson,  
*Educator/Administrative Assistant*  
Brent Thompson, *Biologist*

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