

The Flight Feather

August 2009

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Petra, the Bald Eagle

by Lisa Pajot



Photographer Jules Tileston captures Lisa and Petra at an education presentation at West High.

Petra was just a juvenile, or a hatch-year bird, when she came to Bird TLC in February 1995. She joined the education family in 1998. Like many family histories, specific details of Petra's past are missing or forgotten. She lost her first handler and caretaker to a tragic accident and another was recently re-stationed overseas.

What we do know is that she came to Bird TLC as a rescue from a mammal trap in Cordova. A local trapper found her buried under snow with two of her toes caught in a trap. Amazingly, she was still breathing.

She arrived at Bird TLC with pox on her face and foot, two of her toes injured from the trap, weak, and underweight. Petra went through a series of surgeries to remove the pox from her face and foot and corresponding medications to help with infection. She continued to be weak and was very lethargic and had to be force fed to keep her weight up.

After several months of recovery, she was brought out to the flight center at Camp Carroll but failed to thrive. She was returned to the clinic after three weeks very weak and had to be tube fed. Another month passed and she went back out to Camp Carroll, but again she fared very poorly. She came back to the clinic weighing only 8.8lbs. A healthy bald eagle should weigh between ten and fourteen pounds.

Back at the clinic, Petra had x-rays taken and blood work done. She was anemic, dehydrated, and there was damage to two joints in her left wing at the shoulder. She underwent blood transfusions, more medications, and tube feeding. Finally eight months after her arrival at Bird TLC, she was improving.

It's difficult to know how Petra's wing was injured. It could have been before she was caught in the trap, while she was in the trap, or at some point

Continued on page 6

Larry Marshburn, m.d.

by Megan Pool

Coerced by neighbor and fellow Bird TLC volunteer, Gina Holloman, Larry began volunteering in the clinic January of 2007. Gina was conspiring to house an education bird at her home and hoped that when she was out of town Larry could bird sit. She must have figured that a little time at TLC and the birds would surely win him over. They did.

A recently retired anesthesiologist, Larry has always enjoyed all kinds of animals. In fact, he almost went to veterinary school. But acceptance to the medical program at the University of Michigan came before the acceptance to vet school and he took it. Moving to Alaska in 1968 as a doctor with the US Air Force, Larry ended up settling in Anchorage and then Homer where he practiced medicine and enjoyed the usual Alaskan outdoor activities such as camping and fishing.

Now residing in Anchorage, Larry works Tuesday and Wednesday afternoons in the clinic, but is often seen there on just about any day ending in 'y'. Between giving birds intake exams, pilling bald eagles, folding laundry or chasing baby ducks around, Larry organizes our storage areas, cleans kennels (seeing to it that they get back the rightful owners), makes runs to Costco for clinic supplies, hunts for worms, helps with events and undertakes any handyman chores needed. He does it all while retaining a critically needed sense of humor.

We wondered why his wife Mary let him spend so much time away. He says it's because she understands. Mary usually accompanies Larry on his Bird TLC errands and on days when we are short on clinic volunteers, she will also come in to lend a hand.

After all Larry's years of practicing human medicine, he maintains that tak-



Larry suddenly realizes he should have put a door handle on the inside too.

ing care of birds is much harder. "They can't tell you what's hurting or how they feel." As his interest and knowledge of birds grows week after week, Larry says that he is continually inspired by the fellow volunteers; "people who are willing to pick up and do what needs to be done for the birds."

According to Larry, working at TLC is "potentially an experience for a volunteer that they can't get anywhere else. They need to be open to learning about birds and willing to get their hands dirty." He also emphasizes that one must be patient in the volunteer process. A lot of people begin volunteering and want to jump right into holding an eagle, but it takes time and practice to handle wild birds.

If you are interested in volunteering in the Bird TLC clinic, please call us at 562-4852 or email rehab@birdtlc.net. We are always in need of people like Larry with a willingness and determination to do what needs to be done. Thank you, Larry!



Bird Treatment and Learning Center

Mission Statement

To provide primary medical treatment and rehabilitative care for sick, injured and orphaned wild birds and to provide learning opportunities to the public through live, wild bird programs.

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The Bird Treatment and Learning Center is a 501(c)3 organization,

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Ph: (907) 562-4852

Fax: (907) 562-2441

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Rehab Roundup

by Cindy Palmatier, Rehab Director

This time of year Bird TLC is all about the babies. Baby Robins, baby Swallows, baby ducks, and even a baby Sandhill Crane. Talk about the darling of the clinic!

In the last month Bird TLC has taken in over 130 birds, Needless to say, the volunteers are very busy. And as usual, they are all rising to the occasion, learning new skills, mastering new paperwork and keeping a smile on their faces through it all.

We are also well into our summer releases of birds that have recovered and are ready to get on with life.

To date, in addition to countless songbirds and ducklings, we have released 4 Bald Eagles, 1 Great Horned Owl, 1 Merlin and one Boreal Owl. We currently have a Rough legged Hawk attending Mouse University. Once he graduates he will be off on his own as well.

Let me take a moment and explain about Mouse University. When raptors come into BTLC they suffer from all manner of problems, from broken bones to head or spinal trauma, sometimes even poisoning of one form or another. All of these things impact the way they see the world. Not to mention that some of these birds are with us for months, waiting to regain the ability to fly. During this time, meals are provided in a manner appropriate for the bird in question. That's a lot different than having to hunt for a living.

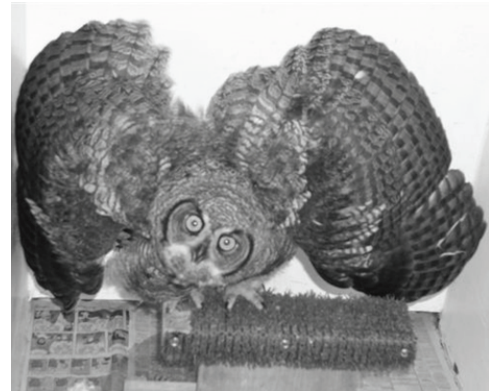
So, once a raptor clears his or her final vet check, they are moved to flight pens where they can build up strength and prepare for life in the real world. This is also the time that we make sure they haven't lost the ability to hunt. A lot of places call this Live Prey Training. At Bird TLC, we call it Mouse

University. A large escape proof area is set up in the middle of the flight pen and mice are placed in the enclosure. If the raptor wants to eat, it has to catch dinner just like in the wild. Once a raptor has proven itself at Mouse U, it's on to a scheduled release in a good habitat to resume life as it should be.

Earlier I talked about our great volunteers, but there is another group that makes treating 130+ birds in 30 days possible. This same group makes Mouse University possible. That group is our donors and supporters. Summer is our busiest season and our time of greatest financial need.

So here's a GREAT BIG thank you for your generous donations, this year and every year. These donations allow us to keep our doors open, provide quality medical and surgical care and get these birds out and flying again.

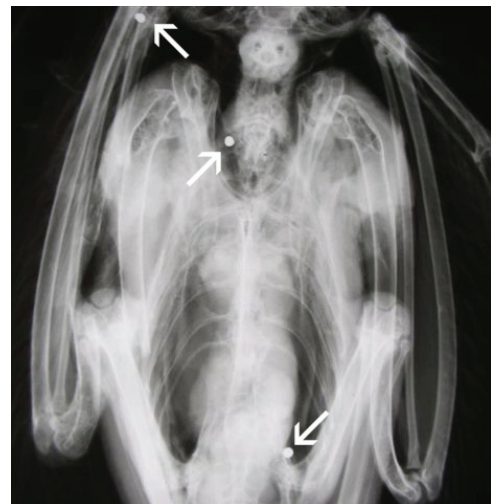
Thank you!



A Great Horned Owl lets us know he's not amused by having his picture taken.



An injured crossbill asks if we can't find some pinecones that still have seeds in them for his dinner.



The three dots the arrows points to are pellets found upon x-ray in our injured Great Horned Owl.

Bird TLC Present

Who's On



It's Dave, not Ghost the Snowy Owl, scaring that little girl.



Lisa Pajot and Wayne Rush show their

If you are dying to see all of Bird TLC's live education birds in one place at one time, this is your chance.
If you have a really good bird call, come down and try your luck in the bird-calling contest.
If you want to see Bird TLC release an eagle back to the wild, this is it.

The 5th annual Bye Bye Birdie event will be held at the Bird TLC property (15500 Old Seward Highway). The event raises awareness about the wild birds in our community and promotes the good work of Bird TLC. The afternoon features live bird programs, and a bird-calling contest. It will end with the first place winner of the bird-calling contest receiving a special prize.

This event is free, open to the public, and will take place rain or shine. Come on out and learn about our birds. Enjoy a free caffeinated beverage from Kaladi Bros. while enjoying the view of Potter Marsh and Turnagain Arm.

Special thanks to our generous event sponsors:

US Fish and Wildlife Service

Fred

Other partners helping to make this event possible are the AK Department of Fish and Game and The Alaska Department of Natural Resources.

Bye Bye Birdie

overhead?



ed birds to a fascinated future birder.

ce.

ay) on August 22nd, 2009 from 12-4pm. This event celebrates the end of migratory bird season, raises
noon will be filled with kids' activities, live education birds on display, multi bird formal education
releasing a rehabilitated eagle.

ur local avian diversity, have a tasty hotdog provided by Tia's Gourmet Alaska Sausages and Hot Dogs,
ain Arm.

Meyer

Alaska Zoo.

Conoco Phillips



MaryBethe Wright and Denali, our Golden Eagle, are always crowd pleasers.

Time Line of Events

12:00 Event Begins

12:30 Raptor Rendezvous - Educational Program

1:30 Those Crazy Corvids – Educational Program

2:30 Who's Who In the Owl World – Educational Program

3:00 Bird Call Contest

3:30 Eagle Release



Light as a feather...



Baby Goshawk



Mallard Ducklings



Juvenile Stellar's Jay

There is a famous legend that circulates among Bird TLC staff about the time our beloved Barbara Doak was at the check out counter in a local grocery store. When she pulled out her wallet to pay, she accidentally also pulled out a dead mouse. For Barbara, this was no big deal. She had an owl to feed at home and mice were his favorite food. Others at the checkout counter did not feel quite as nonchalant about the mouse.

In keeping with the spirit of Barbara's dead mouse story, we bring you....

Karen Coady, bird mom, freaks Fred Meyers staff:

So I get to the checkout at Fred Meyer late Tuesday evening just before the store closed. The checker was scanning the items and putting them into reusable net bags that I store behind the front seat of my car. I also carry one set of baby robins in a large cage in the back seat. The one baby that wouldn't eat now eats on his own - mealworms. So the checker is doing her thing when all of a sudden she shrieks loudly and backs away from the scanner. "A bug a bug" she yells in a voice heard all over the store. I looked over and there was a mealworm, and then another. I picked them up and put them in my pocket while being stared at by numerous eyes.

The life of a baby bird foster mom - scaring the dickens out of innocent store cashiers.

Karen Coady, Baby Bird Mom

Sandhill Crane

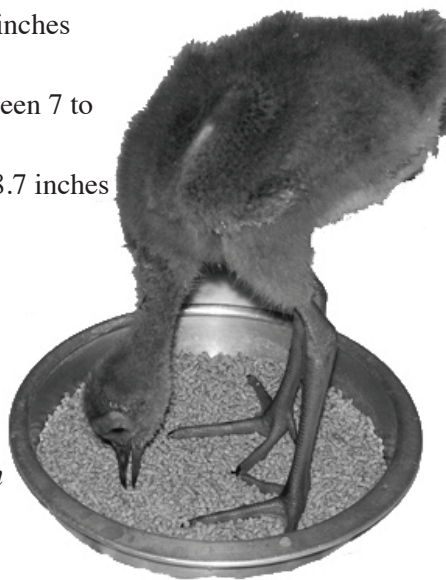
You just never know what arrive on the front steps Bird TLC during baby season. People walking dog found this baby. The little crane came up and bit their rottweiler on the The dog was too stunned to react but when the humans grabbed the bird, they found he had several large wounds on his neck and head. They brought him to the Seward Sealife Center where Pam Tuomi sewed him up and then sent him to us to be cared for until he could be on his own. Needless to say, he found a big cadre of volunteers willing to meet his every peep with another tasty worm.



Volunteer Laura holds the newest member of our baby bird family

Some quick facts about Sandhill Cranes:

- The Sandhill Crane does not breed until it is two to seven years old.
- It can live up to the age of 20.
- Mated pairs stay together year round, and migrate south as a group with their offspring.
- They breed in open marshes or bogs, and in wet grasslands and meadows.
- They feed in marshes and grain fields.
- Their average length is 47.2 inches (that's almost four foot!)
- Their average weight is between 7 to 10 lbs.
- Their average wingspan is 78.7 inches (that's over six foot!)



Right: Look how big he grew in just a few weeks time.

Photo Credits: Dick Williams

Petra (continued from page 1)

at the clinic or Camp Carroll. But with the wing injury, Dr. Scott determined that she would never fly well enough to be released. Petra was brought to the home of the McGees for long-term care. Sometime in 1996 Leslie Lancaster began training with Petra for eventual placement in the education program.

Throughout Petra's numerous stays at the clinic, and even while she was weak and not feeling well, her unique character was evident. There are many notes on her old charts saying how curious and vocal she was and how well she herded, often moving from one mew to the next on her own. We lost much of the information as to what Petra was like during her training and her early years when we lost Leslie, but we do know that Petra enjoys walks in the grass, looking out of the car when riding in her kennel, bathing, sunbathing, and watching other eagles soar.

Petra continues to be very curious and vocal. She lets anyone nearing her mew know that she's there by throwing her head back and calling out. She is a mellow, patient, and very gentle bird to work with and handle. At 13.5 years old, she has traveled the state doing hundreds of education programs with her handlers.

As with Bird TLC's other education birds, Petra often is specifically requested for programs and has even inspired people to begin volunteering at Bird TLC. One of her handlers, Todd Boren, started a blog for Petra (<http://petraeagle.blogspot.com>), writing their experiences down from Petra's point of view. It is clear from hearing and reading feedback from volunteers, her handlers, and the public, that many find Petra an inspiration and are humbled and thrilled to be near her. For those of us who know and work with her, we are privileged to be a part of her story.

BIRD TLC PRESENTS:
Bye Bye Birdie 2009
Who's Overhead?

COME SEE AND LEARN ABOUT OUR LOCAL AVIAN DIVERSITY

SAT. AUG. 22ND. 12-4 PM

@ THE BIRD TLC PROPERTY - 15500 OLD SEWARD HWY

Rehabilitated Eagle Release 3:30 PM

LIVE BIRDS ON DISPLAY ■ KIDS ACTIVITIES ■
 EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS ■
 BIRD CALLING CONTEST 3:00 ■ AK ZOO CRITTERS



Food and Drink Provided By
 Tia's Gourmet Sausages and Hotdogs
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