



Number 5
December 2014

P.O. Box 492, Hoquiam, WA 98550
www.coastalraptors.org
Conservation Through Research and Education

COASTAL RAPTORS TIDEINGS

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Coastal Raptors is dedicated to providing research and education programs leading to better understanding and conservation of raptors in coastal environments. Active since 1995 and with non-profit 501(c)(3) status beginning in 2009, the **goals** are to:

- Conduct scientific research
- Provide education programs
- Train wildlife biologists
- Collaborate with experts in wildlife research and management

Contact Dan at 360-591-5959
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Coastal Raptors
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Hoquiam, WA 98550

Dear Friends of Coastal Raptors,

Greetings from the Washington coast! I hope you enjoy this annual installment of **Coastal Raptors** TIDEings. Established in 2009, newsletter number 5 marks our fifth year as a formal tax-exempt, nonprofit organization. TIDEings provides an opportunity to share some—but by no means not all—of **Coastal Raptors** activities over the past year. In 2014, we continued two ongoing research projects: raptor surveys on the beaches of coastal Washington; and monitoring the health of avian scavengers of coastal Washington and Oregon. Both projects involve capturing, marking, and tissue sampling of birds of prey. A few of these adventures are shared in this newsletter. All field work where raptors are captured is documented in text, photos, and occasional videos under Notes from the Field on the **Coastal Raptors** website (www.coastalraptors.org). **Coastal Raptors** is enormously thankful and appreciative of the volunteer assistance of web developer Mark Schult. Through his efforts we share our accomplishments in the field, publications, and educational programs.

I want to take this opportunity to thank those of you who have provided volunteer and/or financial support to **Coastal Raptors**. It takes your support to make the education programs and scientific research happen. If you have not made a financial contribution to **Coastal Raptors** in 2014 and are able, please consider doing so before year end. Earlier this year **Coastal Raptors** received a contribution from Barbara Dolan with a note that said, “Dan and Team – Love what you do- It is Special!” That says it all! Thanks, Barbara, and thanks to all Friends of Coastal Raptors!

Sincerely,

Dan Varland
Executive Director
Coastal Raptors
Hoquiam,
Washington



Visit us on our website, coastalraptors.org, or on Facebook.

INVESTIGATING BLOOD CONTAMINANTS

Coastal Raptors is collaborating with Dr. Da Chen, research biologist at Southern Illinois University (SIU) with a specialty in contaminants in raptors. In 2013, we sent Dr. Chen blood plasma samples from 6 Peregrine Falcons captured that year. Chen analyzed the samples for pesticides (DDT and its breakdown products, primarily DDE), PCBs, and fire retardants. While DDT and PCB use has been banned in the US, these chemicals still persist in the environment. Fire retardants called polybrominated diphenyl ethers, or PBDEs, have been added to products such as furniture, electronics and carpeting to reduce the risk of fire-related injuries. PBDEs have emerged as a contaminant threat over the past decade.

Despite having been found hunting on Washington's outer coast, far from population centers, contaminant levels in some of the peregrines tested to date have been surprisingly high. W/Z, a male peregrine that many of us involved with **Coastal Raptors** field work have observed, handled and photographed over the years, had the highest PCB levels and second highest PBDE levels of the six tested.

This November we submitted an additional 81 samples to Dr. Chen, bringing the total number sent to his lab at SIU to 87 (see Map). The number includes two more samples taken from W/Z, one in 2010 and another in 2011. Blood samples we have collected from Peregrine Falcons are especially valuable for two reasons: 1) they were collected over a 14-year period, dating back to 2000, and 2) in many instances, we have collected samples from the same individual over a number of years. These samples, as a result, provide important information on contaminant exposure in coastal Peregrine Falcons over time.

Sample analysis is expensive. Costs to cover the six samples already analyzed came from "start-up funds" available to Dr. Chen through SIU. **Coastal Raptors** is providing funding for analysis of an **additional six samples in 2015**, at \$200 per sample. **Coastal Raptors** is seeking additional funding, through individual gift donations or grants, to analyze the rest.

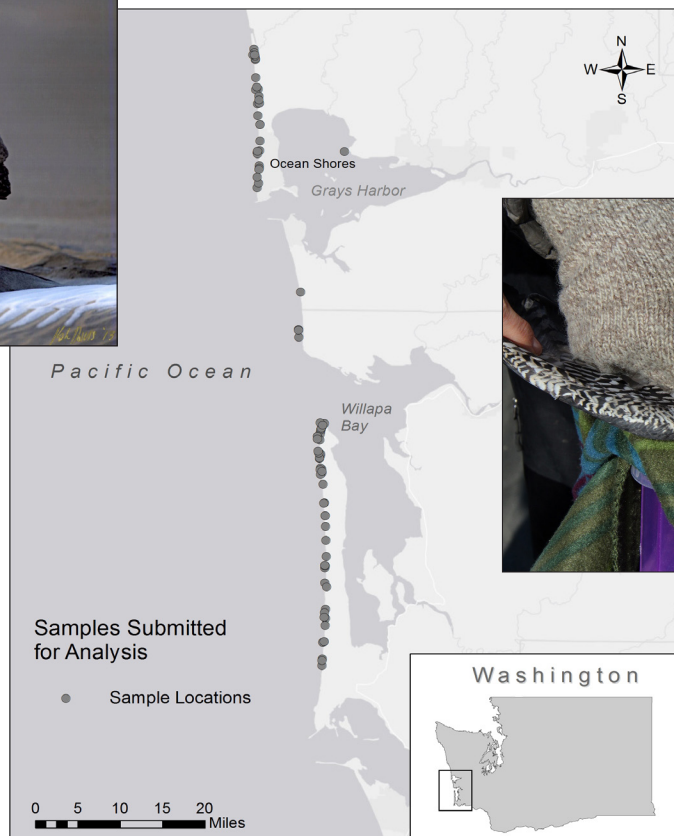


Dr. Da Chen

Kate Davis



Peregrine Falcon W/Z at Ocean Shores in 2013.



Blood sampling.

Tom Rowley

Joshua Benton

My Encounter with Coastal Raptors

I have always had an inquisitive mind and wanted to intimately know the souls of the other species that share our planet. My journey started over forty years ago in snowy northern Michigan as a self-taught naturalist learning to track animals so I could learn about their movements and, hopefully, understand their behavior.

This curiosity has led me down many paths. I have volunteered on as many projects involving wildlife as I could fit into my life over the years. When counting birds in December of 2011 on the Leadbetter Point Christmas Bird Count on the Long Beach Peninsula, I encountered a beautiful Peregrine Falcon that was wearing leg bands. I needed to know who this banded P/4 peregrine was. I contacted the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service and inquired as to who banded this falcon and where.

I soon learned the bander was Dr. Dan Varland with the non-profit group **Coastal Raptors**. I called Dan, basically to report the sighting of the bird. As we talked, I learned that he was working on projects involving raptors on the beaches of Washington. I asked if he needed a new volunteer, and I was thrilled when the answer was “yes”.



Suzy Whittey with Bald Eagle, April 27, 2012.

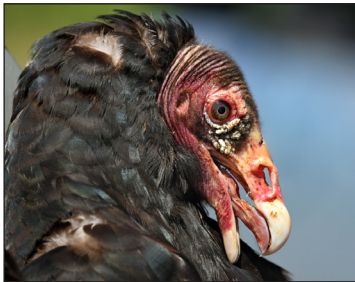
A few weeks later, on January 7th, I was invited along as Dan and a group of volunteers trapped, banded, blood sampled, feather sampled, then released two Peregrine Falcons. That day, to get additional blood and feather samples, we also recaptured two peregrines banded earlier by **Coastal Raptors**. I watched, learned and marveled over seeing the fastest of our falcons relax as the hoods were placed over their heads, then zoom away to a dune or a chunk of driftwood when the hood was removed and they were released and free once more.

The following week I went along again and, low and behold, Dan recaptured peregrine P/4, the bird I saw on the bird count! Once Dan had secured the hood, he handed her to me and said, “Here she is: the bird that brought us together.” I held her gently, up against my body as the others were getting the gear together to process her. I could feel her heartbeat and as I looked down on her, I wondered where this bird had flown. What was her world like? Was it an easy living being a falcon or was each day a struggle to find food, nest, and rear her young? It is moments like this that I live for: to be so close to another species as to feel their soul.

After monitoring Bald Eagles for close to 30 years and witnessing the amazing comeback that they and the peregrines had made since the ban on DDT, I was beyond words when, that spring, Dan captured a Bald Eagle on a day I volunteered to help in the field. After she was hooded and wings and feet were secured to keep her safe, I was given the opportunity to hold her. My heart was pounding almost as much as hers. To encounter an eagle this close was a dream I never let myself have because I did not think it was possible.

Volunteering with Dan and **Coastal Raptors** has been an amazing opportunity for me to learn. I know that his work is teaching our species to respect and care for raptors and their habitats. Hopefully hundreds of generations will survive beyond our lifetime. Thank you Dan, for the work that you do and for the amazing learning opportunities you provide!

Suzy Whittey
Long Beach, Washington



Net launcher fires, capturing two of the five Turkey Vultures pictured here. One received wing tag AN, the other tag BK. All photos ,this page, by Tom Rowley.



Using a net launcher baited with a fish carcass, on June 1, 2014, Tom Rowley, Sandra Miller, Josh Benton and Dan Varland captured two Turkey Vultures and a Common Raven at the Hoquiam Wastewater Treatment Plant. Once in-hand, the birds were tissue sampled for contaminants and disease testing as part of an ongoing avian scavenger research project on the Pacific coast involving **Coastal Raptors** and several other organizations. The birds were marked for individual identification before release. One vulture received wing tag AN, the second vulture BK, and the raven was fitted with color bands. (Note: since Turkey Vultures poop on their legs, they are tagged instead of banded!) As of this writing, one of the three, Turkey Vulture AN, has been re-sighted. Since field work for the avian scavenger study got underway in 2012, **Coastal Raptors** has trapped and wing-tagged 27 Turkey Vultures. Of these, 11 have been re-sighted alive at least once.

AN was re-sighted 61 days after release, a little more than 100 miles north of the trapping location (see map, facing page). This re-sighting is unique for two reasons: 1) the location was remote (only accessible by boat!), and 2) the distance traveled, for a vulture in summer, was far. Based on the timing of Turkey Vulture migration in Washington, their migration should be complete by May or June. Thus, vultures sighted through the summer are not expected to be moving north. As summer residents, Turkey Vulture movements would be expected to range over many miles, but stay local. Not so with AN! He (or she!) obviously moved on in the Pacific Northwest region to British Columbia! While we were not able to tell if AN was male or female using plumage or measurements, we did identify this vulture as an adult based on bill color. Adult vultures have ivory colored bills, visible in the three photos of AN on this page.



Josh Benton with AN

We learned that AN had flown to Canada from Michael Blades.



Tom Rowley

Release of AN, Hoquiam WA.



Michael Blades

AN (wings out) on a small, unnamed island 3 miles southeast of Victoria, British Columbia.



Joshua Benton



Michael Blades and his wife Ann in their Tyee rowing skiff in the waters off Vancouver Island, British Columbia.

Email from Michael Blades, August 10, 2014

My name is Michael Blades, I live up in Victoria, B.C., Canada. I have spent the last 30 years or so kayaking in waters around Vancouver Island, and that has included the Chatham and Discovery Islands to the east of Victoria. In the last 4 years I have taken to using a 14 foot Tyee rowing skiff (albeit with a small auxiliary outboard). Turkey Vulture sightings are pretty common, and while out in the islands yesterday with my wife I noted 5 or so vultures on a small island which usually means only one thing. Sure enough there was a mature dead harbour seal on the shores. I snapped a few pics with my camera from the rocking boat, and landed. The vultures of course dispersed. When I got home I downloaded my pictures and it was only in scrolling in on one of them that I noticed that there was something I had never seen before...a large band on the bird's left wing...a white AN on a red circle.

Thought you would be interested...if you have any questions, feel free to write.

Michael

EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Date	Topic - Presenter	Venue/Location
Feb 5	Presentation: <i>Monitoring the Health of Avian Scavengers on the Pacific Coast</i> - Dan Varland	Conference: The Wildlife Society and other organizations - Pasco, WA
March 22	Presentation: <i>Return from the Brink, or Not?</i> - Jane Fink Veltkamp	Community Education: Aberdeen History Museum - Aberdeen, WA
April 12	Workshop: <i>Raptor Identification</i> - Dan Varland Presentation: <i>Monitoring the Health of Avian Scavengers</i> - Dan Varland	Orcas Island Bird and Wildlife Festival - Orcas Island, WA
Sept 6	Presentation: <i>Monitoring the Health of Avian Scavengers...</i> and net launcher demonstration- Dan Varland	International Vulture Awareness Day, Woodland Park Zoo - Seattle, WA
Sept 24	Workshop: <i>Raptor Marking Techniques</i> - Dan Varland	Conference: Raptor Research Foundation - Corpus Christi, TX
Sept 27	Symposium: <i>Coastal Raptors</i> - Dan Varland	
Nov 3	Presentation: <i>Monitoring Raptors on the Washington Coast</i> - Dan Varland	Wildlife Science Seminar: University of Washington - Seattle, WA
Nov 5	Presentation: <i>Getting to Know the Raptors</i> - Dan Varland	Community Education: Coastal Interpretive Center, Ocean Beach Roasters - Ocean Shores, WA
Dec 17	Panel Discussion: Careers in Wildlife Science	Career Day: Hoquiam High School - Hoquiam, WA

Suzy Whittey



Jane Fink Veltkamp with Dakota, a Golden Eagle

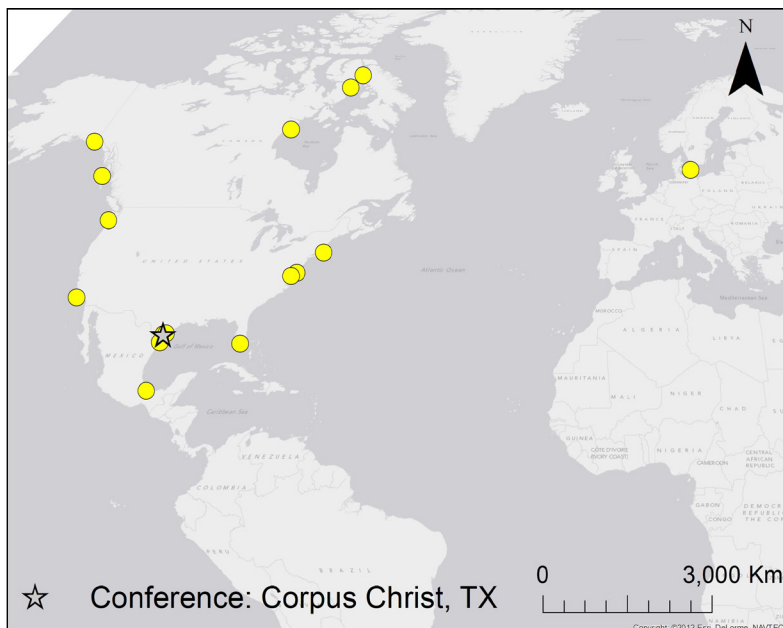
Dan Varland



Dann Sears, Director, Aberdeen History Museum

In March, 40 people attended a program by Jane Fink Veltkamp entitled *Return to the Brink, or Not?* The program was hosted by the Aberdeen History Museum. With husband Don assisting, Jane showed two specially trained, live raptors: a Golden Eagle and a Peregrine Falcon. Having these wonderfully trained and beautiful live raptors on hand really enhanced the educational value of the presentation. Jane is Executive Director of the Idaho-based non-profit Birds of Prey Northwest. The event served as a fundraiser for **Coastal Raptors**.

Coastal Raptors Symposium



In September, Dan Varland organized a symposium on Coastal Raptors for the annual conference of the Raptor Research Foundation, held in Corpus Christi, Texas. There were presenters from the US, Canada and Denmark (their study areas shown on map). Dan served as symposium moderator and made the first presentation, covering the reasons why raptors are attracted to coasts, the risks to raptors along coastlines, and the work of the nonprofit **Coastal Raptors**. The 12 presenters that followed covered a wide range of topics, including nesting ecology, contaminant exposure, restoration efforts, and migration of coastal raptors.

Joshua Benton



Tom Rowley



Tom Rowley



Tom Rowley

In March of 2013, with the help of Adam Hoxit and Willis Industries, **Coastal Raptors** attached a nest box for Peregrine Falcons atop an Osprey nest platform near the Hoquiam Wastewater Treatment Plant. Our goal was to provide a site for peregrine nesting after we saw no Osprey nesting there and peregrines perch on the platform. The box was placed in March of 2013, rather late in the nesting season for peregrines. Thus, when it was not used in 2013, we were not too surprised or terribly disappointed.

We looked forward to the 2014 nesting season. To our surprise, this year a Great Horned Owl pair decided to use the box for nesting. On April 16, we banded two nestlings at the site. Willis Industries generously donated their man-lift and operator Adam Hoxit to allow us access to the young (see photo).

Please Donate to Coastal Raptors!

In these days of federal and state budget cuts, finding grant support for the work of **Coastal Raptors** is challenging. That makes support from individual donors like you even more important. Please help us move forward by making a contribution toward our operating expenses.

If not you, then WHO?



Tom Rowley

It takes quite a lot to run **Coastal Raptors**. Listed below are some of our annual operating expenses.

Vehicle mileage: \$2,500 - \$3,500

Blood sample analysis: \$2,000

Database analyses and maintenance: \$1,500 - \$2,000

Website maintenance: \$175

Office Supplies: \$900

State and Federal Permits: \$300

PLEASE CONSIDER A DONATION FOR 2015 OR 2014 IF YOU HAVE NOT ALREADY (SEE PAGE 8 FOR A LIST OF 2014 DONORS). YOUR CONTRIBUTION IS TAX DEDUCTABLE. YOU CAN DONATE BY CHECK (PAYABLE TO COASTAL RAPTORS); SEND TO PO Box 492, HOQUIAM, WA 98550. OR DONATE ONLINE AT WWW.COASTALRAPTORS.ORG. THANKS!

2014 DONATIONS THROUGH NOVEMBER

Individuals: Jerry and Norma Abma, Juanita Adkins and Kenneth Olson, Suzanne Akamatsu, Julia Bent, Gary Borde, David Chuljian, Kate Davis, Mary Dehart, Will and Betsy Dixon, Barbara Dolan, Jane Fink, John Hermanson, Tom and Mary Lou Jones, Lloyd and Julia Kiff, Gregg Knowles, John and Donna Korvell, Michelle and Nils Landis, Carrie and John Larson, Sharon Lawson, Frank Maher, Virginia Martin, Sandra Miller, Dan and Elise Miller, Thomas Miskovsky and Marilyn Simpson, Dave and Connie Murnen, Marjorie Post, Jerry and Gean Smith, Karen Stubenvoll, Norma Styner, Ellen Sweetin, Suzanne and Marc Tomlinson, Cathy Varland and Jason Downs, Larry and Patti Warwick, Suzy Whittey, Kathleen Wolgemuth, and Tong Wu.



Businesses, Service Organizations or Foundations: Coastal Interpretive Center, Insurance Plans Agency, Inc, Oregon Zoo Foundation.

COASTAL RAPTORS
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Whale skull and wind turbines near Grayland, WA. Tom Rowley photo.