

Keith Parker gives a lecture on albino raptors, as one sits at attention.

A wing and a prayer

Carolina Raptor Center's mission is rescue, rehabilitation for birds of prey

By MITZ BENDER

In September 1975, an injured Broad-winged Hawk was brought to the Biology department at UNC Charlotte. The resident ornithologist, Dr. Richard Brown, along with his students, took care of this bird and released it later that year. During the course of the next four years, about a dozen birds were brought to the university.

By 1980, the need for a facility that cares for these birds became evident. While attending a national conference, Dr. Brown and one of his students, Deb Sue Griffin, decided to form an organization to rehabilitate injured raptors. The Carolina Raptor Rehabilitation and Research Center (CRRRC) was hatched, the name later being shortened to Carolina Raptor Center.

One of the first birds Deb Sue housed and cared for in her bedroom is "Yalish," the Great Horned owl. He was deemed non-releasable due to his wing and eye injuries. "Yalish" has been an educational bird since 1980 and as of September 1999, at over 19 years of age, still travels to exhibits and schools.

The use of several rooms in the Biology department was donated to the fledgling organization and soon the basement and hallways echoed with hoots and screeches. Birds were literally housed in cardboard boxes at first, until wooden cages could be constructed in the rooms. During the early years an all-volunteer staff cared for the birds. These included many UNC students such as Sue Ellen White, Joey Cochran, Dan Roberts, Vinny Greco, and Mike McGrady, just to name a few.

CRC was incorporated in December 1981 as a non-profit corporation. A board of directors was established with the assistance of such dedicated people as local attorney Kent Brown, who would remain involved with this organization for the next 15 years, and bookkeeper Kay Peters.

Deb Sue Griffin happened to work at the Emergency Veterinary Clinic in Charlotte and had ready access to the expertise of local veterinarian Dr. Robert Messenger. He along with Dr. Bob Goehner, provided free veterinary care and surgeries for many years. Outside: cages were constructed on university property and even an old green house was converted into a treatment facility.

The number of birds admitted for rehabilitation grew quickly, from 23 in 1980



A volunteer holds Denver, an owl that was struck by a car and is rehabilitating at the raptor center.

to 218 in 1984. CRC also began presenting educational programs to schools and civic groups. A small gift shop, consisting of cardboard boxes full of T-shirts and stored in a closet, was established to help offset costs.

CRC soon outgrew its quarters at UNCC. In 1984 the Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation Department offered to lease 57 acres to CRC for one dollar per year, and several years later a 99-year lease was signed.

CRC moved most of its operation to its current location in Latta Plantation Nature Preserve on Mountain Island Lake in April 1984. The first "facility" consisted of a donated 12-foot by 12-foot shed. There was no power, water, or phone service during the first few months. Water for the birds and for cleaning cages had to be transported in by buckets from the lake.

CRC's executive director, Dr. Brown, maintained office space at UNCC until 1985 when 2 mobile homes were installed at the new site. Several staff members, such as Sylvia Larson and Mathias Engelmann, lived on site for the next few years. Volunteers constructed holding and exercise cages for injured birds and later temporary housing for non-releasable birds. A nature trail was born, which has since grown into a three-quarter mile long trail with 20 species of birds of prey on display to the public.

In 1986, a grant from Mecklenburg County allowed for the hiring of the

first three paid staff at CRC. Pat Marcum, the center's second executive director, was instrumental in developing the facility into a top attraction for visitors. Over the next few years, volunteers built permanent cages along the Nature trail. Companies and individuals donated medical supplies and equipment for the rehabilitation program. Additional veterinarians, including eye specialists, have since joined the volunteer team, and all veterinary services continue to be supplied at no charge.

Birds admitted to the Carolina Raptor Center are immediately examined and treated. Local veterinarians donate their time for X-rays and surgery. A bird may spend from a few days to a few weeks in intensive care before it is moved outside to an exercise cage. The final stage before release is spent in a large flight cage, where the bird is encouraged to fly and build up its flight muscles. An attempt is made to release the bird near the location where it was found, if that is possible and appropriate.

A bird of prey is a bird with three specific anatomical features: strong grasping feet equipped with sharp talons, a hooked upper beak, and excellent binocular vision. There are 33 species of hawks, falcons, vultures, and eagles and eighteen species of owls breeding in North America.

Mitz Bender is editor of the Tribune's sister paper, The Davidson Gazette.

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Back to the '50s

Downtown Mooreville will travel back to the 1950s this weekend, complete with period outfits, music and retail prices from the Eisenhower administration.

Mooreville Savings Bank and the Mooreville Downtown Commission are sponsoring a return to the '50s on Saturday from 1 to 5 p.m. The day will offer downtown visitors a chance to enjoy music from the era, as well as purchase merchandise at 1950s prices.

Bob's Grill and Deluxe Ice Cream will have good eats for 50 cents; Pat's Gourmet will have 25 cent coffee; Pie in the Sky will sell slices of cheese pizza and drinks for \$1.25.

Also, Wise Florist will hold a '50s costume contest from 2 to 3 p.m. The winner will be awarded a \$150 prize.

Tunes from the decade will be played from First Union all afternoon.

Roberta Roberts, owner of downtown's Precious Times Consignment, said she hopes the day will be successful enough to make it an annual event.

Founder's Day

Mooreville country music artist Russ Caldwell will be the featured act at the 11th annual Founder's Day celebration in Gold Hill (Rowan County) on Saturday, Sept. 22. Caldwell, 19, who has opened for such touring stars as Vince Gill and Reba McEntire, will perform at 8 p.m.

Harvest Fest 2001

Harvest Fest 2001 will be held at the Iredell County Fairgrounds on Saturday, Sept. 29, beginning at 9 a.m. The event will include a horse show, a dog show, arts & crafts, a youth rally, food, and more. Admission will be \$5 per person or \$15 for a family of three or more. For more information, call 704-585-2356 or visit www.sphchristianpub.org.

Balloon Rally time

The 28th annual National Balloon Rally will be held Sept. 14-16 at the Iredell County Fairgrounds in Troutman. Balloon launches and live music are featured throughout the weekend. Advance tickets are \$5 for each day, or \$10 at the gate. Children 5 and under are free. For more information, call the Greater Statesville Chamber of Commerce at 704-873-2892.

Community outlook

Eastern Heights Community Watch will sponsor a community outlook on Saturday, Sept. 8 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. There will be games, free food, and entertainment. Everyone is welcome. For details, call (704) 662-8508, (704) 663-0067 or (704) 662-6108.

Visit the zoo

The Mooreville Recreation Department will sponsor a trip to the N.C. Zoo on Tuesday, Oct. 23. A department van will leave the War Memorial at 8 a.m. and will return at 5 p.m. Cost of the trip is \$2, plus admission to the zoo — \$10 for adults and \$6 for senior citizens and children under 12. For more information, call (704) 663-7026.

SIHS Crafts Bazaar

The PTO at South Iredell High School will present its annual Arts and Crafts Bazaar on Saturday, Dec. 1, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. in the school. Vendor booths are available on a first come, first served basis for \$50 and \$55. For details, call Joanne Moser at 704-892-7750, or write to the following:



Ice cream maniacs

These Davidson College students, who called themselves the Bulk Brothers, were the winning team in last Saturday's ice cream eating contest at halftime of the Davidson-Valparaiso football game. Sponsored by Ben & Jerry's Ice Cream, the contest was a fund-raiser for the Davidson women's lacrosse team. Nineteen teams of five people each attempted to devour a 20-scoop Ben & Jerry's Vermont sundae the fastest. The winners succeeded in 45 seconds. No word on whether they suffered ice cream headaches. (Photo by Mitzo Bender)

ing address for a registration form: South Iredell High School PTO, 631-407 Brawley School Road, PMB 146, Mooreville, N.C. 28117.

Renaissance Festival

The 8th Annual Carolina Renaissance Festival and Artisan Marketplace will be held every weekend between Oct. 6 and Nov. 18, just east of Huntersville on Poplar Tent Road. The festival, which will be open from 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., will include a medieval amusement park, theatrical performances, a circus, a jousting tournament, and more. Advance tickets are available at Harris Teeter. For more information, call (704) 896-5544.

Calling musicians!

Community musicians are invited to audition for openings in strings, French horn or bassoon within the Davidson College Symphony Orchestra. Rehearsals are held each Monday from 7-9:30 p.m. in the Bandroom of the Cunningham Building on the Davidson campus. To schedule an audition, call 704-894-2356 or email Milton Crofts at: microfts@dalton.edu

Square dancing

The Spinning Moors Dance Club meets the second and fourth Saturday of each month at the War Memorial building in Mooreville. Early rounds at 7:30 p.m., square dancing at 8.

Art for seniors

An art workshop for seniors meets each Wednesday morning at 9 in the Senior Day Room of the South Iredell Senior Center, located in the Mooreville Citizens Center. Details: 662-3337.

Winnie Hooper lineup

The following programs and activities are scheduled at the Winnie L. Hooper Community Center (for details, call 663-0033):

- Think Positive Afterschool Tutorial Program — Monday-Thursday, 4-6 p.m.
- Senior Citizens — Meetings every first and third Tuesday, 1 p.m. Speakers, field trips, arts and crafts.
- GED program — Tuesdays, Thursday, 6-8 p.m. Call 663-0033 for details.

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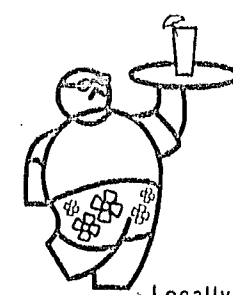
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