



Rocky Mountain
RAPTOR
Program
a second chance at freedom

ON THE Wing

Fall 2025 Newsletter

Ballot Initiatives to Shape Hughes' Fate Campaign Partners Champion a Multi-Use Community Opportunity

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This fall, Fort Collins voters will decide the future of the Hughes site in west Fort Collins, and the outcome will shape our community for generations to come. The issue up for vote will encompass a vision that includes park space, natural areas, recreation, and a portion of the Hughes site for “wildlife rehabilitation, nature, & education center.” Partners, including Rocky Mountain Raptor Program, Bird Conservancy of the Rockies, and the Overland Mountain Bike Association, are supporting the Issue Campaign by **Hughes For Everyone**.

From Hughes for Everyone ~ Connect Conserve Recreate

Fort Collins Voters and community members - We are asking for your support on Resolution 2025-082. This resolution was submitted and **approved 6-1** by the Fort Collins City Council,

based on the recommendations from the Hughes Civic Assembly. This thoughtful and balanced plan was developed over the past several years with significant input from community members across the city who participated in the Civic Assembly process and through multiple public engagement opportunities. Through the Civic Assembly process, delegates advocated for the inclusion of Indigenous voices, presence, and opportunities at the site. Working with First Peoples and other community members, we want to help honor the original stewards through interpretative spaces and by providing a place for the community to gather.

However, on November 4, there will be two competing measures:

- Supported by Hughes For Everyone: The City Council referred ballot measure - **Ballot #2H**, based on the **Civic Assembly Recommendations**. Also, in accordance with the **successful 2021 ballot measure** that designated the use of the former Hughes property for “...parks, recreation, open lands, natural areas, wildlife rescue and restoration”, it proposes multiple uses for the land.
 - The multi-use plan balances these key concepts for the 165-acre property:
 - ~40% (60 acres) as a Natural Area to protect wildlife and restore habitat
 - ~20% (30 acres) for environmental education, wildlife conservation, and wildlife rescue and rehabilitation
 - ~20% (40 acres) for parks and recreation, including the creation of space for cultural activities, and the preservation of the current sledding hill and disc golf course
 - ~20% (35 acres) for the creation of a bike park to promote active and healthy lifestyles
 - Additional multi-use recreational and connecting trails throughout portions of the property
- A competing ballot measure (#303) is a much more restrictive proposal eliminating recreational activities (such as sledding, disc golf, and a bike park) and blocking a proposed collaborative Wildlife Rehabilitation, Nature, & Education Center. It would also negatively impact the City’s Natural Areas budget by at least \$14 million, greatly inhibiting their capacity to steward and protect additional properties for years to come.

Vote YES on 2H!



Mark Your Calendars!

December 9, 2025



ColoradoGivesDay.org

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Comedy, Compassion, and Conservation

Why Multi-Use Matters

This MULTI-USE approach honors the original 2021 ballot measure that secured Hughes for the community by blocking a housing development and directing the site to be inclusive and accessible for natural areas, restoration, wildlife rescue, and parks & recreation.

How You Can Help the Hughes for Everyone Campaign

Please:

- Vote YES on this measure - **Ballot #2H** - MULTI-USE this November 4th
- Donate to the campaign to aid further engagement with the community of Fort Collins to help pass this referendum
- Volunteer to help us spread the word throughout the community

Hughes for Everyone has a website where you can find more information on this initiative. Visit [Hughes For Everyone](https://hughesforeveryone.com/) to learn more, donate, and volunteer for the cause!



Message by Hughes for Everyone

The Rocky Mountain Raptor Program is proud to partner with Hughes for Everyone. If voters approve the multi-use option, RMRP and its collaborative partner, Bird Conservancy of the Rockies, will initiate the planning and negotiation process with the City of Fort Collins for a Wildlife Rehabilitation, Nature, & Education Center on a portion of the Hughes site. Your support for RMRP can make a difference for our mission and at the polls.

With greatest gratitude,

Carin Avila
Executive Director



PS: If you'd like to donate or volunteer to help the Hughes For Everyone Campaign, please call or email me. Together, we can make Hughes a place for people to connect, conserve, and recreate, and where wildlife thrives.



Above: The Cooper's Hawk is deciding what to do next with his meal.

Breakfast to Go

How a hawk, a sparrow, and a sense of humor turned into generosity.

Every so often, a call comes in that reminds us just how surprising, and funny, wildlife can be. Recently, a concerned Fort Collins resident phoned about a Cooper's Hawk (COHA) on her porch. The hawk was sitting on a sparrow, and she was convinced something was terribly wrong.

After reviewing the photo she sent, we gently reassured her that this was, in fact, completely normal hawk behavior—and suggested we wait and see what happened. A short while later, she checked back in with an update:

"I'm thrilled to report that he (the hawk) and the sparrow are gone. He's just taken his breakfast to go! I don't blame him—nothing worse than a hysterical housewife poking around while you're trying to eat! Thank you for talking me down. I'll be doubling my yearly donation since you had to deal with my hysteria as well! 😊. And please thank your incredible staff for literally un-ruffling my feathers. They are simply magnificent, and what you all do is so very appreciated. I am grateful that I am a donor, so I knew exactly who to call for help, and you all answered the call immediately."

Moments like these make us chuckle, and remind us how deeply our community cares about wildlife. Thank you, Bronwyn, for your wonderful sense of humor (and your generous heart)!

In the summer, we receive about **1,000 phone calls and text messages per month** from concerned citizens inquiring about raptors on the ground.

Contact Us

Mailing Address
2519 S. Shields Street, 1K-115
Fort Collins, CO 80526

Physical Address - Call in advance to schedule a visit.
720 E. Vine Drive, Unit B
Fort Collins, CO 80524

When It Rains Raptors...

VOW and Platt Park Vet Rally the Community Raise Vital Funds for RMRP

The Rocky Mountain Raptor Program extends heartfelt thanks to Veterinarians Operating for Wildlife (VOW) and Platt Park Veterinary Clinic for hosting the incredible Saturday Night Live for Conservation event! Filled with laughter, generosity, and community spirit, the evening combined comedy, an exciting auction, and inspiring education—all in celebration of the belief that every raptor deserves A Second Chance at Freedom.



Above: RMRP Director Carin Avila addresses the audience while volunteer Lauren displays Education Ambassador Barley.

Thanks to the creativity of VOW and Platt Park Vet, and the kindness of every guest, \$9,000 was raised to provide hospital care and rehabilitation for injured birds of prey. We are deeply grateful for your dedication and for being true champions for wildlife!

Crazy whirlwind July

Summer is always busy at RMRP, but July was overwhelming with 62 new admissions - from tiny American Kestrels to recently fledged Bald Eagles. Between severe storms, animal attacks, and the ever-dreaded West Nile Virus, it felt like raptors were raining from the sky.

West Nile Virus hit especially hard this year. Young birds with weaker immune systems were bitten by infected mosquitoes, leaving many too weak to eat or fly. Of the 62 raptors admitted, 25

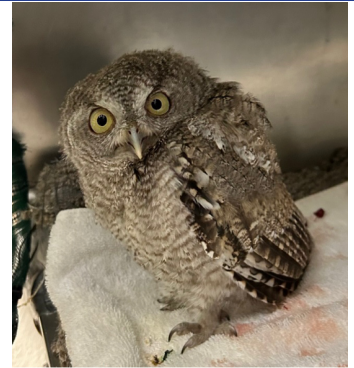


Above: This banged-up Cooper's Hawk came in with a fractured humerus. Sped through flight training and mouse school and was released on August 15.

tested positive for the virus - and sadly, most did not survive.

Right now, our enclosures are bursting full of Red-tailed, Swainson's, and Cooper's Hawks, Great Horned and Barn Owls, Kestrels, Screech Owls, and more—each one fighting for A Second Chance at Freedom. But their recovery depends on a steady supply of highly nutritious food, and our pantry is running low.

You can help fuel their freedom flight. Scan the Rodent Pro QR code to keep hungry raptors fed and on the road to recovery.



Above: This Eastern Screech-Owl is currently in mouse school and doing great!

Rodent Pro



<https://rodentpro.com/giftcard>

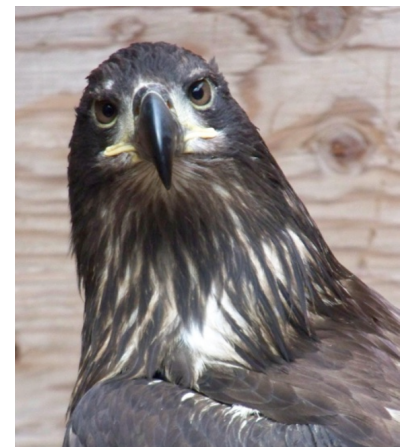
Young Bald Eagle Gets A Second Chance at Freedom Rescue, recovery, and release—thanks to you

On June 23, Colorado Parks and Wildlife reached out about a previously-flighted, young Bald Eagle in east Fort Collins that was struggling to fly. Once captured and brought to us, we found it underweight with a likely shoulder injury—possibly from rough weather, strong winds, or just the trials of a young eagle learning the ropes of flight.

Over the next few weeks, the eagle received nutritious fish, plenty of rest, and expert care from our team of staff and volunteers. Gradually, his strength and confidence returned. By July 15, with strong thermals to lift him, the eagle was ready to soar. He shot out of the carrier, rising to a familiar roost tree, then circled widely overhead—he was back home where he belonged.

With his parents and siblings nearby, we're hopeful this Second Chance at Freedom means a family reunion. And it's all possible because of caring supporters like you.

Scan the RMRP Donate QR code to help save more eagles and give them their own Second Chance at Freedom!



Above: Got him out and back home with mom and dad after a quick stay at RMRP.

RMRP Donate



<https://www.rmrp.org/donate/>

Executive Director: Carin Avila
Phone: 970-484-7756
Rehabilitation Hotline: 970-222-0322
Website: www.rmrp.org
Email: Carin@rmrp.org

Information: give@rmrp.org
Hughes Wildlife, Nature & Education Center
website: www.wildlifefocus.org
Other wildlife emergency?
Go to: www.animalhelpnow.org

Connecting with our Ambassadors



Above: This beautiful girl Aurelia has been a favorite at education programs and community events for several years.

From Patient to Teacher *The Making of an Ambassador*

In 2022, a young Red-tailed Hawk came to RMRP with a broken wing. Too injured to return to the wild, her future was uncertain. But not every ending is the same, and for her, it was the beginning of a new chapter.

Becoming an Educational Ambassador is no small feat. Only a rare few raptors have the right temperament to work alongside people, stand calmly in front of crowds, and adapt to life in human care. This hawk proved she had the courage and curiosity it takes. Within just two months of training, she was already captivating audiences at our Birds of Prey Classes and traveling to her very first off-site program.

Now, this wondrous Red-tail named Aurelia inspires thousands with her story each year, showing what it truly means to give wildlife A Second Chance at Freedom, even if that freedom looks a little different.

You can help give her, and all our ambassadors, the best care possible. With your support, they'll stay healthy and strong for the vital work of inspiring and educating our community. Simply scan the RMRP Donate QR code to play a vital part in their journey.

Come See the Raptors

From owls to eagles—find out where to see them!

- Sept 21 - Old Town Night Out @ Fort Collins Old Town Square
- Sept 27,28 - Elk Festival @ Bond Park, Estes Park
- Oct 25 - Owl-o-Ween @ Rocky Mountain Raptor Program
- Nov 1 - Colorado Gives Donation Portal Opens
- Nov 1,8,15 - Birds of Prey Classes (back by popular demand!)
- Nov 8 - Owl-Be-Home For Christmas @ Wild Birds Unlimited
- Dec 1 - Deadline for Gala auction item donations
- Dec 9 - Colorado Gives Day
- Dec 13 - Winter Open House @ Rocky Mountain Raptor Program

RMRP Events



<https://www.rmrp.org/events/>

Bring the Wild to Your Classroom! *Raptors at Your School*



RMRP Education



<https://www.rmrp.org/contact-us/educational-program-information-request/>

Make science unforgettable with RMRP's conservation educational programs! They are perfect for any grade level. Students will meet live raptor Ambassadors and their handlers up close and discover how these incredible birds survive, hunt, and keep ecosystems healthy. From food webs to biodiversity and more, our programs turn textbooks into real-life inspiration, sparking curiosity and a love for conservation.

Don't miss out-spots fill up fast! Fill out our request form at rmrp.org or reach out to Heather Schneider at heather@rmrp.org.

Since 1987, your unwavering compassion has supported the Rocky Mountain Raptor Program to carry out life-saving raptor rehabilitation - offering critical medical care, nourishment, and a safe haven for injured or orphaned birds of prey. Your compassion also powers our transformative conservation education programs, igniting a passion for wildlife and inspiring the next generation of environmental champions. As an independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit (Tax ID 90-0131614), we rely on the generosity of people like you to support our mission, helping us make a lasting difference, while inspiring the preservation of raptors and our environment for generations to come.