



Arizona's Raptor Experience, LLC

October 2017

~Newsletter~

*Greetings from Chino Valley!*

*We hope this newsletter finds you well and enjoying fall. We are busy getting the hawks out to hunt now that the season has started again. We've also made some changes in our bird line-up that we'll report in this issue.*

*Although our focus is typically on raptors, we thought it would be fun to share some information on two birds that are often thought of at this time of year – around Halloween. We hope you enjoy learning a little about Ravens and Turkey Vultures!*

Join us and the birds at  
Jay's Bird Barn

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

October 26<sup>th</sup> in Flagstaff

October 27<sup>th</sup> in Sedona

October 28<sup>th</sup> in Prescott

11 a.m. – 2 p.m.

We'd love to see you  
there!

Bring your camera.



## *Good-bye to Lyra, Luna and Joy...*



We recently sent Lyra and Luna (Barn Owls) to their new home at Georgia Southern University where they have a large raptor facility. They will continue to be education birds and are settling in nicely. We still have their one offspring, Marlee, who will be a big part of our education programs.

Joy (juvenile Bald Eagle) has moved to her new facility with a friend of ours who will be training her for education programs. Our focus now is to prepare Leo to come out of his enclosure for programs here and when we travel to other locations.

We will miss these beautiful birds, but know that they have all gone to wonderful homes and will be valued education birds.



## *The Not So Common Raven*



The chortle of the Common Raven (*Corvus corax*) has become one of my favorite sounds. We often hear this interesting vocalization as the ravens fly above us and the Harris's Hawks (*Parabuteo unicinctus*) when we are out hunting. Because of the intelligence of these amazing birds, I am always left wondering what it is they are saying to one another.

Ravens have many complex vocalizations used for communication. They can also mimic the calls of other birds and be taught to mimic human words. Ravens belong to and are the largest member of the family Corvidae, that includes ravens, crows, jays and magpies. This entire group is thought to be among the most intelligent of birds. Ravens and crows (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*), relative to their size, have the largest brains of any of the birds. Scientists suggest that their cognitive abilities rival those of some primates like chimpanzees and gorillas.

Intelligence is not the only attribute of these birds that I find endearing. Although not as gregarious as Crows, Ravens have strong bonds with their mate and family members. Pairs may stay together for life and offspring actually assist in rearing young produced in subsequent years. Young birds often stay and travel together until they reach breeding age, from about 2-4, and are so curious that they investigate any new object.

Their curiosity can lead to play. Ravens can often be seen carrying objects that they drop and recapture in mid-air. Young birds also play tug-of-war with new and interesting objects. Their curiosity can also lead them to food sources. Ravens have been known to follow other animals and humans to find food. Being omnivorous, Ravens eat a wide range of foods, including insects, fish, grains, berries, pet food, human food scraps and much more. They will also prey upon eggs and young birds or injured small animals. Carrion can make up a large part of their diet, and they are known to cache extra food for another meal.

Ravens are a hawk-sized bird and the largest member of the order Passeriformes, the songbirds or perching birds.

*P. Schnell photo*

## Turkey Vulture Q & A

Q: Is a Turkey Vulture the same as a Turkey Buzzard?

A: The two names do apply to the same bird. Buzzard is actually a British term that refers to a large hawk and is therefore misapplied when used to describe the vulture.

Q: What is the translation of the scientific name *Cathartes aura*?

A: Golden purifier

Q: How would a Turkey Vulture be identified in the sky?

A: Turkey Vultures are very large birds with a 6-foot wingspan - larger than most raptors except eagles and condors. They do have a distinctive flight pattern, flying slowly and teetering back and forth like a butterfly. When seen head-on, they fly with a "V" shape, or a dihedral unlike most raptors who are relatively flat in flight.

Q: Do Turkey Vultures hunt or kill their food?

A: No. Turkey Vultures eat carrion, or things that have recently died. They prefer freshly dead mammals, but will eat dead birds, fish, insects, etc.

Q: Why is a Turkey Vultures head and neck naked?

A: This helps them to keep clean when feeding on rotting meat from a carcass.

Q: Do Turkey Vultures spread disease?

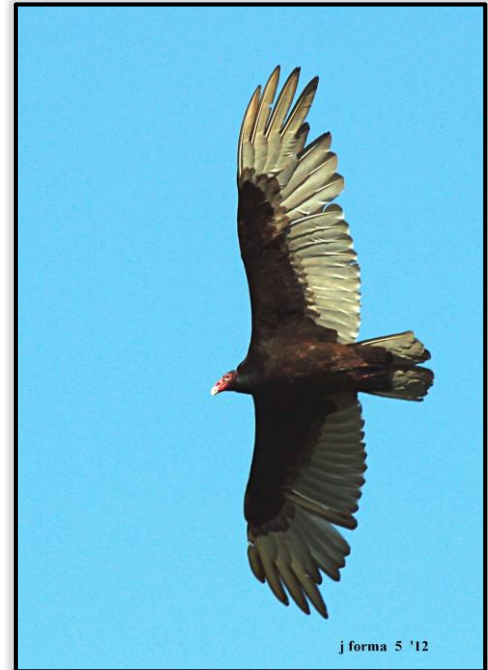
A: No, in fact they help prevent the spread of disease by consuming animals that have died from disease and may contaminate the environment or other animals. They have an excellent immune system that prevents them from becoming ill when eating diseased carcasses.

Q: Do Turkey Vultures really urinate on their legs?

A: Yes, this behavior is called urohydrolysis and is a method of cooling the body through evaporation.

### Cool fact:

Partners in Flight estimates the global breeding population of Turkey Vultures to be about 18 million birds!

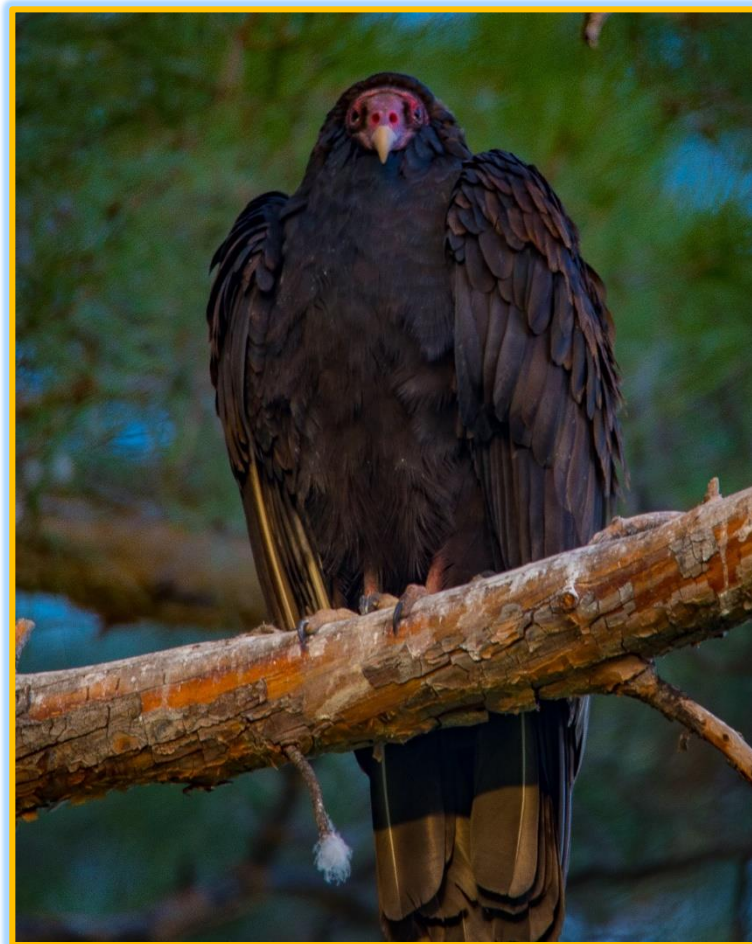


*Photo by Joe Forma*

*Guest Photos:*



Common Raven  
By Gregory Griffin



Turkey Vulture  
By Gregory Griffin