



Fall 2025



I welcome you with genuine excitement to the first issue of Raptor Rising, our new newsletter keeping you connected to the work and the wingbeats of the Auburn University Raptor Center (AURC).

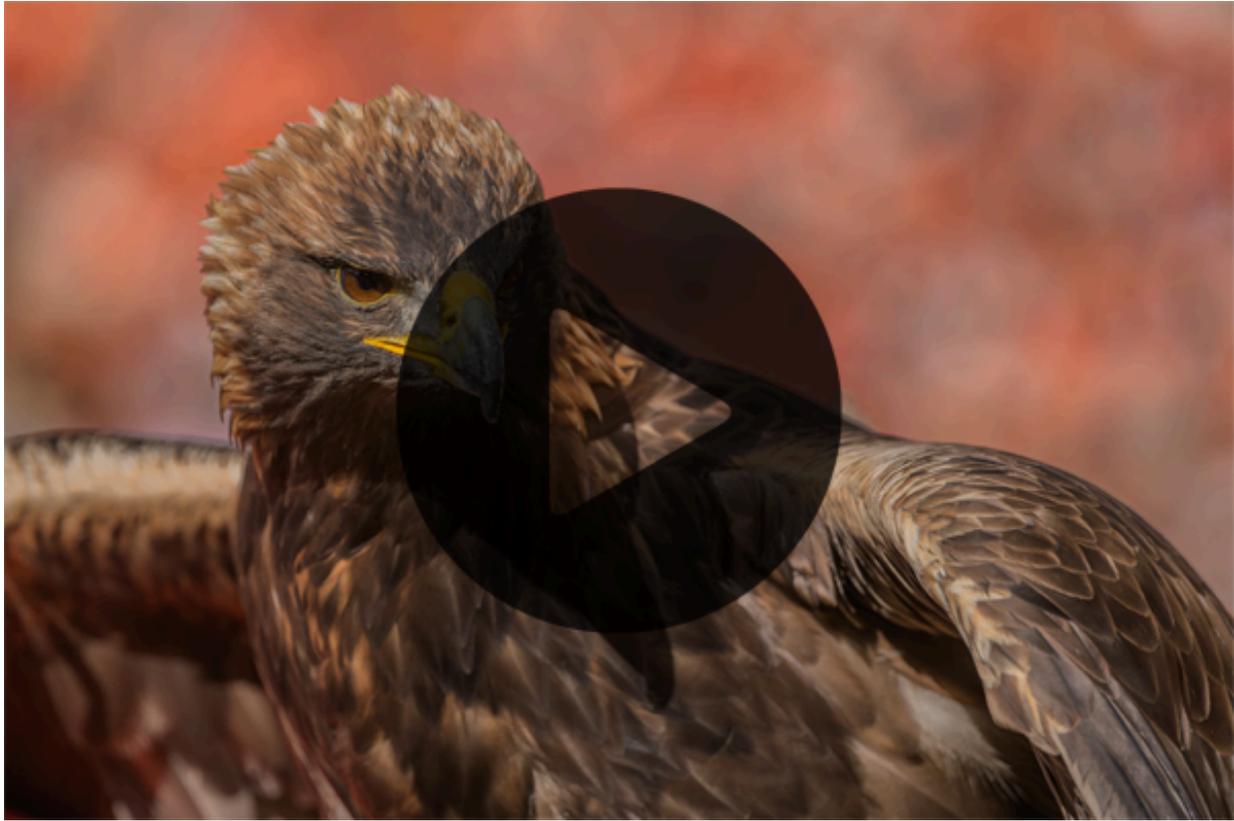
This year, we celebrate 25 years of War Eagle flights. When our eagle takes to the sky over Jordan-Hare Stadium, more than 88,000 people turn their gaze upward. In the brief moment between the eagle's release and her landing, something remarkable happens: Auburn Family and visitors alike are joined in shared wonder. The flight takes my breath away no matter how many times I witness it. It's more than tradition. It's the heart of this university, carried on the wings of a bird who connects us to something greater than ourselves. A legacy in motion, honoring all that has come before while soaring fearlessly toward what's next.

Behind that moment is a place I hold close to my heart. At AURC, we care for birds who can no longer return to the wild, offer second chances to those who can, and create space for people to learn from both. Every outreach program and every successful raptor release is rooted in our shared commitment to conservation, education, rehabilitation, and emboldening the Auburn Spirit. These remarkable raptors are at the heart of it all (and us all). Through them, people reconnect with the natural world in ways that stay with them long after our eagle has landed at the 50-yard line.

With Raptor Rising, we're opening our doors a little wider. Each issue will share updates from our aviaries and exam rooms, snapshots of student learning, community moments, and opportunities to get involved. My hope is that these pages reflect not just what we do, but why we do it—and how every person who supports us is part of the impact we make together.

Here's to the next 25 years of flight. I hope you'll join us as we soar higher than ever before.

With a Heartfelt War Eagle,
Robyn



CONSERVATION

Advancing Raptor Medicine Through Hands-On Training

By: Stephanie Kadletz, Assistant Director, Raptor Rehabilitation, MNR, CWR, CET

The Auburn University Raptor Center is proud to launch a new educational initiative made possible through the Jerry Liguori Raptor Conservation and Education Scholarship from HawkWatch International. This funding supports the development of a hands-on training program in raptor medicine for both veterinary students and private practice veterinarians.

Veterinary students from Auburn University and surrounding universities will participate in immersive training sessions focused on raptor handling, diagnostics, and surgical techniques. In addition, private practice veterinarians will engage in advanced workshops designed to strengthen clinical decision-making and rehabilitation strategies for birds of prey.

The initiative includes the creation of a structured curriculum and the addition of anatomical models, orthopedic surgical kits, and clinical simulation supplies to enhance learning. These tools will allow participants to build real-world skills in a safe, educational environment.

Inspired by Jerry Liguori's legacy of raptor conservation and education, this program

integrates clinical excellence with ecological stewardship. By preparing current and future veterinarians with the skills to assist injured raptors, we are advancing both wildlife medicine and conservation across the Southeast and beyond.

EDUCATION

Keeping Cool: How We Help Our Birds Beat the Summer Heat

By: Andrea McCravy, Raptor Specialist III, CPBT-KA

Here in Alabama, the summer heat and humidity seem to get more intense every year. Working with birds means spending a lot of time outdoors—cleaning aviaries, training birds in our open-air amphitheater, and more. Our team of staff and volunteers looks out for one another, making sure everyone stays hydrated and takes plenty of breaks. But what about the birds in our care?

Just like people, birds can struggle with extreme heat. And while we can reach for a popsicle to cool down, we've found a fun and effective way to offer our birds something similar: bird-friendly ice pops!

These chilly treats not only help our birds stay cool, but they also serve as enrichment—giving them something new and interesting to explore. Wildlife centers and zoos around the world use ice pops to help animals beat the heat, and we've joined in with our own creative twist.

We can use all kinds of molds to make themed ice pops, adding in tasty surprises like bits of food, quail wings, or other snacks. One of the birds' favorites? "Blood pops"—a mix of water, blood, and tidbits frozen into a solid treat. Many of our birds will stand on the ice pop while they peck at it, which helps cool their feet as well as their bodies.

So how exactly do ice pops help birds cool down?

Contact Cooling

It depends on the species, but generally, raptors have a few feather-free areas—like their legs, feet, beak, and around their eyes. When they touch an ice pop with these parts, heat from their body transfers into the ice, helping to cool their blood and lower their body temperature.

Hydration Boost

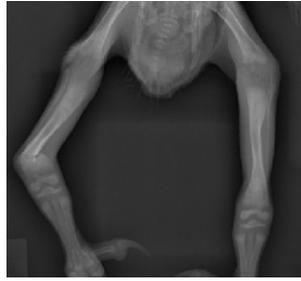
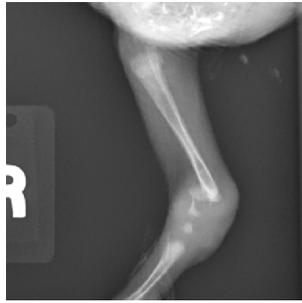
Ice pops offer a small hydration boost as they melt—an added benefit during hot weather. While pecking at the ice to get to the treats, birds may naturally ingest some of the water, helping them stay refreshed and better equipped to handle the heat.

In short, ice pops work for birds much like cold compresses do for us—by drawing heat away from the body and helping to keep them comfortable. It's a simple, safe, and enriching way to support our feathered friends during the hottest days of the year.

So next time you're enjoying a cold treat on a hot day, just know our birds might be doing the same—with their own icy snacks designed just for them. Now I'm thinking an ice pop sounds pretty good, too. Stay cool out there, and enjoy the little things that make summer sweet!



REHABILITATION



From Storm to Strength: A Great Horned Owl's Journey

By: Stephanie Kadletz, Assistant Director, Raptor Rehabilitation, MNR, CWR, CET

On February 13, Great Horned Owl Patient #2025-044 arrived at the Auburn University Raptor Center as a week-old chick. Displaced from its nest during a powerful storm, the tiny owl had suffered fractures to both a wing and a leg—an especially complex case for our veterinarians, due to the chick's young age and rapidly developing bones.

While the wing healed beautifully, the leg fracture proved more challenging. Initially stabilized externally, the leg began to grow incorrectly as the chick grew rapidly. To give this owl the best chance at release, surgical intervention became necessary.

Once the chick neared full size, orthopedic specialists from Auburn's College of Veterinary Medicine collaborated with our team to perform a delicate wedge osteotomy—a procedure to realign the limb. After months of recovery and rehabilitation, we're thrilled to share that this once-fragile chick is now strong, healthy, and preparing for release back into the wild.

This case highlights the power of collaboration, expertise, and early intervention in wildlife medicine—and the incredible resilience of the patients we serve.

TIGER GIVING DAY

Every year, over 200 wild raptors arrive at our hospital, many in critical condition.

This Tiger Giving Day, help critically injured raptors take flight again. The Auburn University Raptor Center (AURC) is raising funds for an intensive care unit (ICU) for injured and orphaned birds of prey.

Mark your calendar for Sept. 10! Your donations will directly improve our raptor patients' outcomes.

#TigerGivingDay #WarEagle #KeepFlyingForward

TIGER
GIVING DAY
TigerGiving.org



SAVE THE DATE

SEPT. 10TH
ANNIVERSARY

EVENTS



[Football, Fans and Feathers](#) will be held at 4:00 p.m.

Huntsville Botanical Gardens:

Tuesday, October 7, 2025 - Shows at 11:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. - [Tickets](#)

Harry Potter Tea on Thatch:

Sunday, October 12, 2025 at 2:00 p.m.

Sunday, October 26, 2025 at 2:00 p.m.

Sunday, November 9, 2025 at 2:00 p.m.

Sunday, November 23, 2025 at 2:00 p.m.

[Opelika Public Library:](#)

Wednesday, October 15, 2025 at 11:00 a.m.

[Athens-Clarke Vulture Festival:](#)

Saturday, October 25, 2025 at 9:00 a.m. until 11:00 a.m. EST.

SUPPORT



One of the ways you can support the Auburn University Raptor Center is by sending frequently used items. We have created an [Amazon wish list](#) so you can easily see some of those items and we can easily update based on our needs. Please note that the supplies listed are just the types of items we frequently use, you are more than welcome to send us different brands, sizes, or use the store of your choice!

[Wishlist](#)



AUBURN UNIVERSITY

College of Veterinary Medicine

We rely on the generosity and support of individuals, corporations and foundations to advance our mission. By donating to our facility, you are providing vital resources to ensure we deliver outstanding medical care to our patients undergoing rehabilitation and high quality educational presentations to the community. To learn about different ways to give or for more information, please contact the Auburn College of Veterinary Medicine Advancement team at giving@vetmed.auburn.edu or call (334) 844-1446.

[Donate](#)

Learn more about the [Auburn University Raptor Center](#), a division of the Auburn University College of Veterinary Medicine.