

GilpinCountyNews

BLACK HAWK • CENTRAL CITY • ROLLINSVILLE • NEDERLAND • THURSDAY, JANUARY 29, 2009 • 75 CENTS

Paying for Gilpin's road, trash, and other Commissioner business. **COUNTY p2**

Black Hawk's Creekside Bed & Breakfast burns. **CITY p3**

Changes needed at Gilpin County School; Science Fair. **EDUCATION p9, 12, 13**

Piranhas swim team devours competition. **SPORTS p20**



DAVE GIBSON

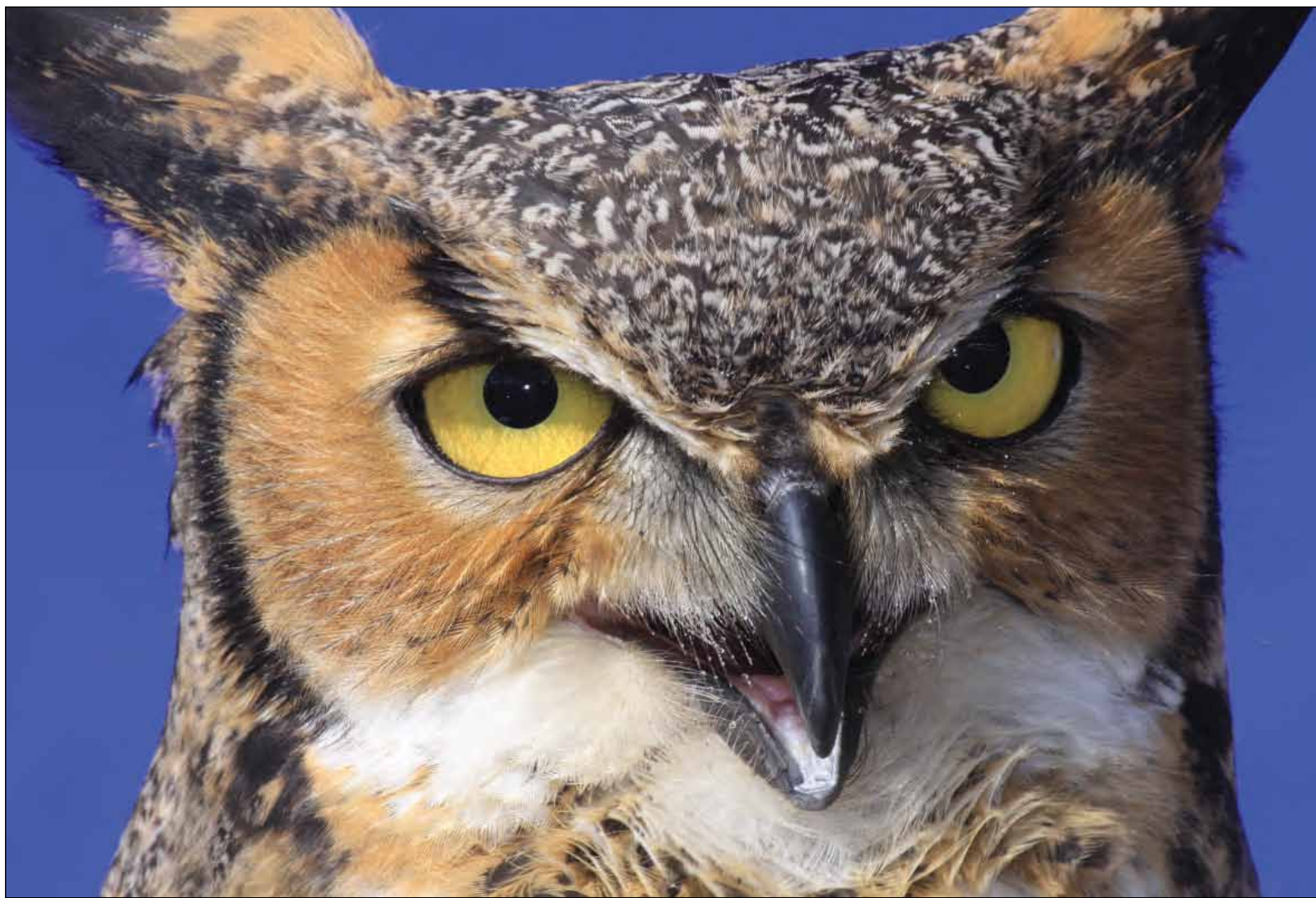
This prairie falcon is one of the raptors being given a second chance at freedom as part of the Rocky Mountain Raptor Program in Fort Collins. Since its inception by veterinary students in 1979, this non-profit association of veterinarians and veterinary students from Colorado State University has treated more than 4,000 birds of prey with the help of over 200 volunteers. **p10-11**

A second chance at freedom

Rocky Mountain Raptor Program

by Dave Gibson

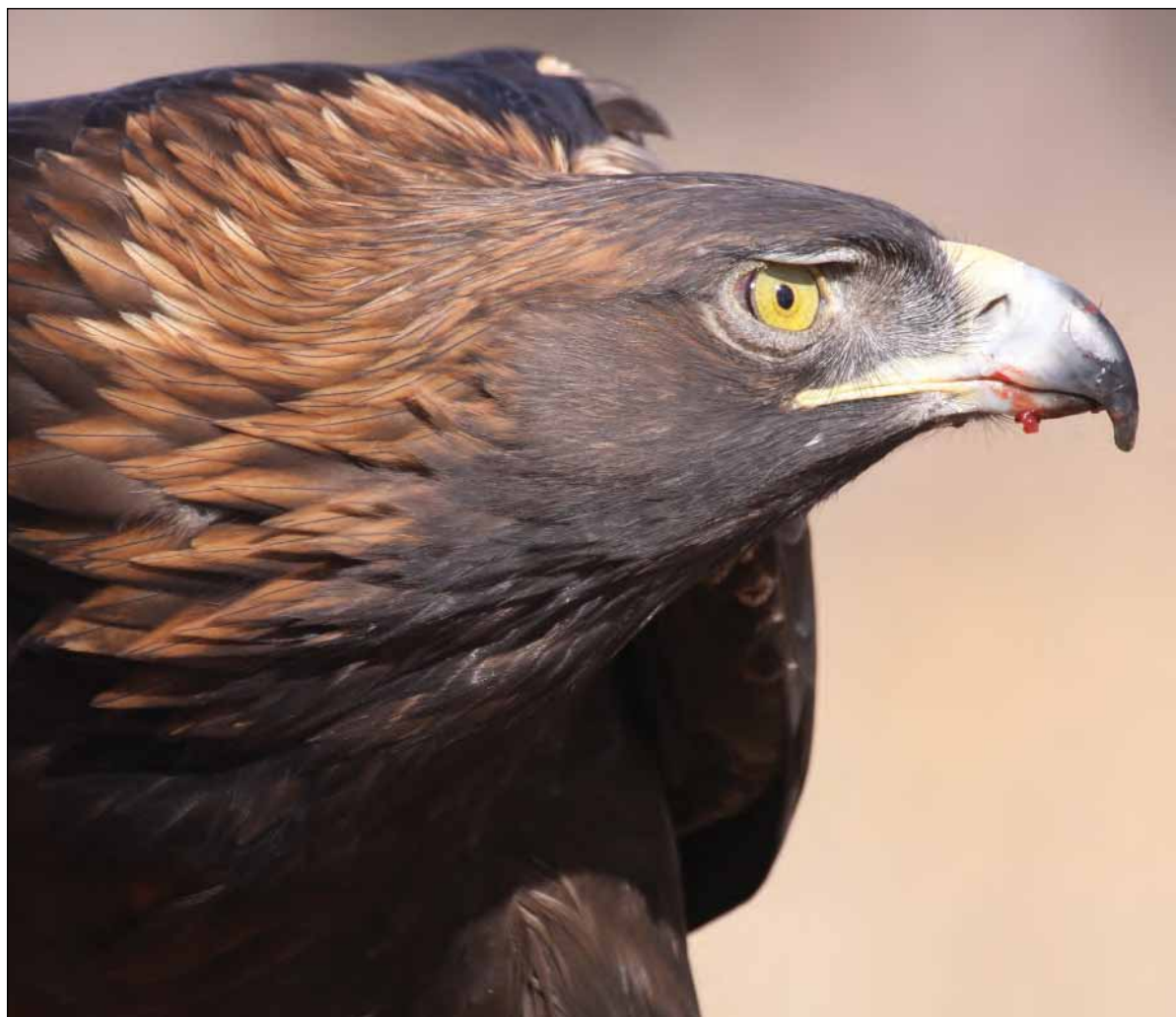
When a tornado ripped through Windsor, Colorado on May 22nd of last year, eighty peoples' homes were leveled. With downed trees and scattered rubble everywhere, some of the area's wildlife also found themselves homeless. A local farmer was cleaning out a drainage ditch filled with debris when he discovered a shredded nest and a young red-tailed hawk. Surviving the storm, his mother and siblings were nowhere in sight. Rushed to the Rocky Mountain Raptor Rehabilitation Center in Fort Collins, he was placed in a "Critical Care" cage for a couple of days of treatment and observation. Doing well he was moved outside with another tornado victim, a mature red-tailed hawk with feather damage. Taking the orphan "under her wing" he was soon strong enough to fly, passing the required "mouse school" and successfully released a few weeks later near where he was found. Since its inception by a group of Colorado State University veterinary students in 1979, the Rocky Mountain Raptor Program (RMRP) has treated over 4,000 birds of prey. Many of the birds are suffering from trauma received from collisions with automobiles. Not all of the birds' stories end as neatly as the young red-tail's, but 70% of the treatable admitted birds are eventually released into the wild. Raptors that aren't suitable for release are found homes, or become in-house "Ambassadors" shown in public by volunteers or used to educate schoolchildren. RMRP is not open to the public because it is a hospital, but hosts several Avian Appreciation Days per year at various locations where getting "up close and personal" with the birds is possible. They also have a holding facility (the Environmental Learning Center) of non-releasable "Ambassadors" on Drake Road in Fort



DAVE GIBSON

Great horned owl

Collins where I saw a bald eagle, a golden eagle, a Swainson's hawk, a red-tailed hawk, and two turkey vultures. On that day handlers took turns removing the birds from their enclosures, feeding them raw meat and dead rodents. The Environmental Learning Center is open seven days a week, although it is best to call ahead if you wish to observe feedings.



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Golden eagle after feeding time.

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A bald eagle from Nebraska was recently delivered to the RMRP Center with the technical diagnosis of "ADR" or "Ain't Doin' Right." With drooped wings, poor balance, and an inability to swallow, he was put on a course of L-lysine. Food and fluids were administered twice a day, along with homeopathic medicine, but they brought no results. Lethargic with eye spasms and muscle twitching, the doctors suspected West Nile Virus. Blood work showed a low white blood cell count and confirmed their suspicions of West Nile. Antibiotics were administered, and a slow recovery began. Wary of humans now with "flight"

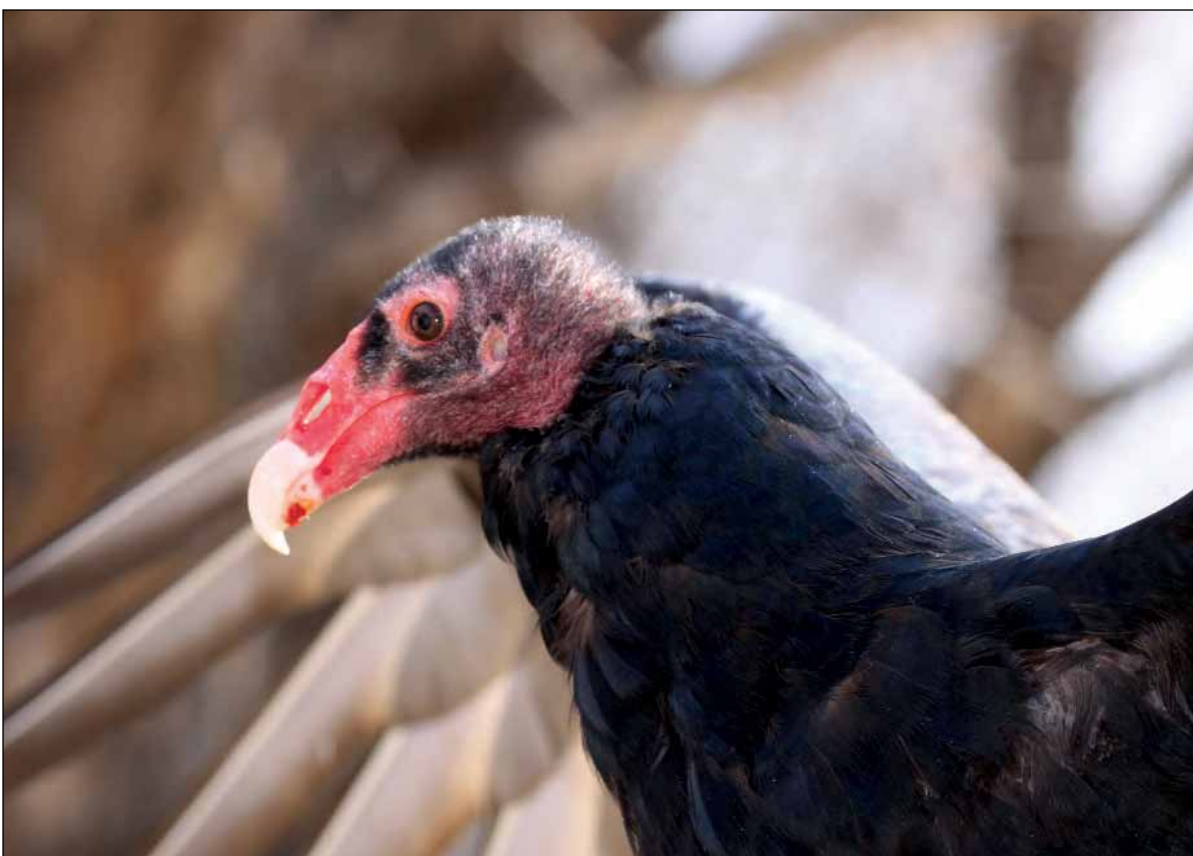
and "mouse" schools complete, he was returned to the wild this winter. The Rocky Mountain Raptor Program employs seven staff members and works closely with veterinarians and veterinary students from Colorado State University. Two hundred volunteers help with medical treatment, rehabilitating, feeding, up-keep, and handling of the birds. RMRP is a non-profit organization with 80% of its \$375,000 operating budget generated by merchandise sales, presentations, private donations, and their "Adopt-A-Raptor" and "Membership" programs. It is expensive to keep large raptors with eagles consuming ten dollars

worth of rats each day. Surgeries cost \$250, and X-rays \$80 each. A new facility is being planned for an adjacent 20 acre site that will contain forty flight cages, treatment areas, and isolation rooms housing injured raptors, thereby giving them "A Second Chance at Freedom." Interpretive trails and exhibits will be open for all to see along with some of RMRP's "Ambassadors." To donate your time or learn more about the Rocky Mountain Raptor Program, go to www.rmrp.org or call 970-484-7756.



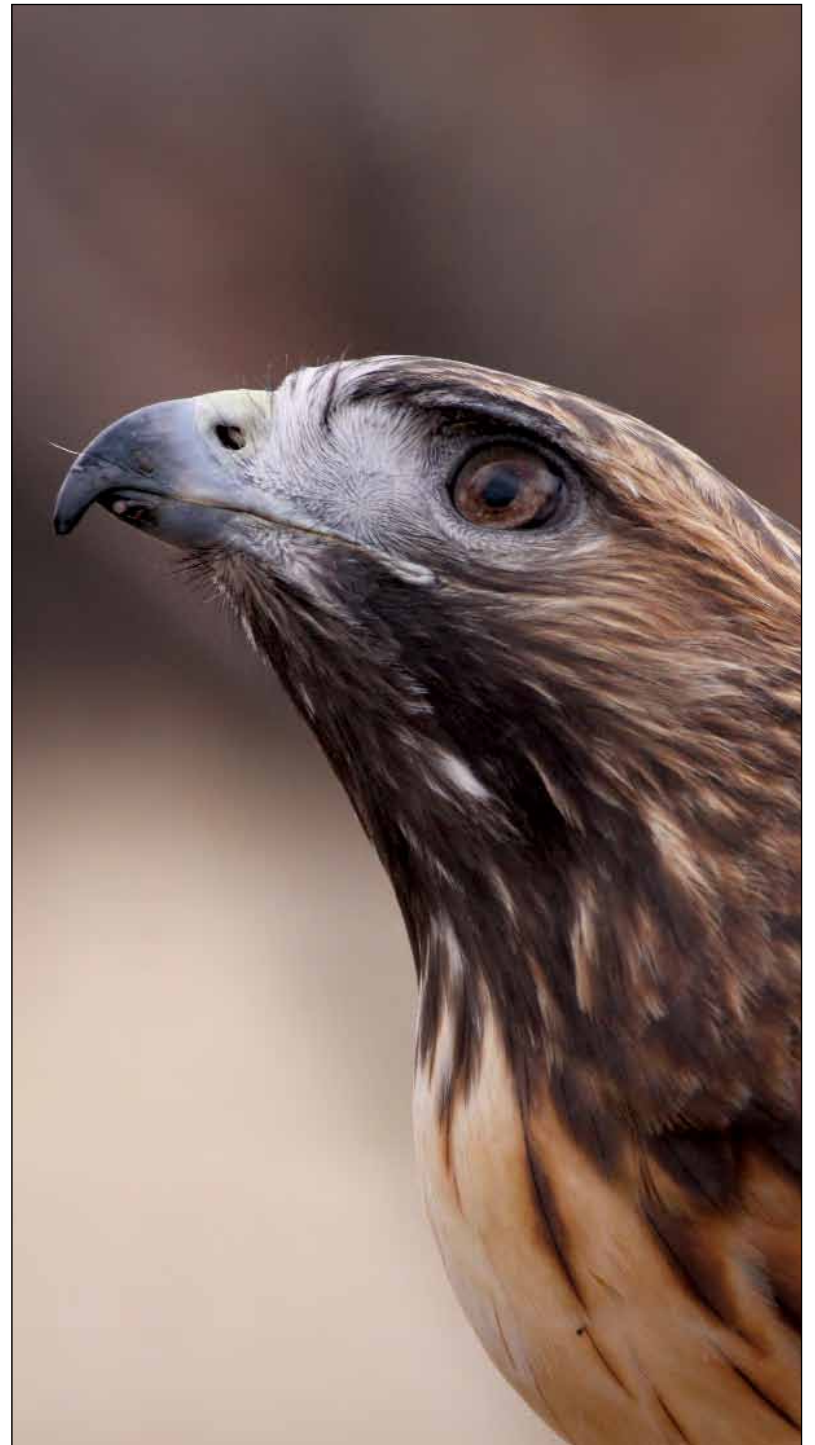
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Swainsons hawk with mouse for lunch...



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Turkey vulture



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Red-tailed hawk

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