

# Raptor Center of Tampa Bay Newsletter



December 2021 Issue | Raptor Center News

## *About Us*

The Raptor Center of Tampa Bay is a non-profit organization that focuses on birds of prey. The goal is to rescue and rehabilitate them so they can be released back into the wild.

In addition, the Center provides education and guidance to the public about conservation and awareness on local wildlife.

The organization consists of dedicated volunteers, state and federally permitted rehabbers, educators, and conservation advocates, that dedicate their time and experience.

*Where to find us*

[www.RaptorCenterofTampa.org](http://www.RaptorCenterofTampa.org)

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## Volunteer Spotlight:

### Roger Newell

volunteer \ n. \ a person who, proceeding from will or from one's own choice or consent, undertakes or expresses a willingness to undertake a service.

Yes - that is the definition. It seems simply put, but it's more uncommon in practice than one might think. And yet there are those who still understand the deeper meaning of the word. Roger Newell understands and has exemplified it both daily and repeatedly over the years through his volunteer work with the Raptor Center of Tampa Bay (RCTB) and others. An avid Eagle watch volunteer for Audubon Florida, he keeps track of half of the eagle nests in Hillsborough County. After significant storms hit the area, he checks to see if the nests are still intact, if the babies are ok, and then provides any necessary help or rescue service needed.

Averaging over 200 rescues a year, Roger has been helping RCTB since its inception and has been rescuing for local rehabbers well over 10 years. He has been responsible for the rescue and/or release of hawks, eagles, owls, falcons, osprey, and more: and that's just raptors! While Raptors are his true love, Roger helps with everything from baby squirrels to opossums; gopher tortoises to blue jays; and fawns to falcons. This proves he understands the meaning of the phrase "...a willingness to undertake a service."

Roger Newell was born and raised in Michigan and drawn to birds early on. Around 12 years old, while looking out the window, Roger spotted a crow's nest built high in a 60-to-70-foot pine tree. He wanted a crow as a pet and decided he would have one! Alone, he climbed the tree to the nest and after reaching in to grab a baby crow noticed it was still too young to leave the nest: not enough feathers. He decided to be patient (uncommon enough in 12-year-old boys!) and wait a little longer. So, after a while he tried again. After one unsuccessful attempt, he was able to secure the (feathered!) baby crow, put it down his tucked in shirt and climb back down the tall pine. He finally had his pet crow. He named him Joey. Roger says he realized how smart, curious, and playful Joey was when he watched him sit on a limb above the chicken coup and imitate the chicken just to watch them scatter. On another occasion he noticed the family dog chasing Joey around the house. The dog chased Joey across the front yard and around the corner of the house, all the while nipping at, and chasing Joey. Roger waited for them to come around the house for another lap, but when they did... it was Joey chasing the dog!



Roger has been described by friends and colleagues as amiable, kind, sincere, knowledgeable, friendly, and forthright... and his favorite saying is "Hot Diggity!". His affability and easy-going demeanor have been on display many times. For example: a few years back, the Raptor Center received a call regarding an injured, motionless duck on a pond within a gated community. Being diligent and knowing the 'ins and outs' of gated community security, he worked tirelessly, following the proper channels to gain permission to enter the community and save the duck. After a considerable amount of time, he finally obtained the proper permission to enter and help the poor duck only to find that the injured duck was in fact a wooden decoy: Roger simply laughed it off.

Another example of his being able to treat adversity like 'water off a duck's back' involved a rescue as well. A call came in to RCTB regarding an injured bird described by the caller as: "...a very large black bird with a red head." Since it was the RCTB that received the call, the Center naturally assumed that a Turkey Vulture was the patient: the description of a large black bird with a red head fit the Vulture line-up perfectly. Proper gloves and protection were secured, along with a large Kennel to protect the mighty bird, and Roger set forth to save a member of one of the most important links in the food chain: 'Nature's Garbage men!' It turned out to be a chicken and Roger laughed it off as well. But because of Roger's commitment to rescue, the chicken was nursed back to health, named Miss Chickadee, and lived happily at the Center for another two years!

Roger provides help with everything involving rescue, transport, or release and never accepts anything in return. His only limitations on volunteerism are self-imposed and involve an even deeper commitment. While Roger is available almost any time for help with a rescue/release/transport, on Sundays and Wednesdays he is NOT. As a devout Christian, Roger attends services on a regular basis and has always made clear how high a priority in life his faith and worship are. Witnessing his commitment to volunteerism leaves no doubt to anyone watching as to the depth of his commitment to the church.

Mr. Roger Newell provides constant help rescuing and transporting birds, mammals, and reptiles for the Raptor Center without ever taking anything in return: a true-blue volunteer per the definition. In today's times of quick fixes and immediate social media gratification, when needing to be "liked" by strangers for an online opinion given alone and with no restraint or effort is sought, and when partial commitment passes as the norm, Roger is a welcome exception. And when the Raptor Center of Tampa Bay learns that Roger is on the job, you can hear a collective, "Hot Diggity!"

*Thank you, Roger!*





# Raptor Center FACILITY UPDATE

Here are pictures from our 100-foot flight cage. We are lucky to be able to use a flight cage in Polk County. It's a tremendous help in reconditioning our birds for return to the wild.



Flight cages that are the size required by law are an integral part of the rehabilitation of injured birds, much like physical therapy is to humans. Typically, only one species of bird can go into the cage at a time, leaving many of other species waiting for their turn.

We need to build several large flight barns so there are never birds waiting to get into a cage. You may not know that the land that was purchased for us to lease has pre-existing issues that we were not aware of. Because of this, Hillsborough County will not let us build our center on the land we have, and the land is tied up in litigation. So, we drive our birds 45 minutes away for reconditioning.

We couldn't do this without our dedicated Flight Team. Kim Kalischek, Lloyd Terry, James Voglesburg, Deb Wells, and our apprentice Jacob come to the cage every day to feed, water, and clean up after the birds. Volunteers drive the birds back and forth. Especially Roger, Carol, Cindy, Susan, Dixie along with several others.



If you know of 2 to 5 acres of land, in Hillsborough County, that can be: leased, sold, or donated to the Center, please contact us!

Don't forget you can also support through purchases in our Etsy Store.



## Non-Raptor Rescues: Sandhill Cranes

by Lexie Vanderweilt

While it's true the Raptor Center of Tampa Bay's name reflects its primary goals, the Center provides help and assistance to more than just raptors. For example, you may not be aware that we love Sandhill Cranes at the Raptor Center even though they are not raptors! We take them in as well as many other non-raptor species.

Here is some background information on Sandhill Cranes and relate how we can protect the healthy and help rescue the injured.

Florida Sandhill Cranes are a sub-species of the Greater Sandhill Cranes found throughout the remainder of the United States. The estimated population is 4-5,000 birds. Florida Sandhills do not migrate. The Florida



sandhill crane is protected by the U.S. Migratory Bird Treaty Act and as a State-designated Threatened species by Florida's Endangered and Threatened Species Rule. They live among us year-round. In November and December, large flocks (estimated to be around 25,000 birds) of northern cranes move in, more than tripling the population in the state. These winter visitors leave during March and April to return to the Great Lakes region of our country.

## Sandhill Cranes continued...

Sandhill Cranes mate for life. If their mate should die, they will seek a new mate. In Florida, you'll notice pairs of cranes beginning to "dance" together and build nests from late February through March in wetlands. Typically, the female will lay 2 eggs, sometimes three. It is not uncommon for only one of the chicks to reach maturity. When there are 3 chicks, only 2 will survive if both parents survive. Young sandhill cranes are called colts. They are precocial, which means they hatch fully feathered with their eyes open and within 24 hours are capable of following their parents away from the nest. Together, they forage for seeds and roots, crop plants such as corn and peanuts, insects, snakes, frogs and occasionally young birds or small mammals. Cranes are omnivorous feeding on seeds, grain, berries, insects, earthworms, mice, small birds, snakes, lizards, frogs, and crayfish.

Both parents feed and take care of the colts. The entire family returns to the nest at night where the female typically roosts with the colts and the male stands guard.



Did you know that Sandhill Cranes return to where they were born to breed? Degradation or habitat loss resulting from wetland impacts for development or agricultural purposes are the primary threats facing Florida Sandhill Cranes. Land development is encroaching upon their generational nesting grounds at an alarming rate. This leaves their nests far too close to moving traffic. Even worse, it causes them to forage for food in busy roadway medians. As they cross the road to eat, they're hit by oncoming traffic and frequently do not survive the resulting trauma. When one crane in a family is hit and injured or killed, its entire

family will stay close either trying to get it to move or mourning it's passing. This can cause even more injury and death.

## How can you help?



- ✓ Protect the wetlands where the cranes breed and roost from development.
- ✓ Remove deceased sandhill cranes from roadways and the medians. (Remove them as far away from the road as possible.) This will help prevent injuries to its family members.
- ✓ Do not allow Sandhill Cranes to eat out of your bird feeders. Every time cranes come in close contact with people, they get hurt. (It is also illegal to feed these birds.)
- ✓ Donate to the Raptor Center's new facility fund.
- ✓ Donate money dedicated to building large enclosures specifically for cranes.
- ✓ If you see an injured crane, contact the Raptor Center right away for help. The sooner we can help the crane, the better it is for the crane and it's family.

Currently when a colt needs to be rehabbed it may be transported to another rehabber which can be hours away. It's critical that we raise the money needed to purchase property and to build adequate enclosures. Please help if you can - and thank you!

The range of the Florida sandhill crane diminished in the southeastern US during the 20th century, with breeding populations disappearing from coastal Texas, Alabama, and southern Louisiana due to wetland degradation, habitat loss, and overhunting. For more information on Sandhill Cranes (*Grus canadensis*) visit: [Sandhill Crane | FWC \(myfwc.com\)](https://www.fwc.com/sandhill-crane)



# 2022 NATURE'S GUARDIANS MONTHLY EVENTS

## JANUARY



1/21 – Ocean Conservation

## FEBRUARY

2/18 – Baby Owl Shower



## MARCH

3/5 – Spring Wonders of Wildlife Festival  
3/18 – St. Patty's Day with the Owls

## APRIL

4/15 – Florida Ecosystems & their Wildlife



## MAY

5/20 – Birds of Prey



## JUNE

6/17 –



## JULY

7/15 – Batty about Bats



## AUGUST

8/19 – Crested Caracara and Falcons



## SEPTEMBER

9/16 – Importance of Birds & Bees in Farming



## OCTOBER

10/21 – Owlween



## NOVEMBER

11/5 – Fall Wonders of Wildlife Festival



## DECEMBER

12/17 – Celebrating Wildlife

