



Audubon

Center for
Birds of Prey

Guest Guidebook

**A companion for your
self-guided tour**

Bald Eagle, Francis



Audubon

Center for
Birds of Prey

The birds at the Center are permanently injured and cannot be returned to the wild. They will live under human care for the rest of their lives.

**This is your guide through the property. This book contains information on the raptor species and non-releasable birds who reside here. We hope you enjoy your visit!
If you have any questions please ask any staff or volunteer you see.**

What is a bird of prey?

Birds of Prey, or raptors, include eagles, hawks, osprey, falcons, kites, owls and vultures. All raptors are predatory birds that hunt and eat other animals. They use their long talons to seize and kill their prey.

All raptors have sharp, curved beaks that enable them to tear their prey. Raptors are vital for maintaining the healthy populations of prey species and are key indicators of the health of our ecosystems.

Swallow-tailed Kite

Elanoides forficatus

Fast Facts

These are among the most adept and acrobatic fliers of all the raptors. They reside in Florida in the spring and summer, raise their young, then migrate to South America for the winter.

Diet

Insects, lizards, snakes, small mammals, and birds.

Habitat

Riverine forests, pine flatwoods, agricultural areas.

Nesting in FL

March through June; use communal roosts in tall pines or cypress. Monogamous.



Sojourner was admitted in April 2021 with multiple fractures in her left wing.

Sojourner was named by our resident artist, Lauren Austin. Sojourner Truth, the American abolitionist and women's rights leader, inspired the name. Sojourner is easy to spot by her solid black eyes.

Mississippi Kite

Ictinia mississippiensis

Fast Facts

Mississippi Kites have a unique migration pattern, congregating in groups in the Florida Panhandle in late summer. They then travel west along the Texas coast to South America, covering thousands of miles.

Diet

Insects, lizards, and snakes.

Habitat

Riverine forests, pine flatwoods, agricultural areas.

Identification

Falcon-like wings, broadest at the wrist, long flared tail. Their call is a high, thin whistle: “pe-teew” or “pee-teeer.”

Shadow was admitted to the Raptor Trauma Clinic in August, 2017. He had a severely injured right wing and eventually part of that wing was amputated. Shadow is easy to spot, he's all grey with a few white feathers on his back.



Snail Kite

Rostrhamus sociabilis

Fast Facts

Snail Kites are not migratory, but nomadic, and move around in response to changing water levels.

Diet

Large snails. Under normal conditions, Florida birds live almost entirely on large apple snails. When the snails become scarce, as during drought, the kites may eat small turtles. Also rarely eat small snails, rodents, crabs.

Habitat

Fresh marshes and canals. In Florida, large freshwater lakes and marshes. In the American tropics, also in wet savannahs, rice fields, sugarcane fields. Favors shallow waters.

Identification

Adult males are dark gray with darker wings and a black tail with white at the base. Males have pinkish-red skin around the bill. Females are similar but browner, with whitish feathering around the face. Their calls consist of low cackles and chatters.

Ruby was admitted to the Center in October 2021 after she was hit by an airboat. She had a fractured right humerus, a dislocated right elbow, leg paralysis, and spinal trauma, all of which have healed, but not enough to where she was able to be released back into the wild.

Ruby was named by Kathy Sayre and John Corbitt, who won her naming at the Center's annual fundraiser. As Ruby matures, her eyes will turn red, which influenced her name.



Cooper's Hawk

Accipiter cooperii

Fast Facts

This medium-sized hawk is a common sight around home bird feeders across the country, swooping in to nab an unwary songbird. They rely on surprise attacks when hunting, using dense vegetation to cover themselves. Their alarm call is a loud “cack cack cack.”

Diet

Small mammals and small to medium-sized birds.

Habitat

Open deciduous or mixed woodlands.

Nesting in FL

Solitary nesters; breeding season is April through July.
Monogamous.

Penrod was admitted to the Center in 2005. He lost the tip of his right wing as a nestling and was later found in a bush as a fledgling unable to fly. Apparently, his parents had still been feeding him while he was on the ground injured.



Hawks are classified into two different groups, Accipiter and Buteo, based on their classification genus. Accipiters, like the Cooper's Hawk, are slender with long tails, designed for maneuverability. Buteos have broader wings made for soaring.

Red-tailed Hawk

Buteo jamaicensis



Fast Facts

Red-tails are the most widely distributed hawk in the United States. While adults have a red tail, juveniles don't. There is a wide variation in color of plumage from light cream to dark chocolate brown.

Diet

Rodents, snakes, insects and squirrels.

Spike was admitted in 2000 with a damaged left eye after being found standing on a pile of logs under her nest. Since the condition was chronic, her damaged eye was removed.

Broad-winged Hawk

Buteo platypterus



Claude was admitted in June 2017 with an eye injury and was determined to be blind in his left eye. He was named after Claude Monet by an online voting contest.

Fast Facts

Broad-winged Hawks are relatively rare in Florida, but are known in the northeastern U.S. for their spectacular migrations where thousands travel together.

Diet

Snakes, mice, frogs and insects.

Short-tailed Hawk

Buteo Brachyurus



Fast Facts

One of the smallest Buteo hawks in Florida. The Short-tailed Hawk is seen in two color forms and is easily recognized in flight because it is the only Florida hawk whose underside is all white or all dark.

Diet

Preys on birds, which is rare in Buteos.

Newman was found hanging from a barbed wire fence in Kissimmee, FL in 2010. His injuries caused severe tissue and tendon damage to the right wing, making him non-releasable.



Red-shouldered Hawk

Buteo lineatus

Fast Facts

Most common hawk found in Florida, permanent all year in this area. A very vocal species with loud, distinctive calls in rapid succession.

Diet

Mammals, lizards, snakes, frogs, and insects.

Sorren arrived in 2015 as a juvenile with a fractured left wing and eye trauma. His name is a shortened version of the community of Sorrento, Florida, in which he was found.

Turkey Vulture

Cathartes aura

Fast Facts

Currently New World vultures are classified as birds of prey, although DNA tests show they are closely related to the stork family. The most widespread vulture in North America, the Turkey Vulture is sometimes referred to as a “Buzzard”. When threatened, they defend themselves by vomiting.

Diet

Carrion, or road kill, is a staple for vultures. Turkey Vultures are unique among vultures in that they find carrion by smell as well as by sight.

Identification

The Turkey Vulture has black-brown feathers, grey underwings, and a red head like a turkey.



Charlemagne was admitted to the Center in 1989 after being hit by a car. The accident resulted in a fractured right wing and a missing toe. She shares her home with three of our hawks, Sorren, Claude and Newman. Charlemagne laid her first egg in 2005.

Mortimer was brought to the Center in 1988 with a fractured left wing and toe, the result of a car collision. Mortimer shares her home with Godiva the Caracara, where she is often seen sitting with or preening Godiva. In the wild these two species are often found together on the side of the road eating carrion.



Crested Caracara

Caracara cheriway

Fast Facts

In Florida, they are a threatened species, primarily due to habitat loss. Also known as the “Mexican eagle”, although the Crested Caracara is in the falcon family. Caracaras can live over thirty years in captivity.

Diet

Reptiles, birds, and mammals; often feeds on carrion with vultures; may hunt or dig on ground for prey.

Habitat

Open grassland, palmetto thickets, agricultural areas.

Identification

Adults are about 23” tall and have bright orange skin around eyes and beak, with a dark crest on head.



Godiva was rescued as a mature bird in Brevard County by a person on horseback in 2001. Godiva suffered from starvation, an old fracture of her right wing, and eye trauma in the right eye. The affects of these injuries have made her non-releasable. She often can be found next to her BFF and roommate, Mortimer the Turkey Vulture.

Black Vulture

Coragyps atratus

Fast Facts

The gregarious Black Vulture roosts, feeds, and soars in groups, often mixed in with Turkey Vultures. Vultures are often called “nature’s clean up crew” and play an indispensable role in preventing the spread of disease by eating dead animals.



Diet

Carrion — road kill is a staple for vultures. Black Vultures will bully a Turkey Vulture away from a carcass.

Identification

Although they have the same size and body shape as a Turkey Vulture, you can tell a Black Vulture by their black or grey head and mostly black underwings,

Jeff was admitted to Audubon in 1995 with a fractured left shoulder and right leg after being hit by a car. When treatment was finished, Jeff’s flight was still limited and one leg is shorter than the other. After 13 years at the Center, Jeff laid an egg. You may hear Jeff make noises; Black Vultures are normally silent, but they can make soft “woof” and sneezing sounds.

Based on plumage, most male and female raptors look the same. Sex can often be determined by size as females are larger. However, the most accurate way to tell is a DNA test, or if the bird lays an egg!

Peregrine Falcon

Falco peregrinus

Fast Facts

Peregrine Falcons are the world's fastest animal, they can dive, or "stoop", at speeds over 200 miles per hour.

Diet

Mainly medium-sized birds caught from high above in spectacular stoops.

Habitat

Migrates following the Atlantic flyway and down along Florida's coastline in the fall on their way south.



Amelia was found badly injured on a cruise ship in the Atlantic during her first migration south in the fall of 2015. She suffered from starvation and spinal trauma, causing paralysis. With extensive treatment and rehabilitation, she has been able to regain some of her movement but remains permanently disabled and non-releasable.

Chopper, Peregrine Falcon



Yearly migration for the Peregrine Falcon includes flying thousands of miles one way along the Atlantic flyway to South America! So you can imagine how many of young falcons don't make it their first migration. Chopper was found in Daytona Beach in October, 2017, as a first year bird. He had a badly injured left wing. After initial treatment, our veterinarians made the call to partially amputate the wing since it wasn't healing properly. Chopper recently retired from being an education bird and is now enjoying his newly renovated suite next to Amelia.

A flyway is an aerial route that birds use when migrating. Peregrines can breed in Alaska and arctic regions, as well as mountainous regions of the western United States. After nesting, they wander widely, following prey as far as southern South America utilizing the Pacific and Atlantic Flyways.

Great Horned Owl

Bubo virginianus

Fast Facts

Also known as a “hoot owl”, Great Horned Owls are the largest owl in Florida. They are the most powerful raptors in the country with 500+ pounds per square inch of grasping pressure in their feet. They are named for their large feather tufts atop their heads, which are not horns nor ears.

Diet

Mostly small mammals, but also birds and reptiles.

Habitat

Mostly hardwood forests. Highly adaptable, found across the US, and from the Arctic to South America.



Charley arrived at the Center the week of Hurricane Charley in 2004 as a non-flighted juvenile with a badly healed right wing break. He is easily spotted since he is much smaller than Jeanne.

Jeanne was brought in as an adult owl in 2001. She suffered from a severe barbed wire injury to her right wing. She was not named until after Hurricane Jeanne hit Florida in 2004.



Bald Eagle

Haliaeetus leucocephalus

Fast Facts

Bald Eagles were removed from the Endangered Species List in 2007. However, eagles are still protected by two different federal laws. They mate for life and utilize the same nest year after year.

Diet

Primarily fish; occasionally birds, mammals, snakes, and turtles but are opportunistic and will feed on carrion.

Habitat

Coastal beaches, marshes, pine flat woods, mixed pine and hardwood forests, urban and agricultural areas.

Identification

Eagles take five years to develop their mature plumage. Young eagles have a dark beak and brown eyes which gradually turn yellow and their brown head and tail feathers molt into white.



Hali was rescued at age two in Sarasota in 2013. She was tangled in barbed wire, had bone exposure and no circulation to the tip of her right wing. She was transferred to the Center for care and it was determined that a partial wing amputation was necessary.

Tallulah was rescued by our staff in 2013 after she was injured in a territory fight. She suffered many injuries and required amputation of part of her wing. In 1998 as a young bird still in the nest, she was banded by U.S. Fish and Wildlife and was equipped with a transmitter as part of a research project that noted her migration all the way to Canada and back.



Barred Owl

Strix varia

Fast Facts

Barred Owls are noted for their "who-cooks-for-you-all" call. They are both nocturnal and crepuscular and the most common owl you will see and hear across Central Florida.

Habitat

Varied habitats including rivers, wetlands, forests and urban areas.

Diet

Small mammals, amphibians, reptiles and fish.



Fil arrived at the Center in 2007 after being hit by a car. Several of the primary feathers (those used for flight) on her left wing did not grow back, leaving her with limited flight.

Hitch was found in December of 2009 as an adult. Rescuers observed him flying in and out of an open U-Haul truck in St. Cloud, FL. He suffered from a fracture to the left wing. Although the fracture healed, his ability to fly is not sufficient enough to survive in the wild.



Diurnal birds are most active during the daylight hours. Crepuscular birds are active at dusk and dawn. Nocturnal birds are most active at night.

Osprey

Pandion haliaetus

Fast Facts

Osprey are one of the few raptors with a worldwide distribution. Florida contains the largest population in the United States. Fish-catching specialists, ospreys plunge into the water feet first. Nicknamed “fish hawk”.

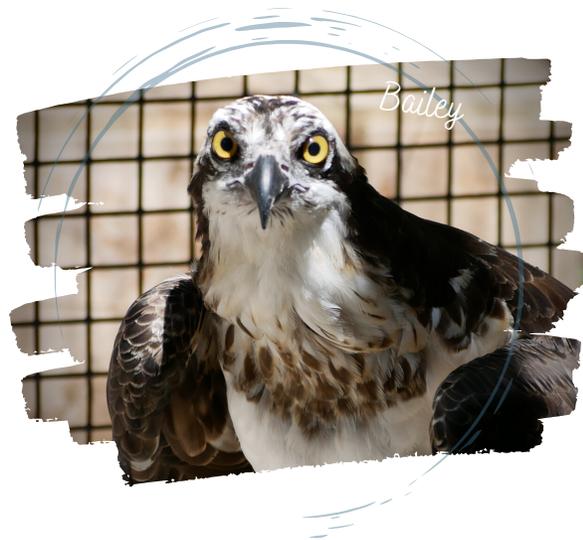
Diet

Specialized hunters eating only fish.

Bailey was hatched in a webcam nest at Hog Island Audubon Camp in Maine. People from all over the world virtually watch Bailey’s parents lay eggs and raise young every year. When Bailey was in the nest in 2017, she sustained a fractured right wing from a Great Horned Owl. She also survived a swarm of bees and a Bald Eagle attack. Bailey was transferred to our Center when she needed continued rehabilitation and a permanent home.

Habitat

Widely distributed; found near lakes, rivers, and coastal areas.



Eastern Screech-owl

Megascops asio

Fast Facts

Smallest owl with ear tufts in the eastern United States. Nocturnal and normally spends most of the day roosting in trees. Screech Owls have three distinct colorations, or phases: grey, brown and red.

Diet

Small rodents, amphibians and insects.

Habitat

Wooded areas, forest, swamps, orchards, parks, suburban areas.

There are several owls in the Screech Owl enclosure. Each owl has been determined to be non-releasable due to a variety of injuries.

Can you find us? We like to hide.

Nesting

Nest in tree cavities and will use man-made nest boxes when natural nesting sites are unavailable.



Burrowing Owl

Athene cunicularia

Fast Facts

This is a Species of Special Concern in Florida due to their declining populations. This is largely a result of habitat destruction, causing the loss of the underground tunnels or “burrows” they call home. They dig these burrows with their feet or use abandoned gopher tortoise burrows.



Terra was seen wandering around on the ground at the Disney Wilderness Preserve and admitted to the Center in the summer of 2012. She was found with a badly fractured left wing and a left hip fracture.

Gopher was brought to us from Kenansville in Osceola County in 2015. He had a fractured right elbow, fractured coracoid and luxated left shoulder, possibly caused by a barbed wire fence above the burrow. He moved from his spot on the porch to join Terra in her enclosure.

Diet

Insects and rodents.

Habitat

Can be seen in daylight hours in open, upland habitat.

Identification

Small, brown, ground owl, short tail, long-legged.
Bright yellow eyes.



Audubon Ambassador - Porch Birds

American Kestrel

Falco sparverius

Fast Facts

Smallest and most common of the falcons in Florida. American Kestrels and Crested Caracaras are the only two species of falcon that live year round in Florida. Kestrels are often seen perched on telephone poles and electric wires.

Identification

One of the few raptor species where the two sexes look physically different. Males have a russet back, blue-gray wings. Females have a brown spotted back and wings.

Diet

Birds, small reptiles, insects and amphibians.



Susie was rescued and brought to the Center in November 2017. She was a young bird that had a severely fractured wing and was underweight. She was found to have a very calm demeanor and was trained to be a bird ambassador in early 2018.

Lance came to us in January 2016 after being illegally kept as a pet when he was young. Unfortunately, it was found that he had a fractured wing and pelvis which left him unable to properly thrive in the wild. This pelvis injury results in Lance's tail feathers tucking under instead of in line with the rest of his spine.



Audubon Ambassador - Porch Birds

Merlin (Falcon)

Falco columbarius

Fast Facts

Merlins, like all falcons, are very fast fliers; they capture birds and insects in mid-air by a level sprint. They migrate south for the winter, arriving in Florida in September-October.

Identification

Adult males are gray-blue above; immature birds and females are usually dark brown. Merlins lack the russet upperparts and strong facial markings of Kestrels.

Diet

Small birds, insects and mammals.



Alina was found in Holly Hill and was brought to us in 2013 from another facility as an immature female. She was diagnosed with a severely fractured right elbow. The fracture healed, but she did not regain full extension of the injured wing so she could not be released. Alina is very energetic; you may see her excitedly flapping her wings.

Audubon Ambassador - Porch Birds

Billie, Eastern Screech-owl



Billie, a brown-phase, was rescued after she fell from her nest in June 2020. She was admitted with severe infections in both of her eyes. After several weeks of treatment, it was determined to be best to surgically remove her permanently damaged left eye. She adapted to a single eye very well, and does great during school programs.

Billie's full name is "Billie Owlsh". She was named by Gary Comer after Gary won the naming rights in our annual fundraising auction. Gary is a great photographer and took the photo of Billie at the left.

Audubon Ambassador - Garden Birds

You can view these birds from the garden end gates or the Audubon House windows



Francis
Male
Bald Eagle



Hank
Male
Osprey



Maple
Female
Barred Owl



Paige
Female
Bald Eagle



Trouble
Male
Bald Eagle



Gretel
Male
Swallow-tailed Kite



Merlin
Male
Barred Owl



Henry
Male
Great Horned Owl

Audubon Ambassador - Garden Birds

Francis, Bald Eagle



Francis, an adult male Bald Eagle, was admitted to the Center as a two-day-old eaglet in April of 1991. He was very sick when admitted due to a respiratory infection and a cataract in one eye. Francis required constant care and he was literally hand-raised by Center staff. It was soon determined that he was non-releasable due to his reduced lung capacity from the infection and being imprinted on humans. Francis is named for St. Francis of Assisi, patron saint of animals.

Hank, Osprey

Hank was found in Biscayne National Park as a baby in the spring of 2017. There were attempts to return Hank to his nest but they ultimately failed because his parents didn't return. In the end, he was too habituated to humans to be returned to the wild.



Audubon Ambassador - Garden Birds



Gretel, Swallow-tailed Kite

Gretel was found as a small nestling in Melbourne, FL in May, 2018. A well-meaning family kept him and fed him for a few days. When he was admitted to the Raptor Trauma Clinic, it was quickly determined that the family's actions caused him to imprint on humans. Swallow-tailed Kites migrate to warmer areas in South American during the winter. If the temperature outside is too cold, you may not see Gretel in the garden - he's inside staying warm!

Audubon Ambassador - Garden Birds



Paige, Bald Eagle

Paige came to the Center in April of 1995 as a fledgling suffering from avian pox and a fractured right collarbone. The Center staff believes that Paige fell from her nest due to impaired vision caused by the pox. Although the pox was treated successfully, she is unable to fly well enough to survive in the wild. At a weight of over 10 pounds and a height of 34 inches, she is the largest bird at the Center.

Trouble, Bald Eagle

Trouble has an unusual history. In 1986, a wildlife photographer who was taking photos of a nest noticed one of the young eaglets had a deformed beak. He contacted the Center, where staff received government permission to remove the eaglet for examination. The congenital defect would have prevented the young eagle from feeding himself once he fledged the nest. Several corrective surgeries improved this misalignment, but because beaks are made of keratin, like fingernails, it continues to grow in the crooked position; he is non-releasable.



Audubon Ambassador - Garden Birds

Maple, Barred Owl

Maple was admitted in March 2018 when she was just a few days old, small enough to fit in your palm! She had a broken leg bone and the Center's veterinarian put a small pin in her leg to help it set properly. Luckily, the leg healed enough that she can stand, but not enough that she could catch and hold prey in the wild.



Merlin, Barred Owl

Merlin was admitted in 1987 as a nestling. He had spent several weeks (illegally) with humans. This prolonged human exposure caused him to become a human imprint, a fact unknown to the Center staff. Unfortunately, he was housed with other owls. Seeing him as "different", they attacked him, causing the loss of one eye. Stories like Merlin's are of vital importance, educating people of the harm caused when wild animals are raised incorrectly and illegally by well-meaning people.



Audubon Ambassador - Garden Birds

Henry, Great Horned Owl

Henry was brought to the Center in July, 2019 from Geneva, FL as a fledgling. Radiology exams revealed a previously fractured ulna that had healed incorrectly. Although Henry is partially flighted, he is not a strong enough flier to survive in the wild. Henry's naming rights was auctioned off at the Center's annual fundraiser. The winners, Scott and Elaine Taylor, named him "Henry Berol" after a family member.



Scarlet, Red-tailed Hawk

Scarlet was admitted in November, 2016 from Washington County, Florida. She had a gun shot wound to her right shoulder which caused a fracture. Pellet fragments were found throughout her right shoulder and the injury left Scarlet unable to fly. Scarlet started a new training program in 2021, so if you don't see her in the garden, she is behind the scenes being trained.



Audubon Ambassador Birds

Sanford, Eastern Screech Owl

Sanford can be found perched in the Raptor Trauma Clinic window when he is at the Center. He was rescued in 2011 when he was only a few days old. He suffered from a broken wing, which although healed, isn't strong enough for him to survive in the wild. Sanford is a guest favorite and even has his own social media sites—find him at Sanford the Eastern Screech Owl on Facebook or SanfordofCBOP on Instagram.



Uff-da, Black Vulture

Uff-da was found as an adult with a fractured right wing. X-rays also showed multiple gun shot pellets throughout her body. Uff-da was transferred to us from another facility who admitted her in 2002. She joined our education team for supervised appearances at programs. You may sometimes find her out on a walk around the Center or doing a training session with her keepers.



Like the birds you visited today? Join Audubon's Adopt-a-Raptor Program.

An "adoption" supports the care, feeding and medical treatment of the birds permanently housed at the Center for community education programs.

Stop by the front desk or visit <https://cbop.audubon.org/get-involved/adopt-raptor> for more information.



Audubon Center for Birds of Prey is a non-profit 501(c)3 organization. We rely on donors, foundations and corporations to support our work. The Center currently does not receive state, federal or municipal funding to pay for the care of patients that arrive at our doors. We greatly appreciate our community's investment in our work.

If you are interested in becoming a corporate or individual sponsor for our programs or exhibits on site, call 407-644-0190 for information, or to donate online, visit: www.auduboncenterforbirdsofprey.org



Audubon

Center for
Birds of Prey

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Hours: 10-4 Tuesday through Sunday

Closed Federal Holidays

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