

saw-whet owl named Nova and an American kestrel named Arrow will be greeting visitors at RTP1 throughout the exhibit.

The three birds are part of a special education program run by the Hawk Creek Wildlife Rehabilitation Center in East Aurora, N.Y. Hawk Creek has treated thousands of animals since it was founded in 1987.
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includes hawks, eagles, vultures, owls, falcons and ospreys.

These powerful hunters have captured the imagination of humans for thousands of years. Falconry, the art and sport of training birds of prey to hunt with their handlers, was practiced as early as 2000 B.C.

In fact, human interaction with raptors has a history that may have started in the Paleolithic era. The connection between man and raptor still exists today.

From hillboards and magazines to television and technology, raptors are symbols used to depict strength and grace.

The Bald Eagle, for example, has come to symbolize peace, strength and freedom, as our national symbol. Eagles are such a part of our own culture that we often fail to notice them. From postage

Why do we hold such a fondness? It is their skill as hunters, their speed, their grace and beauty and their strength that have captured our attention and commanded our respect.

Whether revered as divine messengers, prized as hunting companions, celebrated as emblems of majesty and political power, or reviled as scavengers and bloodthirsty killers, these birds have provoked from us an imaginative response that extends beyond the mere facts of their biology. The lengthy history of their interaction with humans and their use as symbols in art and folklore from around the world attests both to the force of their appeal and to the need to understand them as creatures of culture as well as nature," said Don Polhman of the

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Above is a snowy owl, one of the many mounted birds on display at the Roger Tory Peterson Institute's "Raptors: Hunters in the Sky" exhibit, which runs through April 7.

Science Museum of Minnesota.

Most recently, raptors have acquired a new significance as symbols of the natural world's precarious balance. The pressure they face from the increase in human population, pollution and loss of habitat have placed them in the forefront of many environmental debates.

Biologists study raptors because they sit at the top of the food chain and thus are indicators of the overall quality of the ecosystem in which they live.

They are all around us. We see them soaring high above a farmer's field. We notice them perched on telephone wires as we drive down the highway. We see them swoop down to snatch a bird from our backyard feeder. Such sightings are usually either distant or fleeting. We want to see them up-close. "Raptors: Hunters in the Sky" may be your chance.

The exhibition was created by the staff at the Roger Tory Peterson Institute with the help of Hawk Creek Wildlife Rehabilitation Center in East Aurora, The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, Jamestown Audubon Nature Center and the State College at Fredonia's Willard F. Stanley Museum. A number of private collectors also contributed material for display.

Admission is \$3 for adults; \$2, children; and members, free.

Every Saturday in March, Hawk Creek will present a special series of programs beginning at 11 a.m. at RTP1. During this time, visitors will have a chance to see more live raptors. Saturday programs include "Hawks," "Owls," "Falcons" and "Endangered Wildlife."

To learn more about any of these exhibitions or to schedule a group tour, call 665-2473.

Did you know that the bald eagles' nest is the largest built by a single pair of birds in North America? Did you know that the soft feathers around an owl's ears act like funnels for sound? Did you know that a barn owl's hearing is so good that it can find its prey in complete darkness? "Raptors: Hunters in the Sky" is full of interesting and informative information about birds of prey.

Above is the "Strike Two" exhibit, features a Peregrine Falcon and Green-wing Teal. At left, the Bald Eagle may be America's most recognized raptor.



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