

Conference Report  
**Raptor Research Foundation**  
2016 Annual Conference  
And 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration

Grand Hotel, Cape May, New Jersey  
October 16 - 20, 2016



*The Cape May  
Raptor Banding Project*

**Hosted by:** New Jersey Audubon's Cape May Bird  
Observatory(CMBO),  
And the Cape May Raptor Banding Project

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

**Sponsored by:** Cellular Tracking Technologies, Atlantic City Electric,  
PSE&G, Lotek Wireless

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Department of Environmental Protection, Students from Stockton University,  
CMBO Volunteers

### RRF 2016 CONFERENCE SCORECARD

#### Attendees

Total = 262

RRF Members = 131

Non-Members = 46

Students = 43

Volunteers/Comp = 5

Non-participating guests = 12

Sponsors = 4

Vendors = 6

#### Programs

Speakers = 134

Posters = 20

Symposia = 5

Evening events = 4

ECRR Workshops = 9

Field Trips = 4

**RRF 2016 CONFERENCE REPORT  
TABLE of CONTENTS**

Committees	4
Planning	4
Marketing/Registration Software	5
Hotel	5
Transportation	6
Program Booklet	7
Conference Schedule	7
Scientific Program	8
Evening Socials	9
Field Trips	9
Sales/Gifts	10
Volunteer Coordination	10
Vendors	10
Final Thoughts	11
Appendix I: Financial Breakdown	12
Appendix II: Registration Breakdown	14
Appendix III: Program Attendance	15

## CONFERENCE PLANNING COMMITTEES

### **Local Planning Committee**

David La Puma, PhD, CMBO, Conference Chair

Lillian Armstrong, CMBO, Conference Co-chair

René Buccinna, CMBO

Kathy Clark, New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, Endangered and Non-game Species Program

Trish Miller, Raptor Researcher

Michael Lanzone, CEO, Cellular Tracking Technologies

Paul Napier, Cape May Raptor Banding Project

### **RRF Planning Committee**

Gerald “Jerry” Niemi

Dan Varland

Kate Davis

### **50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Committee**

Miguel D. Saggese, Chair

Jim Bednarz

Lloyd Kiff

### **Planning**

The suggestion of Cape May as the site for the 50th Anniversary Raptor Research Foundation Conference came back in 2014, during a phone conversation between then newly minted director of New Jersey Audubon's Cape May Bird Observatory (CMBO), David La Puma, and raptor researchers Trish Miller and Michael Lanzone. Michael has a long history with Cape May, having worked as an official counter in the mid 1990s at both the Cape May Hawkwatch and the Avalon Seawatch, and later as an employee of the Endangered and Non-game Species Program for the State of New Jersey. Michael has returned to Cape May many times since the mid-90s and in 2015 moved his business, Cellular Tracking Technologies, from Somerset, PA, to nearby Rio Grande, NJ, and his family to West Cape May.

The next step was submitting an application to host the 2016 conference, and Dan Varland, having served on previous RRF Conference committees, was extremely helpful in assisting with the application, as well as providing general guidance in various aspects of the conference itself.

Of course, after the RRF board agreed that Cape May would host the RRF meeting, we were surprised to learn that no RRF meeting had occurred here in the last forty-nine years! Cape May has been synonymous with coastal raptor migration for over a century, and the non-profit Cape May Raptor Banding Project (CMRBP) has been tagging and measuring migrant raptors here since the early 1970s. New Jersey Audubon's Cape May Hawkwatch began in 1976 with the birth of CMBO and has been tallying raptors every autumn since. We have documented the recovery of the Peregrine Falcon, the Bald Eagle, and the Cooper's Hawk, while also detecting the decline of the American Kestrel and Sharp-shinned Hawk along the eastern seaboard. More importantly, Cape May is an incubator for raptor researchers interested in studying raptor migration and ecology, and both CMBO and the CMRBP welcome interested investigators to work in Cape May to better understand birds of prey.

So, it was with great excitement that New Jersey Audubon's Cape May Bird Observatory and the Cape May Raptor Banding Project agreed to co-host the 50th Annual Raptor Research Foundation conference in 2016.

The Local Committee was formed in the Fall of 2015 and it met in person once before the holiday season and then regularly throughout 2016 until the conference. The committee consisted of RRF veterans, Trish Miller, Mike Lanzone and Kathy Clark, and CMBO staff David La Puma, Lillian Armstrong, and René Buccinna. René has a background in the hospitality industry, which was of particular help in securing outstanding service and negotiating rates with the hotel and other vendors. Therefore, we did not require the services of a professional conference planner.

### **Marketing/Registration Software**

The event was marketed primarily through the RRF itself, the CMBO quarterly schedule publication, the OSNA newsletter, and via social media, including Facebook and Twitter. Libby Mojica put together the conference website based on the information supplied by the local committee, and then linked it to the registration system used by CMBO for major events. The system is called Regonline, and people seemed to have an easy time using it.

### **Hotel**

The Cape May Bird Observatory has been holding its special events, including annual Spring and Fall Festivals, at the Grand Hotel in Cape May for nearly 20 years. This long-term relationship results in outstanding service and an ingrained knowledge of our expectations. It also means that we are not charged the usual rental fees for the use of

ballrooms or meeting rooms. This alone helped us keep registration costs affordable. Also, René in particular, having worked at The Grand for ten years, knows what to ask, and when and where the pesky details need double checking. She also handled the hotel details for the Waterbird Society Conference in 2009, hosted by New Jersey Audubon's Research Department, and therefore had a great handle on the logistical needs of a scientific conference.

One thing that is lacking in the Cape May hospitality scene (essentially a tourist destination) is ballroom-type settings for large groups. The Grand Hotel is the only site with two ballrooms, which is ideal for a conference setting. By scheduling our event on weekdays, we had access to both, and could conduct our morning plenaries and evening programs in the upstairs ballroom, and our concurrent sessions in the ground floor ballroom (divided into three spaces). The weekday schedule also allowed us to negotiate a remarkable room rate of \$89 per night. While we did run out of rooms, participants were able to secure accommodations nearby.

About a month before the conference, we realized we needed to rent two podiums enabled with sound. We had enough projectors and screens, we were just short podiums. We hired an expert to have on hand to deal with AV and sound issues, and although one of the rented podiums was troublesome, everything seemed to go smoothly.

We were grateful to our colleagues at Cellular Tracking Technologies who set up a wireless network and staffed a central location outside the downstairs ballroom for downloading presentations. That worked out well.

## **Transportation**

Working with a local limousine service, the conference organizers offered limited airport shuttle service to/from Philadelphia International Airport. Approximately 40 people took advantage of that. Arrival times were not at all clustered, so the logistics proved complex and more often than not we were putting three people in a sedan rather than using a mini-bus. We had some trouble one of the first nights due to lengthy, weather-related flight delays, which caused some folks to have to wait at the airport for a long time in the middle of the night. There were some language difficulties due to the international conference attendees as well as limo service employees, as well as the usual cell phone glitches, but despite a few individual difficulties, all in all things went relatively smoothly and no one was left behind.

We also supplied transportation to a couple of the ECRR programs, to/from the Tuesday evening Dinner Cruise, and a shuttle service to the Cape May Point State Park, which is the

location of the famous Cape May Hawkwatch. This gave a maximum number of conference attendees, the majority of whom had no transportation, the opportunity to experience the excitement of the Hawkwatch, as Cape May has no real public transit system.

## **Program Booklet**

Although the Local Committee recommended putting the abstracts online and putting together a more retrospective, full color program for the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, RRF leadership said that they weren't quite ready for that and that they preferred the traditional printed conference program. Kate Davis suggested we contact Joseph Dane, who had completed program lay-outs for the RRF in the past, and he kindly offered to work with us for an extremely reasonable price. René and Lillian put together the content for most of the front matter, and we requested input from various folks by September 1<sup>st</sup>. We arranged printing with a local printer in southern New Jersey, who also offered a great price and great service.

Instead of featuring the local raptors of southern New Jersey for the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Conference, we thought the images should be more global. We put out a call for photos and received some very nice images of raptor species from around the world. People were excited to see their images used in the publication.

There was one error in the book on the very last page! Something got lost in translation in Grainger Hunt's article for The Journal of Raptor Research March 2016. We made corrected copies available in the registration area and also emailed the corrected version to all participants after the conference.

## **Conference Schedule**

We started on Sunday, November 4, with the RRF Board meeting and the ECRR workshop series. The workshops are detailed in the program, so we will not repeat all that information here.

The only real difficulty we had planning the ECRR workshop was that there are really no suitable climbing facilities within a reasonable drive from the area. After an exhaustive facility search, we recommended eliminating the climbing course, but it remained in the schedule until a few weeks before the conference. Luckily, only two people had signed up and they switched to other things. Also, we did not have the student attendance of the prior year, so we consolidated some courses that were offered twice and did a little bit of last-minute re-arranging.

In addition, Cellular Tracking Technologies offered a series of three courses in telemetry during the day, which were well attended. There was not as much interest in the Avian Power Line Interaction Committee Workshop as expected, so it became a half-day session rather than a full-day session.

The Local Planning Committee decided to invest in three plenaries, one for each day, in honor of the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. We were thrilled when our top three choices all said yes, Ian Newton, Carol McIntyre, and Yossi Leshem. Each was invited to focus on different aspects of research, whether trends in global migration, international cooperation in conservation, and the value and techniques of long term data collection. Each was offered a speaking fee to help offset the cost of travel and given lodging at the hotel. In addition, on Monday and Tuesday the plenary talk was followed by another special session for all participants. On Monday, Jimmie Parrish, Richard Clark and David Bird presented, *The Raptor Research Foundation, Inc.; Promoting Understanding, Appreciation, and Conservation of Birds of Prey for Over 50 Years*. And on Tuesday, Rebecca McCabe and Katie Harrington moderated a panel, *Women in Raptor Research: Trailblazers and the Next Generation*. All in all the morning sessions ran very smoothly and they proved inspirational starts for busy, productive days.

Morning sessions were followed by general sessions, symposia, speed talks, etc. Please refer to the program for details.

We arranged with the hotel to provide a coffee/beverage station, as well as snacks, throughout the day, as the conference took place during Cape May's "off-season" when other meal options were not as plentiful. This kept break times to a minimum, allowing maximum number of presentations.

### **Scientific Program – Submitted by Beth Wommack**

The Raptor Research Foundation 2016 Conference in Cape May, NJ had 121 oral and 20 poster presentations scheduled. In addition, we had multiple plenary speakers and panels to start out each of the three days of the conference's scientific program. The 2016 conference count of oral presentations was lower than that from 2015 (198), but higher than other previous years (97 in 2013, 93 in 2011). This represents a wonderful turn out for the conference in which we celebrated our 50th Anniversary.

For the conference, we had six symposia, which included the following topics: Urban Raptors, Snowy Owls, Short-eared Owls, Lead and Raptors, Northern Saw-whet Owls, and one symposium celebrating the 50th Anniversary. Communication was begun early from the symposia chairs for two of the six, and resulted in much smoother transition of information and planning. As a result, a deadline of one month before abstract deadlines



was implemented for all symposia proposals for the 2017 RRF conference. It is hoped this will encourage and facilitate early communication between symposia planners and the conference committees.

I took over the Chair of the Scientific Committee in 2016 from James (JD) Dwyer. JD has served as a member of the Scientific Committee this year, and been a great help with questions, advice, and aiding in navigating the nuisances of organizing and scheduling that are the jobs of the Scientific Committee. In addition, JD, Evan Buechley, and Dylan Steffen all volunteered their time to help me read through and edit abstracts. I'd like to present a big thank you to them all for all their help. Having volunteers to help the Scientific Program Committee edit abstracts at multiple stages helps immensely, and is highly encouraged for all conference in the future.

### **Evening Socials**

RRF traditionally has one off-site evening event and the local committee chose to offer a dinner cruise around Cape Island. We combined the Icebreaker Reception with the ECRR round-table session on the first night (Sunday), and it worked reasonably well. Although the appetizer offerings on the first night were a little on the light side, the hotel more than made up for that the next evening for the Poster Session Reception. Tuesday evening was the Dinner Cruise, which was optional for an additional fee. Although the weather wasn't particularly cooperative while we were on the ocean, it was relatively pleasant on the Cape May Canal. The event provided a relaxed atmosphere for networking

And finally, the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Banquet! With the generous sponsorships we had received we were able to upgrade our food selections and supply everyone with two complimentary drinks. Although some folks appeared to be a little disappointed in our choice of a buffet in lieu of a sit-down banquet, in the end it was said this was the best food ever! The remarks could have been more brief, to give more time for dancing and socializing. Unfortunately, we thought we could use the ballroom until 11:00 pm, but the City's noise ordinance required us to shut down the DJ at 10:00 pm. Rumor has it the partying continued for many...

### **Field Trips**

On Monday, we offered four choices for Cape May experiences to registrants. Paul Napier of the Cape May Raptor Banding project took groups of up to six people out to one of the banding blinds. He ran four trips which were attended by 16 people. We also ran a trolley trip called "Cape May Grand Slam", which visited our 3 active Fall migration count sites; the Morning Songbird Flight at Higbee Beach, the Avalon Seawatch and the Cape May

Hawkwatch, with a box lunch provided. Renowned hawkwatcher and Cape May Hawkwatch counter Frank Nicoletti led a hawkwatching group at Cape May Point State Park, where we delivered a delicious lunch selection from a local restaurant. Lastly, Pat and Clay Sutton, local residents and authors, led a bus tour up to adjacent Cumberland County, which is rich with wildlife and open Delaware Bayshore vistas. On this oddly balmy day in October, however, birds were scarce, so perhaps the highlight was the lunch from the Oystercracker Café at the Bayshore Center at Bivalve, which was enjoyed al fresco at one of Pat and Clay's favorite spots.

### **Sales/Gifts**

David La Puma and Michael Lanzone worked together to create a 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary/Cape May logo featuring an American Kestrel in front of the Cape May Point Light House. We chose to go with etched pint glasses rather than mugs, and they turned out very sharp. Each registrant received a free tote bag, pint glass and a ¼ pound sample of Cape May's famous The Original Fudge Kitchen. Commemorative t-shirts were available for \$20.00, extra pint glasses for \$6.00. Mike Lanzone also had a few commemorative sweatshirts made up that were sold in a special drawing at the banquet.

In addition, we had invited a New York based wildlife artist, David Kiehm, whose favorite subject is raptors to show some of his works at the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Banquet. Each of our plenaries received a matted print, and we tried to select appropriate subjects.

### **Volunteer Coordination**

Since CMBO and CTT staff were available on-site at the conference for the duration, we had minimal need for volunteers. CTT staff was especially helpful with folks having computer and/or AV slide show issues. We had a couple of volunteers who were local songbird banders and due to unfavorable winds, they were available. They enjoyed helping folks get around town and meeting folks and answering their questions.

### **Vendors**

We increased the fees for vendors to \$300, which seemed more appropriate given our space restrictions and the significance of the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. Cellular Tracking Technologies had a large display, as part of their \$10,000 Sponsorship. We worked out a deal with Buteo Books, who wanted two tables, and we gave them a discount on the second table. Other vendors were Pepco Holdings (sponsor), Lotek Wireless (sponsor), Conserve Wildlife Foundation of New Jersey, and the Hawk Migration Association of North America.

## **Final Thoughts**

The fact that Cape May is more of a summer tourist resort presents both opportunities and challenges. We enjoyed great deals in terms of costs and we had access to some things that might be otherwise unavailable, such as the trolleys. On the other hand, many restaurants and other attractions are either closed for the season or open on weekends only.

We were somewhat disappointed in the number of student attendees, especially since setting up the full day of ECRR workshops is no small task. The Eastern US lacks the large universities that have departments focusing on Raptor Research. Perhaps consideration should be given to providing travel aid to students when the conference is scheduled away from the academic centers in western North America.

Finally, we would like to thank the RRF for giving us the opportunity to host this 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Conference, and celebrate the milestone along with CMBO's historic hawkwatch, and the many contributions of both organizations to the advancement of raptor research and conservation around the globe.

APPENDIX 1

**Raptor Research Financial Summary**

**October 16-20, 2016**

**REVENUE SUMMARY**

	<b>Attendees</b>	<b>Revenue</b>	
Registrations	262	\$51,416.00	
Telemetry	46	\$1,240.00	
ECRR Workshops	43	\$1,125.00	
Dinner Cruise	92	\$4,655.00	
Banquet	175	\$10,205.00	
Field Trips	56	\$2,965.00	
Airport Shuttle	42	\$3,330.00	
Vendor Fees	6	\$1,000.00	
RRF t-shirt and pint glass sales		\$1,265.00	
Sponsors		\$16,020.00	Includes Cellular Tracking Technologies(\$10,000); PSE&G(\$500); Atlantic Electric(\$5,000); Lotek(\$520)
<b>Total Revenue*</b>		<b>\$93,221.00</b>	

\*\$650 in donations to RRF received from registrants not included in revenue

**EXPENSE SUMMARY**

Plenary Honorariums	\$3,400.00	(Ian Newton: \$1,200; Carol McIntyre \$1,200; Yossi Leshem \$1,000)
Plenary Lodging	\$1,615.17	
Paypal fees	\$1,526.43	
Regonline fees	\$1,872.13	
Venue - Grand Hotel	\$30,681.82	
MainLine Expo - Poster Boards	\$1,435.00	
MAC - trolley shuttles	\$700.00	trolley transportation to hawkwatch and dinner cruise
Great American Trolley	\$1,400.00	field trip transportation
Fudge Kitchen	\$420.00	1/4 lb. sample box given to each registrant
Acu-Print		
Sponsor banners	\$895.00	
Conference Program	\$1,448.73	275 copies
RRF T-shirts	\$1,855.55	

Joseph Dane	\$800.00	layout and design of conference program
Cape May Whale Watcher	\$4,020.00	Dinner Cruise (includes fuel and gratuity to crew)
DJ for after-party	\$275.00	
DB Electronics	\$515.00	sound equipment for conference
Accountable Limousine	\$3,866.24	airport shuttle service from Philadelphia International Airport
Name Badges	\$78.46	
Just 4 Wheels	\$600.91	van rental for ECRR, pick up Yossi Leshem
Fuel for van	\$87.00	
van tolls	\$12.50	to pick up Yossi Leshem at Philadelphia train station
Etched Pint Glasses	\$2,646.00	1 pint glass given to each participant; additional available for purchase
Totes	\$517.00	275 totes for RRF registrants
Dead Drift Studios	\$131.20	gifts to Plenaries
Office Supplies	\$201.47	includes batteries, device to accept credit cards with chip
Rental City	\$360.00	Podium Rentals
Bayshore Center at Bivalve	\$225.00	Lunches for Cumberland field trip
Zoe's	\$405.00	lunches for Nicoletti hawkwatch field trip participants (\$195) and ECRR ID course - Clark (\$210)
Miscellaneous Expenses	\$168.95	meals for volunteers
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$62,159.56</b>	
<b>4.4% overhead for host org.</b>	<b><u>\$3,396.84</u></b>	
<b>Grand Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$65,556.40</b>	

<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$93,221.00</b>
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b><u>\$65,556.40</u></b>
<b>Net Profit/(Loss)*</b>	<b>\$27,664.60</b>

**\*Divided equally between RRF and Host organizations (CMBO and Cape May Raptor Banding Project)**

APPENDIX II

**Raptor Research Conference: October 16-20, 2016**

**Registration Breakdown**

	<b>Early: up to July 15</b>	<b>Middle: 7/16 to 9/15</b>	<b>Late: 9/16 to 10/15</b>	<b>On site</b>	<b>Total Registrants</b>
Total Registrations	120	78	48	16	262
RRF Members	71	42	17	2	132
Non-members	17	15	13	0	45
Students	22	13	7	1	43
Single day	3	4	8	11	26
non-participating guest	5	3	3	2	13
Life Members	2	1	0	0	3
Totals	120	78	48	16	262

<b>Registration Fee Structure</b>					<b>Total Attendance</b>
RRF Members	\$210.00	\$240.00	\$300.00	\$300.00	132
Non-Members	\$250.00	\$280.00	\$325.00	\$325.00	45
Students	\$100.00	\$100.00	\$125.00	\$125.00	43
Single Day: no membership required	\$105.00	\$105.00	\$105.00	\$105.00	26
Non-participating guest					13
Life Members					3

APPENDIX III

**Raptor Research Foundation Conference October 16-20, 2016**

**PROGRAM ATTENDANCE**

<b>Program Item</b>	<b>Cost/per</b>	<b>Total Attendance</b>
APLIC Workshop	free	6
A Professional Development course in Telemetry - Part 1	\$10.00	27
A Professional Development course in Telemetry - Part 2	\$10.00	29
A Professional Development course in Telemetry - Part 3	\$20.00	34
ECRR Raptor Trapping Session 1 - Napier	\$20.00	6
ECRR Harnessing Raptors Session 1 Lewis/Millsap	\$20.00	0
ECRR Raptor Field and In-Hand ID Clark/Hull	\$40.00	12
ECRR Raptor Trapping and Handling Techniques	\$20.00	5
ECRR Techniques for handling Varland/Smallwood	\$20.00	0
ECRR Safely Accessing Raptor Nests	\$20.00	2
ECRR Harnessing Raptors w/ Transmitters	\$20.00	9
ECRR Raptor Trapping Session 2 - Napier	\$25.00	5
ECRR Raptor Necropsy	\$20.00	4
Sunday Icebreaker/ECRR Reception*	n/c*	135
Monday Poster Reception*	n/c*	174
Tuesday Dinner Cruise	\$55.00	86
Wednesday Banquet	\$65.00	161
Cape May Migration Grand Slam field trip	\$65.00	16
Cumberland County Hotspots Field Trip	\$75.00	13
A Day of Hawkwatching with Frank Nicoletti field trip	\$50.00	11
Into the Blind Session (4 sessions)	\$25.00	16
Airport Shuttle to/from Philadelphia	\$45.00	74**

\*Included in Registration Fee

\*\*Actual number of participants is 36, as many used the shuttle both from and to the Philadelphia Airport