



Newsletter

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The Fear and the Fascination

- By Liz Rocco

It's fall now and we're all waiting for winter, and it's a perfect opportunity to reminisce . . . It happened on a dark and cloudy day in April. Overnight and throughout the previous day the mountain had received a soaking rain; almost to the top of the mountain, although it never rains at Alta. An early morning was called to send out the troops on avalanche mitigation routes, hunting for a monster.

I was sitting rescue in dispatch this particular morning; the feelings among the crew were mixed. Some thinking a huge avalanche with explosives likely and some wondering why we are going out on all routes across the High Traverse so heavily armed. Overnight

lows had been above freezing for a few nights in a row and it had rained hard at the base of the mountain. The snow line was near 9000 feet. This was an unusual situation for us, so extreme precautions were being taken. Over the previous few days I had trolled around some un-skied terrain and felt what it is like when there is absolutely no structure to the snowpack. It's a spooky feeling to sink to the ground, even with skis on.

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Nature Nugget - Accipiter Hawks - By Liz Rocco

This summer we had an Accipiter Field Trip in July and you're probably wondering, what's an accipiter? Accipiter is a genus of hawk more commonly known as 'forest hawks'. Three species of hawks make up the Accipiter genus in North America, and there are 46 different species worldwide. These raptors are short-winged, long-tailed, and are primarily bird-catchers. All three species start out with yellow eyes as immature hawks, and then they change to orange, then red. Females are larger than the males and they all hunt by ambush, flying rapidly around and even through brush and trees to grab their prey. Those three species are Northern Goshawk, Sharp-shinned Hawk and the Cooper's Hawk. These hawks are fast, and often hard to see because of their speed. Most often sightings will be random encounters when you happen to see one flying overhead in search of food. They can also be spotted catching afternoon thermals. The Cooper's and Sharp-shinned Hawks have also been spotted in towns, at parks, and on golf courses.

The Northern Goshawk is the largest of the three North American accipiters. They nest in coniferous forests and can be very aggressive towards intruders to their nesting site. Goshawks will eat squirrels and hares as much as birds. As an adult, Goshawks are blue/grey on their topsides with a black head and whitish grey below with faint black barring on underbelly.

If hawks interest you, check out HawkWatch International. This organization's mission is to conserve our environment through education, long-term monitoring, and scientific research on raptors as indicators of ecosystem health. They have tons of educational opportunities and ways to get involved from hawk watches to special events. Keep your eyes to the ridgelines in the afternoons for thermal soaring raptors!



Adult Northern Goshawk

© Jerry Liguori



“Like music and art, love of nature is a common language that can transcend political or social boundaries.”

—Jimmy Carter

The Fear and the Fascination Continued...

Opening time was looming near when over the radio two words changed the outcome of the morning and entire day, “Breaking trees.” Oh man, a grounder, the entire season’s snowpack was now at the bottom of the slope. Five foot crown and flanks, 10-15 feet of debris in a pile. Snow plastered to mature trees up to twice the height of man, small trees broken and some gone entirely. The size and scale of this avalanche blew my mind. The scar of this monster was visible until the snow was completely melted out for the season. The weather conditions, type of avalanche, and uncertainty of the snowpack was all new and different for me. This day will always stand out for me; it will continually remind me of how snow can behave so differently throughout the season and with varying weather conditions.

The awe, reverence, and excitement of working in snow every day will always be there for me. I’m filled with gratitude for this opportunity to witness, learn from, live through, and bring down avalanches with ski cuts and explosives. I live for this type of work, different every day and always something to learn.

This is one of the last articles from Liz Rocco, who has been with Alta Ski Area long enough to stop counting, starting at Alf’s Restaurant and moving on over to Ski Patrol. She’s now moving north to see what adventures she can find there and she will be greatly missed. Alta will always be here for Liz if she should find herself in Utah again. Good luck Liz and keep in touch!

October - November Sustainability Events

If these highlighted sustainability events catch your eye, check out our full sustainability calendar at alta.com/alta-environmental-center/resources#sustainability-events.



- **Oct 22 - Utah Clean Energy 15 Year Anniversary & Fundraiser:** Celebrate with our beloved non-profit UCE 15 years of working hard to bring cleaner energy to Utah. More info at: utahcleanenergy.org/15-year-anniversary
- **Nov 14 - Monthly Bird Survey:** Join Tracy Aviary for this month's Bird Survey up at Alta. No Experience necessary, come enjoy the beauty of Alta while participating in a great program! More info: tracyaviary.org
- **Nov 15 - Annual Utah America Recycles Day:** This free public event expo will showcase hybrid and electric vehicles and give a quick update on recycling in the State of Utah and particularly Utah communities. More info: utahrecycles.org
- **Nov 15, 16 - 10th Annual Salt Lake County Watershed Symposium:** Free and open to all, the Watershed Symposium encourages a comprehensive review of the current state of our watershed while creating learning and networking opportunities for a broad array of stakeholders. Visit: slco.org