



MEDIA RELEASE

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Raptor Free Flight Program Lifts Off at Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum

Tucson, AZ (Oct 3, 2012) As part of the Museum's 60th anniversary year, it's preparing for the Fall launch of its supercharged, untethered birds of prey exhibition. What makes this exhibition so impressive is that the birds fly completely untethered, without any jesses (attached leather straps). "The birds fly so precisely and so close that visitors are often brushed by feathers and can feel the rush of air as the birds fly just above their heads," states Executive Director, Craig Ivanyi.

The demonstrations occur in the open desert showcasing natural activities of native birds as a narrator explains about their attributes, habitats and behaviors. Two presentations are scheduled daily beginning, Saturday, October 20th and continuing through April 14, 2013.

The demonstrations feature one of only two raptor species in the world that hunt in family groups, similar to the pack behavior of wolves. "It is amazing to watch how the Harris' Hawks work as a cooperative unit," states Ivanyi. These birds are native to Arizona and the Sonoran Desert.

Other birds that will be featured in the presentations include Great Horned Owls, Ferruginous Hawks, Gray Hawks, Prairie Falcons, Red-tailed Hawks, Chihuahuan Ravens and Peregrine Falcons.

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“Forty-four raptor species inhabit the Sonoran Desert region and 37 species breed here,” states Executive Director, Craig Ivanyi. “The Museum’s *Raptor Free Flight* program provides visitors a chance to witness the amazing aerial maneuvers of these spectacular birds which they would rarely see while hiking in the desert.”

According to a spokesperson for the Association of Zoos and Aquariums, "*Raptor Free Flight*" is like no other demonstration in the country because the birds are the focus and are presented in their natural habitat."

Since the birds featured in the program change daily and the birds themselves can be unpredictable, no two shows are exactly the same. Visitors are encouraged to revisit on a variety of days as the bird encounter will be different each time. This is especially true of the Harris' Hawks as the family dynamic changes throughout the season.

The museum urges visitors to bring their cameras in order to capture the phenomenal presence of these majestic birds. When the birds fly without tethers they appear truly wild. There is no extra charge for the *Raptor Free Flight* exhibitions which are included with general admission.

The Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum

The Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum is one of the nation's leading outdoor, living museums, featuring more than 230 animals and 1,200 varieties of desert plants. Its mission is to inspire people to live in harmony with the natural world by fostering love, appreciation, and understanding of the bi-national, Sonoran Desert. The museum is located at 2021 N. Kinney Road, nestled in Tucson Mountain Park adjacent to Saguaro National Park (West). It is open daily year round with operating hours varying by season. General Admission is \$14.50 and admission for children is \$5.00 (ages 4-12). Children 3 and under are free. Call (520) 883-2702 or visit www.desertmuseum.org for more information.

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