

In Partnership with the USDA Forest Service & the San Juan National Forest

Chimney Rock Press Release

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CRIA Lecture Series with Marcy Cottrell Houle: *Peregrines of Chimney Rock: A Flight for Survival and Triumphant Return*

Wednesday, September 24, 2025

Pagosa Springs, CO – Acclaimed wildlife biologist and award-winning author Marcy Cottrell Houle will return to Chimney Rock this fall to share the gripping and inspiring story behind her groundbreaking research on the area's iconic peregrine falcons. The special lecture, titled “Peregrines of Chimney Rock: A Fight for Survival and Triumphant Return,” will take place on **Wednesday, September 24, 2025, at 6:00 PM** at the **Fellowship Hall of the Methodist Church**, located at **434 Lewis St., Pagosa Springs, CO., 81147**. Doors will open at **5:45 PM**.

Houle will recount her extraordinary experiences in the 1970s when, as a young biologist, she was tasked with studying the endangered peregrine falcons of Chimney Rock during the early days of the Endangered Species Act. Her four-year study—chronicled in her award-winning memoir *Wings for My Flight: The Peregrine Falcons of Chimney Rock*—revealed not only the fierce beauty of the falcons but also the intense resistance she faced from a community reluctant to embrace conservation.

“People didn’t want the falcons—and they didn’t want the biologists either,” Houle wrote in her book. Her research was met with hostility, and she and her colleague, Forest Service partner Anne Potter, faced threats to their safety. Tragically, efforts to sabotage their work led to the death of a mother falcon and her three nestlings. Despite the opposition, Houle’s perseverance helped pave the way for better protections and awareness for birds of prey in the region.

Now a respected voice in environmental advocacy, Houle has authored seven award-winning books. Two of her works—*Wings for My Flight* and *The Gift of Caring*—received the prestigious Christopher Award for affirming “the highest values of the human spirit.” Her writings have appeared in the **“New York Times, Los Angeles Times, Smithsonian Magazine”**, and more. This rare homecoming event offers a firsthand look into a little-known chapter of Chimney Rock’s natural history, told by the woman who lived it.

This event is **free and open to the public**. Don’t miss this opportunity to learn more about the fascinating history of Chimney Rock’s peregrine falcons. *Donations to CRIA are welcome. Canned goods for the church’s food pantry are also greatly appreciated.*

CRIA’s free Lecture Series offers the opportunity each year for the public and CRIA volunteers to enjoy a speaker whose topic typically relates to southwest archaeology, archaeoastronomy and/or Chacoan culture.

Thanks to LPEA for the Round Up Foundation Grant Award. This support helps fund our free lecture series, sharing Chimney Rock National Monument’s cultural and natural significance.

CRIA is a non-profit 501(c)3 organization that offers interpretive programs at Chimney Rock National Monument in partnership with the USDA Forest Service and the San Juan National Forest. For more information see the CRIA website at www.chimneyrockco.org or call (970) 731-7133.

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