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BIRDS INSPIRE DESIGN OF NEW WILDLIFE CAMPUS

Kate Nolan, The Arizona Republic

Megan Mosby pondered the true value **of** a **bird** in the hand.

Preparing to release a red-tailed hawk back to nature, she slipped her leather gloves on and grabbed the raptor, a **bird** that makes its living ripping up rodents, lizards, snakes and other **birds**.

"He's really a nasty **bird**," admitted Mosby, director **of** Liberty **Wildlife**

Rehabilitation, a group that for 25 years has tenderly mended eagles, cactus wrens and other injured Arizona native **wildlife**.

In a moment, the feathered carnivore was shearing off the airspace just above the heads **of** a select audience.

Representatives **of** the Nina Mason Pulliam Charitable Trust, the Stardust Foundation, the Teets Family Foundation, philanthropists Dorothy Moller and Vita Goppert and others had ponied up more than \$7 million for Liberty **Wildlife's** **new campus** and programs.

Thursday morning they gathered for the building's groundbreaking at Papago Park next to the Phoenix Zoo.

The **wildlife** supporters looked up, up as the gangsta raptor cut a glorious path that coincidentally circled the site **of** the **new campus** just north **of** the zoo's entrance.

The hawk's showy performance may have been a perfect articulation **of** the project's spirit.

Its architect, Michael Rotondi **of** RoTo Architects in Los Angeles, says **birds** inspired his **design**.

Liberty **Wildlife** officials wanted an energy-efficient, low environmental impact, or green **design**, that lived up to their mission as preservers **of** nature. As a non-profit, they wanted to keep building and maintenance costs down, Mosby said.

The green requirements led them to Rotondi, a professor at Arizona State University's architecture school, who is known for sustainable **designs**. He helped found and continues to be involved in the Southern California Institute **of** Architecture, a school dedicated to finding **new** responses to human needs. In this case, Rotondi tilted the mission to animal needs.

"What's really inspiring is the grace and efficiency **of** **birds**," he said.

Bird efficiency

"There is nothing extraneous in the anatomy **of a bird**," said Rotondi, whose designers watched videos **of birds** to stay focused on efficiency. That translated into a building where every part conforms to what Rotondi calls performance criteria.

"The style emerges out **of it**," the architect said, pointing out that traditionally, style isn't related to performance. That's how bank buildings come to have Greek columns, Rotondi said.

In his **design**, a 180-foot free-flight area for large **birds** shoots from the **bird** area as if a flight path, rather than a long cage, because it arcs the way a **bird** flies.

A model **of** the project gives the impression **of** shapes rising out **of** the earth, conforming to the desert hillside.

"Efficiency makes a building light, and this one seems to be hovering above the ground," Rotondi said.

Like a **bird's** hollow bones, the **wildlife** center's skeleton is hollow too, featuring low block walls and shaded airy courtyards. Its metal roof will be naturally distressed to mimic desert colors.

Made **of** rammed earth, blocks and steel, it will house surgical and intensive care suites, a nutrition center, and separate areas for **birds**, mammals and reptiles.

Building on a diet

"For conceptual reasons as well as environmental ones, this is a building on a diet. The concept is to use the least amount **of** materials and all the things that are around to reduce energy consumption," Rotondi said.

The project, due to open in about a year, will employ daylighting, shading, solar collectors, heat exchange for heating and cooling, solar heated water and micro-climates made by capturing wind.

Rotondi said, "It's what you become an architect for." It's also made him the envy **of** his envelope-pushing designer friends, Rotondi says.

Wait till they peer down from the Hole in the Rock in the Papago Buttes. The **bird** area is cloaked in a magnificent sunshade that, seen from above, mimics the profile **of a bird** in flight.

Liberty **Wildlife**

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CAPTION: 1) A ferruginous hawk named Pawnee attends a groundbreaking ceremony for Liberty **Wildlife's** **new** center at Papago Park in Phoenix. The **new** facility will allow the **wildlife** rehabilitation center to expand its services beyond the Valley. CAPTION: 2) Megan Mosby CAPTION: 3) Michael Rotondi