



The Owl Foundation NEWS

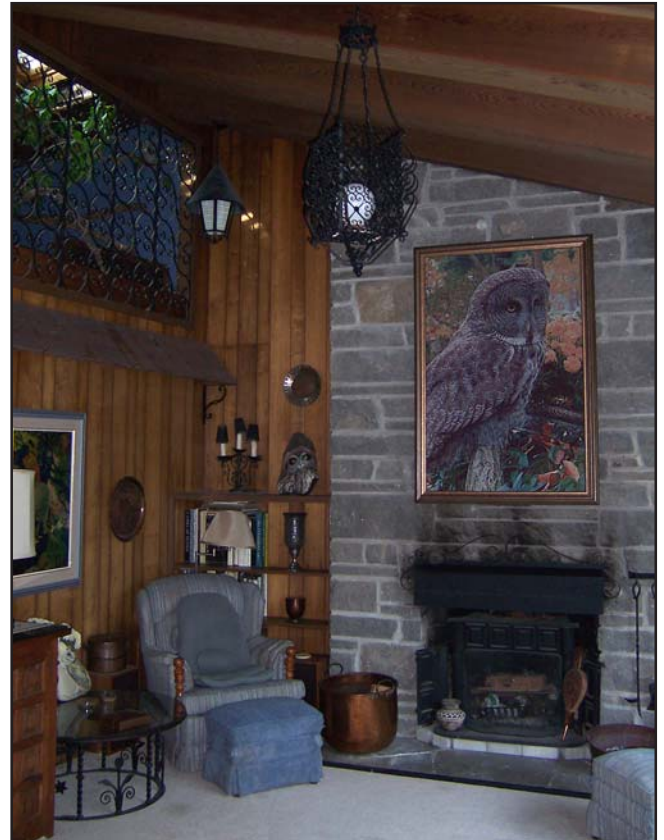
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August 2007



Motoring along from our last newsletter, which related our assorted trials and tribulations up to the end of July 2006, we have another mixed bag of sad and silly activities to confess to our supporters this year.

Those of you who came to our tours last September may recall a battered cage down near the water, looking as though we had been gently bombed. It was one of our biggest breeding units for Great Grey Owls, almost 1,000 sq.ft. and had been the home of 3 Greys, all of whom could fly to some extent. In our long years of designing inducements to frivolity among these sober creatures, we always hope the males will have sturdy wings and legs and that their injuries will be to eyes and ears, condemning them to a captive life, but not to celibacy! Contrarily, we are relieved when a new female has a dinged wing or gimpy leg; it slows them



Big Bird's photo as a tapestry at the Foundation



Just the edge of the ice storm in Vineland

down and makes them less frightening to a nervous little male. In owldom, all males are familiar with nervousness! But Murphy's law is well established here, and the occupants of the cage were typical; two big buxom females with eye and ear problems, and a small male who could barely fly 50 feet.

Another of those wretched big hickories (of which we still have seven standing) 85 ft. high, dead for four years but a two foot diameter, went over in a gentle breeze two weeks before tours and cut the cage in half like a giant cleaver. All three owls took off, heading for the hills, the male carefully, from tree to tree, and the females like bloody rockets! That was almost a year ago, and although one of the females was seen by a Niagara birder, near Fonthill, we never saw either of them again. The Niagara Peninsula is seriously lacking



The right kind of pair: she can't fly and he can't see!

in continuous forest cover, so far south of their Boreal forest home, and it is crisscrossed with dangerous highways, but it has irregular snow cover in winter, allowing more glimpses and sounds of ground rodents, whereas up north there would be three or four feet of snow and an ice crust, where owls lacking binocular vision and balanced hearing would soon starve.

The charming little male, "Calypso", doomed by his damaged wing, was hit and killed by road traffic on 4th Avenue, less than three miles from us, three months after his escape. We got his broken body, freshly dead. Of course he was beautiful, but they are all beautiful and it is so disheartening.

For an expert to have taken the tree down would have cost a few thousand dollars. Now, to fix the severed cage (half repair and half rebuild) will cost about the same. The best cage-builder in the world is a staff member here - Brent, and when he finishes the result will be more efficient, sturdier and better looking than the original ever was. But doing it right takes time and time is our scarcest commodity. If Brent had only to build cages, this one and the other one he is working on right now, and two or three others due for rebuild (a cage life of 25 years in this climate) would be history.



But he also keeps everything else going; car, truck, tractor, batteries, electrical equipment, driveway maintenance, heavy perches in high cages, mosquito netting on over 30 units and on and on. Alas, the owls are gone and we are faced with more dying hickories on our slope, and the kind of tree experts we need are still dealing with the cleanup from the devastating ice storm of last winter in the eastern peninsula.

Obviously, some of our best luck is the things that didn't happen, and that storm was one of them. So by and large we had a pretty safe fall and winter at the Funny Farm. And I distinguished myself by not falling off, over or into any of the hazards waiting for a misstep here, all of which I skillfully avoided. Most of our four staff also side-stepped Murphy's best efforts, although Cathy lost her wits and really invited disaster; she leaped out of an aeroplane, trusting her life to a parachute and an instructor. She tried mountain biking over assorted cliffs and luckily escaped with her face and arms and legs more or less intact. Not yet satisfied, assuming Murphy's attention was distracted elsewhere, she (and Kara) ran up to the top of the C.N. tower in Toronto, in a challenge to raise money for the World Wildlife Fund. Even her job here is scary enough to my mind - doing daily battle with a giant octopus otherwise known



"Big Red", the eternal mother Great Horned owl



as a computer, with more damn lights, bells, burps, whistles and clicks than any other contraption I've ever seen. I am so relieved to see her here each morning before the monster breaks out of its room and goes on a rampage. I keep my bedroom door locked because it is even scarier at night, glowing venomously in the dark, with red and green and white flickering lights and emitting evil sighs.

Remembering last Christmas, I had a wonderful present from the staff, which all our tours will see. A beautiful photo of my special companion, the Great Grey "Big Bird", taken by Annick, was turned into a larger than life tapestry by some mysterious process and now hangs on our fireplace wall, stretched and framed, 4x6 ft. and magnificent.

Another special event last winter was the 30th anniversary of the founding of the National Wildlife Rehabilitators Association of which I have been an attending member for half the years and a member for all of them. Their meetings are four day affairs, somewhere in the USA each Feb./March. Instead of going myself this year (too much on my plate at the time) I found a few hidden dollars and sent Kara and Annick to their first international rehabilitation conference. In Chicago, this year, they were shepherded by old friends of mine and had the opportunity to see and hear how other centres deal with all kinds of injured wildlife - some not very well and some expertly and a chance to judge for themselves. Money well spent as I remember my own impressions over so many years.



"Colada" foster mother Screech owl "Another Orphan?"



The orphan "I'm just a little kid trying to get along."

I even had a brief trip myself, but this was in late May. It was an invitation to the University of Saskatchewan on the occasion of the dedication of a new "wing" of their library for display of some special collections - among them my grandfather's library. It was an honour to be asked, although my grandfather, a scholar and man of letters himself, might have wondered at their choice, since I was anything but a scholar, never mind a celebrated one! I guess I was his only surviving grandchild known to the university. For me it was an opportunity to see their beautiful campus, especially in spring, and to re-connect with some very special friends at the College of Veterinary Medicine, and with Dr. Stuart Houston, O.C. and his lovely wife, known to me over years of meetings of the Raptor Research Foundation. A memorable visit in a busy season here.

Two other events in May this year are worth mentioning even though one of them can hardly be called an event. That was in mid-May and it was the last measurable rainfall we were to have in over three months of the driest mini-climate experienced in over 50 years of records in the peninsula. As of this writing (Aug.22) a total of 8 millimeters of rain fell on these premises. That's less than 2/10th of an inch and almost unbelievable. Increasingly irritating in the sustained drought were the frequent promises of "heavy" showers and storm alerts and warnings from our weather office (what planet were they on?) but nothing remotely like rain was allowed to sully the dust bowl of Beamsville and Vineland. In desperation, by late July, seeing so many of my beautiful



Juvenile Boreal owl

shrubs and even 25' trees wilting and their leaves turning brown, the staff and summer help and I took to carrying cistern and well water in pails to the most sickly of my plants, like azaleas and rhododendrons, barely keeping them alive and with unsuitable chlorinated water.

Back in the 1970's, my husband Larry, an electrical engineer by profession, set up a superb irrigation system for our two acres of forested slope, pumped up from the Jordan Estuary and piped to six taps along the bank. But in the mid-1980's, as planting the first 12 acres of our new Carolinian forest up on erstwhile farmland got under way, various helpers, unfamiliar with the realities of fractional horsepower motors, constantly wrecked the system, burning out a succession of pumps despite Larry's advice and exasperation. Finally, by the turn of the century, the whole enterprise was kaput from misuse and ill-advised experimentation. A few recent years of adequate rainfall and infrequent planting set us up for the disaster of this summer.

So poor Brent, trying desperately to get cage 36 rebuilt before our tours, once again lost out to expediency. He has now spent almost a week installing a new pump down on the Estuary and a new line to the top of the hill, with branch lines both South and North along the bank. So after 10 years of unladylike profanity as I struggled with pails and tap water, we now have irrigation again. Oh Hallelujah! But the god of weather



is not best pleased with our insurgence. He has kept the clouds moving westwards, prohibiting anything resembling moisture from falling on Vineland, and instead dumping every drop he can muster on the poor devils in Ohio, Indiana and states south and west, to the point where their houses and cars were last seen floating down the river. Now, since we have had the effrontery of arranging our own irrigation, the skies have suddenly opened over our heads and we have had 3/10ths in two days!!

The other event in May, to which I alluded, was even more ridiculous than our fun and games with water. It was the 10th day of May, a perfectly ordinary day; Cathy had just headed home, Brent had taken a load to the dump, and Kara and Annick were in the mouse house sorting mice, radio on and no phone up there. I was watching the three fledged babes of Great Greys Fred and Fanny on the monitors. The oldest babe was trying to jump up to another limb over his head but it was too high. Not willing to give up, he tried to climb one of the slats beside him, his little sharp talons of one foot barely getting purchase but he was determined and stuck his head between two other slats below his goal. Suddenly, his foot lost its grip and his head slid down between two slats, suspending him in mid-air by his neck, his feet frantically looking for pur-



People ask how to tell a young Saw-whet from a Boreal



chase. His mother flew to the overhead limb, vocalizing loudly but there was nothing she could do. Realizing he was strangling and without time to look for a hard hat (none of them fit my pin head anyway) or a ladder (all down the hill) or heavy gloves (all downstairs) or even a hat (all put away for winter) I grabbed an extension pole with a little perch on top of it and ran out the front door and up to the cage. As I burst in the door, both parents were making incredible sounds and the male, already highly agitated and seeing me as a further threat, attacked as I bent over to get under a perch, making a hit on my lower back as I got to the spot where the babe was kicking weakly over my head. Trying to position the pole under its bum and looking up, the enraged mother got me on the right side of my face and ripped an eyelid. Meanwhile, the father, flying from the far end at 40 feet distance, with better velocity, hit me on the left side of my head and face just as I got the pole under the babe's backside and thrust up and saw his head come out and his body fall to the ground. This blow damn near knocked me out and blood obscured my vision, but I felt my way back to the door, swinging the pole to fend off any further attacks (there weren't any) and somehow got back down to the house and in the door and straight to the bathroom and a wet towel!



Big Bird "Who is this in my cage?"



"Whoever it is, I think it needs a mother."

Boy, was I ever relieved to be able to see out of both eyes when I washed off the blood - and what a horrible sight I was! Two cuts on my forehead over each eye, a torn eyelid on the right and a punctured little blood vessel on the left lid, two cuts on the left cheek, a swelling lump on the bridge of my nose and a steady nose bleed. Grabbing another wet towel, I went back out the door and up to the mouse house and nearly scared Kara and Annick out of their wits with such a bloody apparition. Our car was right there and Kara drove me to the West Lincoln Hospital.

You can't leave a car in the way at emergency admitting, but a uniformed man at the door came forward, took my arm and guided me in the door, around a corner and into a little cubicle where he pushed me into a chair and closed the door behind me. A nurse came in the opposite door, took one look at me and sat down facing me across a little table. Of course I had blood on my shirt as well as dripping from my nose and a swollen face as bruises began to colour up. She said, in a very kindly voice: "You are safe here, no one can get at you in this room" (instinctively I checked overhead). Then she patted my arm and said gently: "Now tell me all about it". By this time it had dawned on me that this must be how they handled battered wives, and I sure looked as if someone had used a shovel! As carefully as I could I said, apologetically: "Well actually I was attacked by an angry father owl". I don't suppose anything else I could have said would have been so anti-climactic. "A WHAT?" said she, rising to her feet and pressing a buzzer for help. I never saw the kindly



lady again. I was whisked away and given anti-tetanus amongst other things and my face washed and patted with antibiotic creams; my eyes were checked briefly and except for two shallow corneal scratches were deemed uninjured. Kara and I had to sit in the general waiting room (the object of curious glances from adults and open stares from children) until the resident eye specialist was able to do some finishing touches, but we were home before supper to find that Annick and Brent had caught and boxed the parent owls while they scrapped the whole corner of converging ramps and perches and saw that the owlet was still able to stand although not looking very cheerful.

The assorted scratches healed quickly, the bruises took a little longer and obliged me to wear dark glasses in public to hide the shades of purple to yellow that my visage presented. The final conclusion, shared by myself, is that I was a bloody fool, after all these years, not to have found a hard hat with a visor that would stay on my head and hang it beside the front door, and maybe another for the back door. I really was very lucky.

Alas, after all the fuss, the young owl did not recover unscathed. Watching him closely for a week, we realized that he was left with damaged vision. His father took mice to him, as fathers do with fledged babes, but he often left them if he dropped them, or walked past them, unheeding. For a while he was also mute - no doubt from a painful throat and syrinx, but he has since



"Male" mother of the egg, with the wild orphan

recovered a normal voice. Big Bird looked after him for a week, in her outdoor screened-in porch, but because he had fledged two weeks before he was already able to fly farther than her "bedroom" allowed, we moved him to a big cage below the house, furnished for three crippled Great Greys with all ramps and perches accessible easily from the flat ground. One of these older females, "Lizzie" by name, who very obviously was a mother in her earlier days, has begun to adopt him, staying near and occasionally seen to feed him. But his sight has not recovered adequately for him to go back to his own family and manage competition from his siblings. Time will tell his future.

On the lighter side of owl observation, we were delighted this spring to see evidence of mating behaviour between two other Great Greys who have spent the last two entire winters squeezed together in one corner of a very large cage. "At last", thought I, seeing the dark little male busy himself with rearranging the nest basket; uprooting hidden sticks and buried treasures, pulling and digging until the nest was a total shambles and he looked proud of the effect. The big female did not look very impressed, or even really interested in his industry, mostly staying at the far end of the cage, usually asleep. Dumbstruck, next morning, we found him happily sitting in the mess, himself, and looking as though he was there for the duration! Surely not, said we to each other, he's too small to be a female! But alas, by the end of day two "he" was proudly incubating a useless egg and the distant female even less interested than before! Can you believe it? These



"Welcome to Vineland, how about breakfast?"

crazy birds will drive me mad. So of course this wretched bimbo sat on her dumb egg for the full 33 days (How the Hell do they know when it's the 33rd day?) and we were glad to see he/she had the grace to look a little remorseful when no babe burst forth. But wait, what should now occur, to justify her deceit, but a call from a wonderful lady up in Long Lac, above Thunder Bay, to say she had an orphaned Great Grey needing a happy home. Is this Murphy at work again? Getting even with us for the irrigation system? Needless to say, the orphan arrived and was immediately adopted by our friend, the male mother with a very irritating expression on her face, suggesting she knew what she was doing all along! (I'll put beetles in her porridge.) And when this young orphan goes out to the big overwintering complex with our two home-hatched babes, getting ready for spring '08 release, we will move our last unattached male into the home cage of these fraudulent ladies and see if he can straighten them out.

Noteworthy and satisfying, early this spring, was the star performance of Big Red, the female Great Horned Owl (the widow of our beautiful Cicero) who for the 3rd year after his death, just kept functioning like a mother, laid her two eggs in her familiar basket and took on not two, but 13 orphaned Horned Owl babes - not all at once, but one after another! We have three pairs of other Great Horned Owls, "childless" themselves, who take on Big Red's graduates as they fledge from her basket when she gets another nestling.



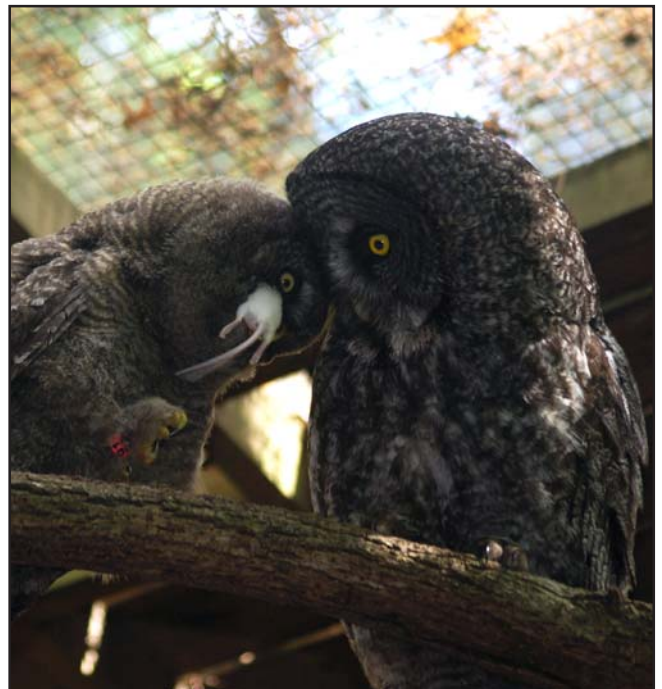
"Now that it's yours, shut up and eat it."



It's a great system, so long as Big Red doesn't suddenly notice that Cicero hasn't been around for a while and stops egg production!

A very short, but revealing, incident happened this spring with the arrival of a very young and helpless Great Horned Owl. Big Red already had three bigger owlets in her basket, all well-fed fatties! To give the babe a chance to get a little stronger before it faced the competition, we lent it to my lovely Big Bird for a few days. She yearns for babies in the spring. We put it in her own basket where she immediately covered it with her breast feathers, croaking with happiness. Only a female who had known real motherhood in her earlier (wild) life would respond like this to an infant, without first having laid an egg and then being able to disregard the difference between the food cries of her own and another species. But the babe was in the right place, at the right time of year, and her blindness allows her to accept me as her mate, and of course I bring the food and give it to her with appropriate sounds. It's no wonder I love this gentle creature, who now offers a critical option for the nurture of a very young orphan, whether it be Great Grey, Great Horned or Barred. How lucky I really am to be able to watch this magic at such close range, marvelling at the incredible tenacity of maternal instincts, even from such a damaged life.

Although we have not had any Northern Hawk Owls admitted lately, our little crippled mother, Toba,



"So the mouse is white: is there a problem?"



Irresistible young Hawk owl, from Toba & Yin-Yin in '07

with her mate Yin-Yin, once again produced six perfect babes, hatching here in early spring even as her six of 2006 tasted freedom north of Thunder Bay through the kindness of friend and associate Brian Ratcliff. These bewitching little owls, the fastest owl species on the planet, are the "Peregrine falcon" of the owl world; diurnal, noisy, playful, fecund and aggressive. And they live away up north, in the Taiga, just below the Tundra. Strongly nomadic but not migratory, they survive across North America, Scandinavia and Siberia, dependant on rodent and avian prey, their population fluctuating with their prey. We lost 16 adults and 12 young, in 2002, totally vulnerable to the onslaught of the West Nile virus, and have not replaced more than six adults since then.



An owl for all seasons and all temperate zone habitats of this continent is the beautiful brown-eyed Eastern Barred Owl. This species, the most opportunistic I have ever known, which will eat anything and lay its eggs anywhere, will probably still be with us even when we are not so sure we're still with us! We have only five permanent (damaged) residents; one pair still breeding yearly (Oddy and Evy) another pair (Jupiter and Jenny) finished with all that nonsense with eggs and arthritic knees in stuffy old cavities, but still willing to raise orphans, just to show they can still help to that



Foster mother Barred owl, "Jenny", with Orphan

extent (they are responsible for the well-being of four orphans this year) and finally, one middle-aged female, who watches and no doubt wonders, from the sidelines. Alas it's a male we will probably need soonest, because Jupiter is very, very old.

Another apparently widespread species is the beautiful and very colourful Long-eared Owl, and for all that it is so secretive and sensitive by nature, we have had surprisingly good luck with breeding these owls. Not very vulnerable to West Nile, most of our erstwhile successful parents have slowly succumbed to old age and former injury, leaving us at present with widows, aunts and uncles, all good foster parents of the yearly orphans, but none lascivious enough to step up to bat themselves! On reflection, one clue may be that in the wild this owl is almost invariably found in the appropriated and elaborate nest of a Cooper's Hawk, also usually in a stand of pine trees, with the nest builder close by and having to build a new nest for himself since his last years' nest was stolen! It is the same with Great Greys and Goshawk's nests, and with Great Horned's in Red Tail's nests. As I know of no owl species that will build it's own nest, this seems to be an ancient and universal owl practice. I exclude Snowies and Short-eared, since both are ground nesters and simply scrape dirt or perma-frost out of the way. With apparent concern only for what can observe from the air, these two species seek some concealing ground feature. In



Two of Jupiter and Jenny's four orphans, in '07



The beautiful Long-eared male "Mork" from Hearst, ON

fact, the only real contribution I've seen from a nesting mother, is most of her breast and abdominal feathers plucked, to expose her eggs to body warmth.

And speaking of Short-eared Owls, first "cousins" to the Long-eareds since sharing the same genus, the species is now endangered across its range; the open prairie/grassland, now coveted by developers for urban sprawl, golf courses and new roads. If only owls could vote; but they just begin to fail in the poor bits left to them, bewildered by the loss of their world, increasingly victims of collision with their wide wingspan and their slow and moth-like flight. So few Short-eared arrive (alive) these years, when once their numbers rivalled Screech Owls. We have had 11 here for some years, many getting very old and all the females non-flighted.

Imagine then, Kara's horror on morning rounds July 6th to discover four murdered Short-eareds in one of our two very large enclosures for this community nesting species. Not only freshly dead but also torn apart! All three females and even one of the flighted males. We have not seen this kind of mass murder since the 1970's when the mesh size of our units for small owls allowed entrance by the only local weasel, the Long-tailed. (A tragic ignorance on our part and quickly corrected after the loss of five juvenile Screech). Since then, and at sobering cost, we have used nothing larger than 1" steel mesh everywhere except for Great Horned,

who would really love eating weasels, except that no weasel would be stupid enough to go into their cages!

So what could possibly have gotten in that could physically do such damage? The probable answer was seen the same day by Brent and myself - a small slick animal, seeming even smaller than a Chipmunk, with a short furred tail, white body below and mixed brownish above. Frantic searches through field guides suggested either Short-tailed or Least Weasel, either of which could easily access 1" mesh. Although both these tiny killers have been reported from enormous ranges across Canada and the USA, they are seldom seen and nowhere common. In 42 years we have had no previous evidence of their being here. Wherever it came from, Brent set up no less than nine baited traps; four using the savaged bodies (none of which showed any sign of being eaten) and five others involving various devices. For one week, all traps were sprung every night and all baits moved or consumed, but not once in a trap, dead or alive, did we find the perpetrator.



So where was it, or where is it? On the day of discovery, in total panic, we gathered up all the remaining Short-eareds (the survivor and six others from the other compound), all our wing crippled Long-eared and our Hawk Owl family of two adults and six young and put them into 16 units of our Isolation building. We also



One of our surviving male Short-eareds from 2001

extended the fluorescent lighting in our Snowy breeding units of over 2,400 sq.ft. to 5:00 a.m. since weasels are nocturnal and just-fledged Snowy babes would be totally vulnerable in darkness. So where has the devil gone? Or has it gone? And if it is still with us, what is it living on now? And where did it come from in the first place? Did some resident of this community go camping in its northern home range and bring it back inadvertently in their gear? It all leaves a very uneasy feeling.

Finally, in this owl report, we have good news this year about our two Snowy Owl breeding pairs. Reacting to the devastating summer of 2006 when, of 10 hatched Snowy eggs, nine babes died of dehydration in their first week of life, we were determined to try almost any measures this year. After successfully breeding this species since 1978, with no elaborate precautions, we examined what could possibly have been so different in 2006. The only real change was having had to cover roof and walls of all Northern owls' units with mosquito wire, after all of those owls died of West Nile in 2002. For the past 30 or more years, our large cages for Snowies, Great Greys, Hawk Owls, Boreals and Saw-whets had beautiful ground cover vegetation of natural Canada violets. The cover of this low ground plant, which thrives in shade, retains moisture after rain.



The lovely "Winnie", mother Snowy with five, in 2007

But there is no question the damn mosquito netting not only reduces light but also restricts rain and snow. In consequence, all of the netted cages are now devoid of the lovely violets, the ground being bare and dried.

Hoping to compensate for the wire effect, at least for the Snowies, Brent put up five four-foot fluorescent light fixtures UNDER the roof of the breeding units so the owls get their unobstructed ultra-violet light arti-



"What the Hell was that I ate?" (one of Winnie's big two)



Chinook and Winnie's big chicks

cially. We also installed long perforated sprinkler hoses in both breeding units, a source of endless fascination for the young owls who sit on them, lie on them and fool around in the mud that is created! A single summer, especially in this persistent drought is not enough to regenerate violets, but at least we have been able to supply moisture and 20 hours of daylight for this northern species.



Male Snowy, Bandit, bringing mouse to Banshee & babes.

But the final innovation for Snowies, this year, was the decision that every single mouse provided for these two families, from the day of hatch, would be injected with 10 cc's of water as the only sure way of delivering fluids to the babes. Then Kara and Annick made the brilliant suggestion of using electrolytes instead of water. And we did. And maybe that's the reason that not one infant Snowy died of dehydration this hot, dry summer.

Even so, we had other forms of bad luck with some of their offspring: of Banshee's four eggs, one was not fertilized and another was cracked before hatch, but she has two little fatties stumbling around and tripping over everything including the hoses. Winnie and Chinook had five eggs and hatched them all, but the two oldest were gargantuans, and the third small, which appeared to have a congenital problem with his legs and was euthanized after ten days of anxiety and interference. This was a lot of stress for Winnie, as well as leaving a big gap in both age and size as the two bigger ones lumbered in and out of her scrape where she tried to brood her two smallest. We think one of them got sat on, during a brief absence of their mother, and the smallest one was probably eaten by a big sibling! In any such situation in future, we will intercede and put such tiny chicks in protective custody for a week of growth. But at least our confidence in being able to raise baby Snowies in this climate has returned, to everyone's relief.



Mouse delivered and no fooling!



The big event at The Owl Foundation this year was the wedding of two of our staff! Annick Gionet and Brent Rollick were married on July 14, in a quiet but beautiful ceremony at a lovely B&B about five miles from here. It was supposed to be performed in the garden, but a sudden shower forced everyone into a big tent on the nearby lawn. (Needless to say, no rain fell on Vineland.) Our Annick was truly a beautiful bride, in a classic and gorgeous gown and Brent was barely recognizable, without his cap and work boots, in a sophisticated black tuxedo. Annick's parents, brother, and an aunt and uncle came from New Brunswick and her sister and three children from CFB Petawawa. Brent's mother and his daughter, April, now 13 and beautiful, came from St. Catharines and April, composed and elegant, made a graceful speech about her affection for her new step-mother. Not a dry eye in the place! With sleek cameras, hundreds of photos recorded the event and the guests. The catering was delicious and the music muted and appropriate. Oh what a celebration! Kara brought me back here and she and I fed all the owls, after which she returned to the evening festivities, now in a hall where music and dance were in progress; while I retired to my chair with Big Bird, thankful for a quiet evening and a good book, but well pleased with a happy and successful day.

Brent and Annick took a week's holiday around Cape Breton Island, off Nova Scotia, a treat for Brent who was unfamiliar with the beauty of Canada's East

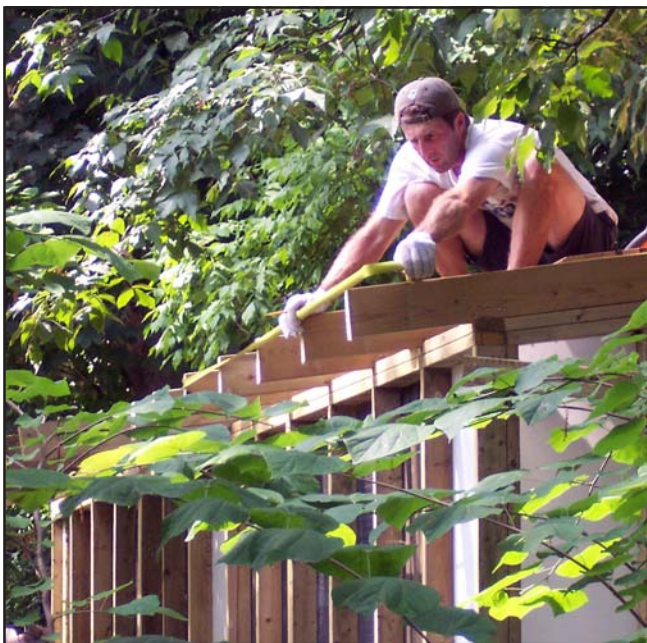


Annick Gionet and Brent Rollick, married!
It isn't just owls I try to pair off!

coast. Our star volunteers, Paul and Tina Summerskill, have, for years, spent part of each summer on the coast of Newfoundland and have become entranced with the island and its unique charm. Now with Annick taking photos of Cape Breton, the rest of us are green with envy at evidence of such lovely places. How few of us really know the beauty of our own country.

Like all the years here, this past year has been a time of both sorrow and rejoicing. For this old lady, looking back on so many years of labour and hope, of plans that worked and those that didn't, the most recent years have given me consistent and genuine thanksgiving for the quality of the people who work here, with me: our staff and volunteers, each one of them a joy to know and an anchor for the future. For all the owls I love and have loved, I could not possibly have built a better human environment. And the final blessing is the support and interest of all our members, so many of you faithful through the years, the ship that keeps the whole thing afloat! Most gratefully, we thank you all.

Kay McKeever; Kara, Annick, Brent and Cathy
The Owl Foundation



Brent in his more accustomed role!

