



# THE OWL FOUNDATION NEWS

4117 21<sup>st</sup> Street, R.R. 1, Vineland Station, Ontario L0R 2E0

905-562-5986

Charitable Registration Number 12431-5094-RR0001  
www.theowlfoundation.ca

November 2022

As another year winds down, time to reflect on the past few months, and what has been happening at The Owl Foundation.

For those who attended our donor tours in the early fall, I hope you enjoyed yourselves. If you have toured in the past, you saw a big difference in how tours were conducted this year. We have adopted a new format to make tours less stressful on both feathered and non-feathered. We scheduled tours on many days, not limited to a few weekends as before, but we limited how many would be invited to each tour, so that we would have only two tour groups on site at a given time. We also allowed donors to choose in advance which tour they wanted to attend, instead of assigning them automatically to a date and time. I'm sorry I didn't get to meet and greet any of you (a part of my job I particularly enjoy) but as we always state "the birds come first". For those who asked after me, YES! I'm still here. Tours were a success all around and we will be applying the new format going forward. Thank you to the attendees who bought items that we offered for sale during the tour, or who made donations. *\*Reminder, a donation of \$50+ generates an opportunity to request an invitation, for two, to attend our next tour season.*

Our donor tours could not happen without our volunteers. From tour preparations, to tour leaders, to gift shop keepers, to tour tear down, we rely on volunteers. I'd like to express gratitude to them all...

Myra Kennedy, Kay Ashwood, Phil Goodwin, Ken Smith, Stacy Rezner, Bruce Mackenzie, Bonnie Schnurr, Chris Earl, Marcie Jacklin, Brad Clements, Win Laar, Ed Anderson, Kim Walker, Krista LeVasseur, Bruce White, Rod MacFadyen, Lee-Anne Facey-Crowther, Laurie Mackenzie, Cheryl Steele, Sandra Black, Fay Owen, Elisa Allen, Anita Gray, Frank Drasnin and Peter Christie. As you can see, a long, long list of volunteers helping make our donor tours such a success.

We have released over 70 birds since our last newsletter. Releasing birds also involves volunteers....volunteer drivers. A big thank you to the many who have logged so many miles transporting birds to and from The Owl Foundation. If you'd like more information about becoming a volunteer driver, email us and we'll send you more information. Whooo knows when you'll have an owl as a passenger?

For those of you who live in or near the Niagara region, we are still in need of more volunteers to help care for our mouse colony, which provides part of the food supply of our raptors. It is very important for us to have a volunteer each day for this job as otherwise our paid staff have to do it, reducing time for their other work. The mouse colony is in a heated building. Volunteers replenish food and water for the mice, change wood shavings in the bins where

mice are kept, move mice between bins, and do related cleaning work. A volunteer usually does 2 or 3 hours work once a week or every two weeks. Volunteers are given access to an internet tool to see the schedule and shifts available and to update the schedule themselves, according to their availability.

Many people are put off by the idea of working with mice, but our mice are clean, curious, cute animals. And you get to see baby mice. Some of our volunteers love the job. Recently we have made a few more improvements in the mouse house which should help our volunteers. Volunteer Ed Anderson has installed improved lighting, and a big air cleaner to reduce dust in the air. He also lowered shelves on one side of the mouse house to make them easier to reach. Perhaps consider joining our volunteer team? Email us for more information. [owlmail@sympatico.ca](mailto:owlmail@sympatico.ca)  
Sincerely,



*Unique sign, perhaps needed more often?*

Cathy Foxcroft, Business Administrator, The Owl Foundation

# Owls Migrate Too

Autumn means the birds are on the move yet again and migration is in full flight. In Ontario we have a few owl species that migrate.

Northern Saw-whet Owls start their migration in early fall from their breeding grounds at the Northern latitudes and can fly as far south as Florida. Project OWLNET is a research project that occurs every migration season and many Northern Saw-Whet Owls are captured, banded and released from over 100 migration banding sites. The Owl Foundation has had reports of banded Saw-whet Owls (rehabilitated and released) found at these migration banding sites. We are always pleased to get these sightings reported. Proof of a successful rehabilitation to release.

Snowy Owls are also starting their migration this time of the year. They leave their far North breeding grounds and head south for more food opportunities as the northern winters can be quite harsh. They typically winter across the middle of the continent. However, during an irruption many years ago, there was a Snowy Owl sighting in Bermuda! Talk about a snow bird!

Short-eared Owls also migrate, but are considered medium-distance migrants. Their migration routes are shorter and can go as far south as Virginia. There are small numbers that are seen year-round in southern Ontario as their breeding and wintering range can overlap.

As migration occurs, we will admit more of these migrating species. The most common cause of injury is being hit by a vehicle. Owls do most of their migration at night and can sometimes fly over 50km in a single night. Migration uses up a lot of energy and fat reserves. Owls need to fly long distances and hunt in new regions they may not be familiar with. Owls that don't catch enough prey become emaciated and can't carry on without help.

It is important if finding any type of wildlife not to feed it until you talk to an authorized Wildlife Custodian. Migration is one of the natural wonders of the world, if you are lucky enough to see an owl this fall, please keep your distance and observe it for a short time and then move on.



*Short-eared Owl*



## Does It Get Any More Canadian Than This??

Earlier this summer, on his way into work, Owl Foundation rehabilitator Brian received a phone call from fellow rehabilitator, Annick, that there was an injured bird on the ground in a park close by. Brian made a small detour to start looking, Tim Hortons iced cappuccino in hand. Coincidentally, Business Administrator, Cathy, was driving by on her way into work, saw Brian's car and pulled into parking lot to help look. Annick arrived from The Owl Foundation with a net and towels. After a brief search, the bird was located, netted by Annick and restrained by Brian.

Brian, is seen in photograph, carrying a bald eagle (wrapped in a towel) in one hand and his beloved Timmies iced capp in the other, a quintessential moment.





# Snowy Owl Breeding

Our remaining resident female Snowy Owl, Astrilla, admitted in 2011 with a wing fracture, was without a mate until paired this year with Yeti, the father of many broods with SassyQ until her death. As we had hoped, Astrilla and Yeti soon mated, and Astrilla laid 4 eggs in her scrape and incubated them. All of the eggs hatched, but unfortunately, two of the chicks died while still very young. However, the other two did well and were raised by their parents in their home aviary. By the fall the young were moved to a separate aviary. They will stay with us over the winter and will be released in far northern Ontario next year. We hope that Astrilla and Yeti will produce more offspring in coming years.



*Young Snowy Owl Being Weighed During A Health Check*

## A Sticky Situation

As winter approaches rodents will start to move into warmer locations such as sheds, garages or even your house. Rodents are a food source for birds of prey and other animals. Killing rodents isn't the answer. The best solution for unwelcome rodent guests is prevention. It is important to limit or reduce rodent opportunities.

A common rodent attractant is bird feeders. The rodents will eat the seed that falls on the ground. The rodents could then move into surrounding buildings (your house). After all you've invited them over for a nice meal, why wouldn't you continue to be a gracious host and allow them inside to be toasty warm? Plug up all gaps into your house. Inexpensive steel wool stuffed into the hole is often enough of a deterrent. Remember...if the hole is the diameter of a pencil, a mouse can get through it...they have very flexible skeletons.

Other forms of rodent control such as rodenticide or glue traps should not be used. If you use rodenticides, the rodents will eat the poison and then before they die will go back into the environment. They are likely to be eaten



by predators or scavengers which will be poisoned. This is called a secondary poisoning. Every year The Owl Foundation admits multiple rodenticide cases, they can be hard to diagnose and treat and prognosis is usually guarded.

Another bad method of rodent control is glue traps. The rodents that are caught can suffer long hours being caught on something so sticky, it is not humane. Glue traps are indiscriminate. Glue traps often end up catching more than just rodents. We recently admitted an Eastern Screech Owl that found itself in a glue trap. Thankfully we were able to remove the owl with minimal damage to the feathers, but this often isn't the case. We continue to care for this owl and are looking forward to when he is returned back into the wild.



# HPAI Update

In our May newsletter we wrote at length about the highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) virus that was spreading across North America in domestic flocks and wild birds, resulting in the deaths of large number of birds. Raptors are among the species of birds that are very susceptible to illness and death due to this virus. We mentioned that the first confirmed case of HPAI in Ontario this year happened to be in a red-tailed hawk transferred to us in March by another rehabilitator. It was euthanized on arrival and sent for testing, as it was showing the severe neurological symptoms associated with HPAI.

On pages 4 and 5 of the May newsletter we described the ways in which the virus spreads and the changes we were making to our procedures and facilities to improve our biosecurity and to protect all the raptors already on our premises from possible sources of infection.

Fortunately, the Owl Foundation has so far not had any more confirmed cases of HPAI. We had expected more cases. As of November 20, the number of cases of wild animals testing positive for HPAI in Ontario this year was 183 (almost all birds, a few mammals). Most cases are waterfowl, some are raptors. In the US, there have been 3700 confirmed cases in wild birds of all species, including a few hundred cases in states close to southern Ontario, and many of the cases are raptors. The actual number of wild birds infected is sure to be far higher than reported, since birds of some common wild species are infected without becoming ill, and most wild birds that die do so without being noticed or tested, and don't get counted in surveillance programs. HPAI has been detected in hundreds of domestic poultry flocks in the US and Canada this year, affecting many millions of domestic birds due to the very large size of commercial flocks.

New cases of HPAI continue to be detected in wild birds in North America. There have been more than 100 detections in November so far in wild birds in the US. HPAI epizootics sometimes extend over years, so we might see more cases next year.

---

---

## They Grow Up So Fast!

These owls were all hatched at The Owl Foundation this past spring. They are fully grown. They will be released in Northern Ontario in 2023.





# Great Horned Owl Release

by Chris Earl, Owl Foundation volunteer

I began volunteering in the Mouse House in the summer of 2019 and soon got into a rhythm of an afternoon shift once a week working with the mouse colony and enjoying the chance to work with live animals, do something practically useful, and contribute a little to redressing the balance of harm which our species has done to others. Although our mice have short and circumscribed lives, we aim to make those lives as comfortable and interesting as we can.

This past August, 2022, I was offered the chance to do a release of an owl which had been brought in more than a year previously for a wing fracture and had now been assessed as able to fly and fend for himself. He was a beautiful mature Great Horned Owl and it was beyond thrilling to be an agent in his release back to the wild.

I brought the owl home after a shift in the Mouse House on a Thursday afternoon. I had had a light shift: a shelf and a half of maternity but they were all new litters with no weaning to do and mostly cleaning around rather than transferring to different clean bins. So, finishing at 3, I went in search of Brian and after some thought, he produced a satellite image of the region where we were to release the Great Horned Owl. Then I went with him and his assistant to an enclosure where the owl was netted, weighed, checked and banded. They put him in an animal crate with a sheet over it and then into the back of my car. I drove home as carefully as I could but I hadn't realized, until driving back to Niagara-on-the-Lake with an owl in a crate, just how bumpy is the QEW. He was a bit agitated and I could hear him fluttering and scrabbling in the crate as I drove. At home, I put the crate in a quiet, cool room on the lower level of the house and waited for the day to draw in so that the bird could be released near sunset.



It was rather exciting having a wild bird of prey in the house, even though it was tucked away in a quiet room. When I at last went downstairs to retrieve the crate, I was obliged to make a loud sound when opening the door as it's sticky. This caused some fluttering but I remained very still and quiet for a few minutes and he settled and I carried the crate back up to load it into the car.

At about 6:45, I picked up my friend Janice (White), who was so excited about the release that she had had a quick meal and then left friends at a restaurant and raced home. She brought her camera equipment along. We drove up towards Niagara Falls and in the vicinity in which the owl had been found injured, we looked around for a good place to release him and

found what we thought was suitable although it was rather open. But there was a line of trees that I thought would be good cover. I backed off the road and got the crate out. The owl was very eager and excited. Janice positioned herself to the side and I got behind and opened the crate and the owl took off without hesitating and flew up into a dead tree where he sat eyeing us for five minutes or so.

Instead of going deeper into the trees, he flew in the other direction across a natural meadow. He landed in the middle of it. We watched to see if he would emerge but he didn't so we turned back towards the car and moments later, looked back to see him on top of a nearby telephone pole watching us. Shortly after that, he flew away towards some woods in the distance. I had not brought my binoculars so couldn't follow. But it was a magical experience. The evening light was golden, the air clear and fresh, and the owl spectacular. We so hope that he has been successful in hunting and in finding his territory, and has been able to fully resume his life as a wild owl.



# Soccer Nets and Solutions

It appears we should re-visit a topic we have touched on in the past. We recently admitted two Great Horned Owls that found themselves in similar situations. Both Great Horned Owls were found tangled in soccer nets. The nets had been left up in fields - a common occurrence in our local parks and school fields. We suspect that the owls were hunting in open fields, looking for voles, mice or even a rabbit or skunk, and were not able to see the thin netting material. The soccer nets became traps and both Great Horned Owls became quite tangled. There are some easy options to avoid this type of scenario:

- Lower the net to the ground when not in use (better yet, take net indoors)
- Tie flags, ribbons, streamers, or even hang old school jerseys on the netting mesh to make it more visible
- Use a thicker gauge of rope for the net, making it easier to see

The Owl Foundation made these suggestions to the managers of these two community parks and they made commitments to make sure this won't happen again at their park. We need to spread the word to all community parks, and schools, where soccer nets are left unattended.

Both these owls were able to make a full recovery and be released back into the wild.



## Volunteer Voice

by Ed Anderson

Hi. My name is Ed Anderson. You may see me hanging around the workshop at The Owl Foundation if you drop by. I have been volunteering here for several years now, since my retirement from GM where I worked as an electrical engineer. I grew up with budgies in the house as a child, so I have always been around birds. I currently live in Welland with Kiwi, a rehomed Green-cheeked Conure, and Elaine, my wife of 46 years. We have two adult children, Ian and Liz, that I am very proud of.



I started in the mouse house, as many volunteers do, but because I am not smart enough to say no, I have gotten involved in many other areas, like taking out the garbage, putting up shelves, fixing plumbing, replacing light fixtures, repairing air compressors, installing air filters, running to the hardware store for this and that, patching downspouts, driving owls to various destinations, cleaning owl enclosures, and giving tours to our supporters. Doing the tours is always a special treat for me, because it gives me the opportunity to actually see some of the owls. When I'm not puttering around The Owl Foundation, you may find me puttering around Firehall Theatre in Niagara Falls where I am the current president.

Earl, the Eastern Screech owl, was my first owl encounter. He invited me to come in and tidy up his home a bit before the tours one year. Earl was a perfect host, and he will always have a special place in my heart. The toy owl that sits on the dashboard of my car is named Earl in his honour.

I have been privileged to observe several releases, and have actually had the opportunity to personally release two kestrels and an Eastern Screech owl. Watching a recovered bird take wing and return to the wild is one of the greatest experiences in the world and I wish that you may all experience that thrill.



# Snowy Owl Quilt...

## A Gorgeous Gift for the Owl Lover In Your Life

We would like to offer for sale a gorgeous quilt that was generously donated by Carol M. She and her husband Peter have been supporters of The Owl Foundation for 20 years! Carol is a very talented quilter and has donated this original art quilt to raise funds for The Owl Foundation.

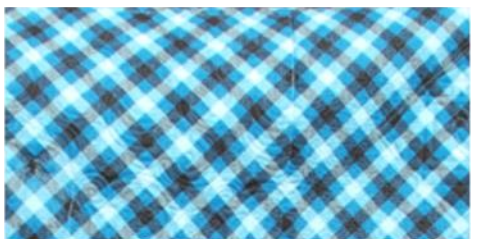
The quilt is of Carol's own design and measures 46"x56". It has a rod pocket on the back to enable it to be hung as wall art if desired. The pictures don't do it justice. There are miles of intricate quilting, including snowflakes, a lovely nod to the Snowy Owl. We anticipate there will be many purchase enquiries regarding this quilt. All interested buyers names will be put into a hat and a lucky name will be drawn on December 15. Plenty of time to receive by December 25th if it is a Christmas gift.

If you are interested in owning this piece of art, please email [owlmail@sympatico.ca](mailto:owlmail@sympatico.ca) and put in the subject line QUILT. Winner will be notified on December 15. Good luck to all potential owners.



**\$600**

*Whoo's feet belong to the model?*



*reverse side of quilt*



**DO YOU HAVE SOMEONE  
WHO'S IMPOSSIBLE  
TO BUY A GIFT FOR?  
SHOW THEM YOU  
GIVE A HOOT!**

Christmas is right around the corner  
An owl sponsorship is a great gift!

Your gift includes a personalized owl certificate, a copy of our latest newsletter and an opportunity to attend our fall tour. You receive a tax receipt.

It's perfect for that hard to buy for person and at the same time you're helping owls. Win win. Please use insert, providing all information and any extra instructions (love Grandma, love your Snookums...you get the idea 🧑🏻‍🎄) and mark on the envelope GIFT to ensure a timely delivery. Certificate can be mailed to you for presentation or directly to the recipient, your choice. *\*please reach out by telephone ASAP for Christmas arrival.*



THE OWL FOUNDATION

4117 21<sup>st</sup> Street, R.R. 1  
Vineland Station, Ontario L0R 2E0

