



THE OWL FOUNDATION NEWS

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Where does the time go? It doesn't seem that long ago that we were compiling our last newsletter.

From January to the end of October we admitted 170 birds for rehabilitation, so we will probably receive around 200 birds this year, as in previous years. Collisions are the most common cause of injuries in birds that we receive. Collisions are not necessarily witnessed by the finder, but the combination of the nature of the injury, such as a fracture, or retinal detachment, and the place where an injured bird is found, such as beside a road, or under a window, provides good evidence for collision as the cause of injury.

We received at least 15 birds due to entrapment in buildings, fences, sports nets, or strings. Sports nets should be taken down when not in use, or covered with ribbons or tarps so that owls can see them when hunting in low light. In October a Screech Owl that had been caught in a glue trap was transferred to us from another rehabilitation centre. We oppose the use of glue traps, which cause suffering for anything they catch, and sometimes catch non-target species such as birds. We received three raptors injured by metal pellets, probably from air guns: a Red-tailed Hawk, a Northern Harrier and a Peregrine Falcon.

Our September donor tours were once again a great success. We had over 400 guests. A big thank you to the many volunteers who play such a large role in ensuring our guests have a great experience. Speaking of volunteers, we are still looking for local volunteers to help look after our mouse colony. If interested send an email to owlmail@sympatico.ca.

We also rely on volunteers to deliver injured birds to us. Often the distance a bird is coming from requires a relay of volunteer drivers so that no one person has a long journey. When trying to set-up multiple people transportation, we try to repeat a group from before. It just makes things easier for everyone. You know what car to look for in the (Tim Hortons?) parking lot, you know what the person looks like and they become familiar. So much so that we have several volunteers who have become friends. They have dinners together, and two couples have even mini-vacationed together! When you meet like minded people, you already have something in common and in these cases it's a love of owls and volunteering.



Volunteer arborist, Matt, renesting a juvenile Screech Owl

We continue to make improvements to our facilities. A large project, which will take place over a few years, is rebuilding our Snowy Owl Complex. We have made a great start this year (see story page 3) and we are excited to see this project proceeding.

This newsletter is being finalized during the postal strike. Depending on how soon the strike ends, and on when you get this if you receive it by mail, there might still be time to give an owl sponsorship as a holiday gift. We mail sponsorship packages via Canada Post. If you want to give a sponsorship gift and timing is short, you can request the gift sponsorship by phone (during business hours), using your credit card, before Dec. 13.

If you are interested in making a year-end donation and doing it by mail, Revenue Canada requires a donation to be post-marked before or on December 31 to qualify for a current year donation receipt (exceptions will likely be made if the strike continues that long). If you are donating close to the end of the year, you can call us to make a credit card donation during business hours, or you can use this Canada Helps link to donate by credit card until 11:59 on December 31 in your time zone:

<https://www.canadahelps.org/en/charities/the-owl-foundation/>

Best wishes for a happy holiday season.

Astrilla, Resident Snowy Owl

Our breeding female Snowy Owl, Astrilla, was kept separate from her mate Yeti this spring and summer to prevent mating, as part of a plan to address a chronic issue she has had for a few years. Each spring an ovoid mass in a skin sac on her lower abdomen would increase in size, presumably as a side effect of reproductive hormones which in the spring cause a brood patch to develop on the lower abdomen prior to incubation. The mass would hang down in the sac of skin. During summer and fall the mass would shrink again and the sac would shrivel. This spring the mass grew larger than in previous years. There appeared to be bruising, and skin damage due to stretching and small lacerations. We decided to prevent Astrilla from reproducing this year due to the risk that the large sac might suffer more serious accidental injury and become a life-threatening situation for her, and for her eggs and young if she had them at the time of injury.

We consulted by email with Dr. Evan Mavromatis of the Links Road Animal and Bird Clinic on Astrilla's condition. He thought the mass might be a growth of fatty tissue (lipoma) or a hernia of reproductive tissue, with associated skin damage and formation of a sac. He provided a drug we gave to Astrilla twice to suppress the reproductive hormones, and we decided to let the mass shrink again in size over the summer before doing an operation to remove it, as it would be safer to operate on when it was small. The photos show the sac in May and again in July, by which time it had already shrunk a lot. Dr. Mavromatis performed the



operation in September, using facilities kindly provided by the Fonthill Animal Hospital. The operation was successful and Astrilla has recovered. No hernia was found. The excised tissue was sent to the Animal Health Laboratory at the University of Guelph for examination. The primary diagnosis was of a dense collagenous nodule resembling the tissue of a keloid scar. The report speculated that the nodule might have begun as a feather follicle cyst, which forms when a developing feather fails to emerge through the skin.

We hope that Astrilla and Yeti will be able to produce young again next year.

Volunteer Voice

By Jeff Gilbert

I was born and lived in the village of Port Sunlight, England until the age of 22 when I decided to emigrate to Canada. I first got involved in volunteering when I was a teenager. After the initial teenage grumblings, I came to find that volunteering was interesting and fun (imagine that!). I found you could get opportunities to do things that you never would have normally had the chance to experience. I helped paint houses for the



disabled, I DJ'ed on a hospital radio show and I must have drunk gallons and gallons of tea when I visited with many pensioners who were housebound. I probably learnt more from them than I ever learnt in school.

I continued with volunteering when I got to Canada, I was a Scout leader, served food at a kitchen and worked on the phone lines at a Distress Centre among other things. I now include volunteering at The Owl Foundation, where I thoroughly enjoy my time. I started in the mouse house last year and this year I switched positions and am now responsible for maintaining the grass cutting of the lawns and trails. I am also a volunteer driver, picking up injured owls to bring back to the centre to help them recover. I have also had the experience of being involved in the release of several fully rehabilitated owls and falcons back into the wild. I still drive as needed.

All the staff and volunteers here are super friendly and always willing to help in any way they can. All in all, I really enjoy my time here and feel that it definitely helps keep this owl man young.

Replacing The Snowy Owl Complex

We have started a phased project to replace a set of 7 old adjoining aviaries, together called the Snowy Owl Complex, though it is also used for other species. The project has been made possible by generous bequests.

Currently three of the units are homes to our resident Snowy Owls. The other four units, which are the oldest ones, have been used for resident and hatched Snowy Owls, and for rehabilitation of Snowy Owls and other large species. Each unit of the complex is a square, 24 ft by 24 ft. Parts of the residents' units have been renovated to some degree over the years, but most of the complex is in poor condition due to decay of the wood frame and coverings. The aviaries were built with roofs that did not protect the walls properly



by roof coverings and overhang. We are replacing one unit at a time in order to maintain capacity in the old units for holding birds during the project and to maintain our ability to do other projects that at times may be of higher priority. It will take some years to replace the entire complex.

The new units will have roofs that protect the walls from rain, with roof openings away from the walls so that birds still can be in the sun and rain if they wish. Wall coverings will provide greater privacy for birds than in the old units. All of the units will have large openings in their shared walls covered by solid sliding gates, so that the size and shape of available space and flight paths for occupants can be changed at any time. Four of the new units will also share a wall and gates with a long flight unit that will grow gradually in length to 120 ft as the new units are built. The long flight unit may be used independently or with access to and from the square units, for reconditioning and flight testing.



Juvenile Long-eared Owl

A young Long-eared Owl was admitted by Sandy Pines Wildlife Centre in June. The owlet was found on the ground in a backyard in Kingston, where it was being harassed by crows. It is common for crows to mob owls. The owlet was transferred to us as we have facilities where it could practice flying and learn to hunt. But as it was not injured, we asked a volunteer in Kingston to see if he could find its parents or siblings. Over the next couple nights at dusk, Kevin Bleeks walked the neighborhood where this owlet was found and after much searching he located the entire family unit! We made immediate plans to get the owlet to Kingston using our partners at Canadian Wings of Rescue. The owlet was flown to the Kingston airport and returned to its siblings and parents on June 24th. Team work and quick thinking helped get this owlet back with its family.



*Siblings..."Hey! Where have you been?"
See release photo on newsletter insert*

Bald Eagle



Very Indignant Bald Eagle during weigh-in and exam

We received a call in June from staff of a golf course west of Hamilton. They were very concerned about an injured Bald Eagle found on the ground and unable to fly more than 20 feet at a time. It was the female of a pair of eagles that have nested on the property for the last six years. The eagle was brought into our care after an eventful rescue executed with the help of golf course staff. The eagle had a fractured ulna and bruising of the left wing.

At the time of the injury there were two eaglets in the nest, close to the age of fledging. While we had the mother eagle in our care, her mate continued hunting and providing food for the young eagles. After six weeks in our care, she was fully healed and ready to be released. Upon arrival at the golf course, as soon as the crate was opened, she flew directly to her nest and was greeted by her two 'children', now 'teenagers'...probably wondering where Mom had been all this time. The eagle family was reunited. See full story on our FaceBook page.

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



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 or call us to use a credit card. Deadline for receiving your request is December 13. Certificate can be mailed to you for presentation or directly to the recipient, indicate your choice.