



THE OWL FOUNDATION NEWS

4117 21st Street, R.R. 1, Vineland Station, Ontario L0R 2E0

905-562-5986

Charitable Registration Number 12431-5094-RR0001

www.theowlfoundation.ca

Summer 2023

We're a little late with this edition of our newsletter.

As a St. Catharines resident, I found this history interesting. Many of you are aware of the underground railroad that the abolitionists used to help African Americans escape slavery. A woman named Harriet Tubman played an integral part in this between 1850-1860 and St. Catharines (not far from Vineland Station) was one of the final 'stops'. There was an article that suggested Harriet Tubman used the call of the Barred Owl to guide enslaved people to freedom. Sadly, after doing some research, there are disagreements around this story. Harriet, an ardent naturalist, likely did use bird calls to communicate with hidden slaves, but they can't definitively determine which bird calls were utilized. A Barred Owl call would make sense, especially during the night, but whooo knows if it was used.

We have been kept busy this year with admissions. When we receive a call about an injured owl (or other bird of prey), we often use volunteer drivers to get the bird to us in a timely manner. Unfortunately, the calls are often last minute (we can't predict where/when an owl will need our help), but the more driver options we have, the quicker we can get the owl here. (You only *drive*, no handling of birds required-they are already contained before we start looking for volunteer drivers.) If you are interested in becoming a part of our taxi/ambulance service, we have a form on the back page. While we have volunteer drivers across Ontario (THANK YOU!) and we welcome new drivers, we have very few volunteers in some geographic areas. Do you live on the south eastern shores of Lake Huron? The southern shores of Georgian Bay? Lion's Head? Markham? Caledon? Quinte West? If you live in one of these areas, we'd be especially grateful to welcome you aboard. You won't be asked to drive any farther than you are comfortable with; we often have relays when getting an injured owl to Vineland Station.

In our last newsletter we showed photos of the Great Grey Owl and two Snowy Owls that were hatched and raised in 2022 by resident owls at the Owl Foundation. They were released in northern Ontario at the end of May 2023. Our two breeding pairs of Great Grey Owls did not produce any young this year. The females laid eggs and incubated them, but the eggs were not fertile. Our resident female Snowy Owl laid five eggs and they all hatched in the latter part of June. Sadly, four of the chicks died over the first two weeks of July, in spite of efforts to save them; only one developed at normal speed and survived. All of the postmortems indicated dehydration, kidney damage and other systemic issues.

Finally, we are still looking for more volunteers to help look after our mouse colony. For details see our last newsletter or email owlmail@sympatico.ca.

Sincerely,

Cathy Foxcroft,

Business Administrator

The Owl Foundation



Barred Owl call "Who cooks for you" used by Harriet?

Our Partners In Rehabilitation

Throughout the years, we have had the good fortune to be assisted by some wonderful veterinary practices. They have embraced the challenges that come with treating wildlife. Basic clinical training for veterinarians focuses on a few domestic mammal species, and doesn't necessarily translate well to care of wild mammals and birds. Medicine prescribed to dogs and cats may not be effective for a squirrel or a rabbit and may even cause harm. It isn't simple to transfer knowledge of pet medicine to meet the needs of wildlife. The wildlife patient may have not only trauma to tissues and bones but also be underweight and dehydrated. There are also age and species-specific nutritional requirements to consider. Treatments plans that work for your pet, that is accustomed to human contact, can be very stressful for a wild patient. Medications that are recommended to be given four times a day are not a good option. Excessive stress can reduce the ability of the immune system to function and help the body heal.

When it comes to the avian patient, they have different anatomy and physiology. The recommended dosage for medications is often twice to three times the amount that would be recommended for a mammal. Birds have very efficient organ systems and can absorb, process, and filter at a higher rate than a mammal. There is much to consider when practicing wildlife medicine!

These wonderful veterinarians and technicians have helped us in many ways; from offering medicines, services, and supplies at cost, to volunteering their time and expertise for consultations, as well as offering surgical services at no cost (which could be \$5000 for a complex surgery). Their willingness to squeeze us in when the need arises assists us in providing prompt assessments and treatments.



*Dr. Evan Mavromatis
of Links Road Animal and Bird Clinic*



A big shout out goes to West Niagara Animal Hospital, Niagara Falls Animal Medical Centre, The Links Road Animal and Bird Clinic, National Wildlife Centre and Fonthill Animal Hospital. And to all those other clinics that have accepted animals from the public, provided them with initial care and/or triage and a safe place to rest before transferring them to their nearest rehabilitation facility, we thank you.

If you are a veterinarian interested in helping your local wildlife, please look into your CVO policy: Provision of Veterinary Services to Wildlife. You are permitted under your license to provide medical treatment to wildlife in need. However in order to provide convalescent care and rehabilitation beyond the medical treatment you must become an authorized wildlife custodian. Please reach out to your nearest rehabilitation facility if you're willing to assist with medical care prior to taking in wildlife. There is a network of rehabbers and experienced wildlife veterinarians willing to assist you with protocols and procedures that are species specific.

Hug your local animal care provider – they deserve it!



Our Partners In Rehabilitation...continued

If only wildlife could share their stories. The Great Horned Owl pictured below came in with unusual wounds. There were several deep puncture wounds around her right eye and just inside her ear, with lots scabbing all around the eye. We suspect she may have been attacked by another Great Horned Owl (or perhaps a large hawk or eagle) as the wound diameter and position closely matched the size of a large talon and position of the toes. Great Horned Owls are sedentary, meaning they like to keep "house" and will defend their home or territory from other owls and hawks year round, not just in the breeding season.

The puncture wounds were older, and healing, but there was so much scar tissue forming that the punctures could no longer heal properly. The eye itself also suffered trauma. The lens was detached from the iris muscles and the eye was no longer able to function.

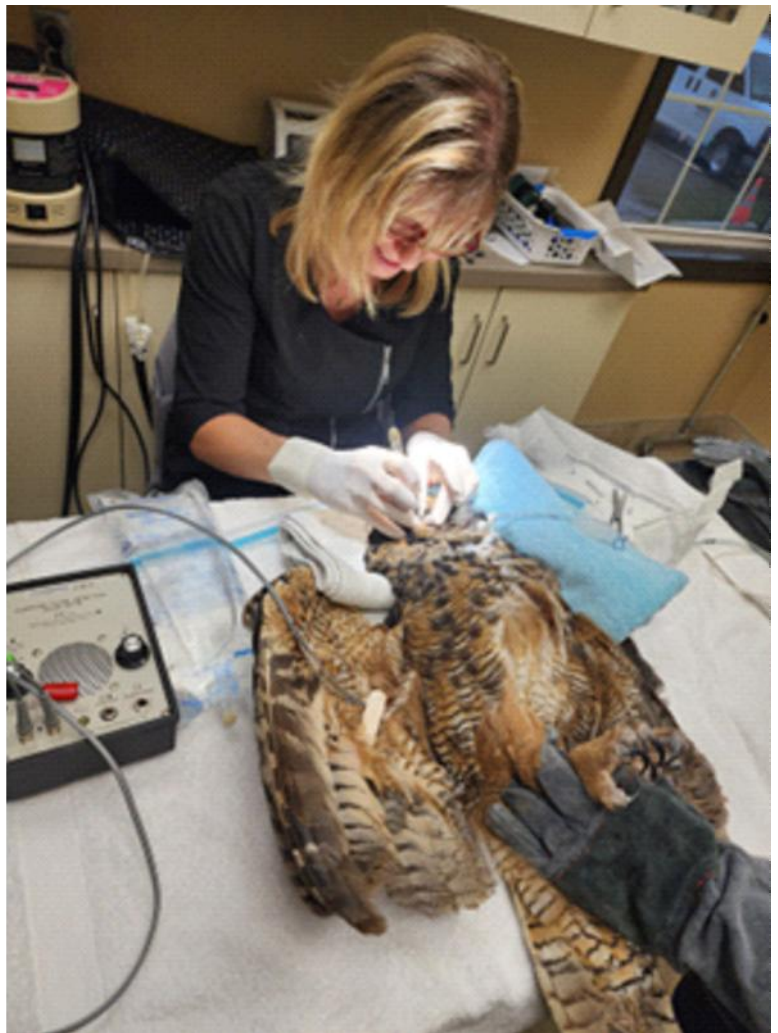
Dr. Claire Todd of Fontheill Animal Hospital to the rescue. With the owl under anesthesia she was able to clear all the damaged tissue (debridement), remove the globe and suture the remaining skin closed. Dr. Todd was concerned about the suture site as there wasn't much tissue left after the debridement and the closure itself was very tight. The owl had a challenging recovery. After a few weeks there was a 1 cm area that had not healed well and had split open....so back to Dr. Todd. The owl had a local injection to numb the area and it was a quick suture procedure.

Soft tissue damage can be complicated but the body can do amazing things. No two wounds are the same. It is important to have experience with what to look for. For instance: When to surgically intervene? When to debride? When to let the body do the work, healing on its own? Which products and bandages to use?

The eye area is now healed and the owl is in an outdoor flight. We will continue to assess her flight to make sure she isn't hesitating in her movements or landing. Thus far, her flight is fast and agile, showing no hesitation or mistakes when landing or moving around obstacles. A good sign she is ready for the next step on her road to recovery; live prey capture. We will ensure she has adapted well to the loss of her eye by providing her with prey to hunt under the cover of leaves and ground plants. We are hopeful she will be a candidate for release.



Deep puncture wound and sloughing of lower lid



Dr. Claire Todd from Fontheill Animal Hospital performing surgery on a Great Horned Owl

Short-eared Owls, A Species In Decline

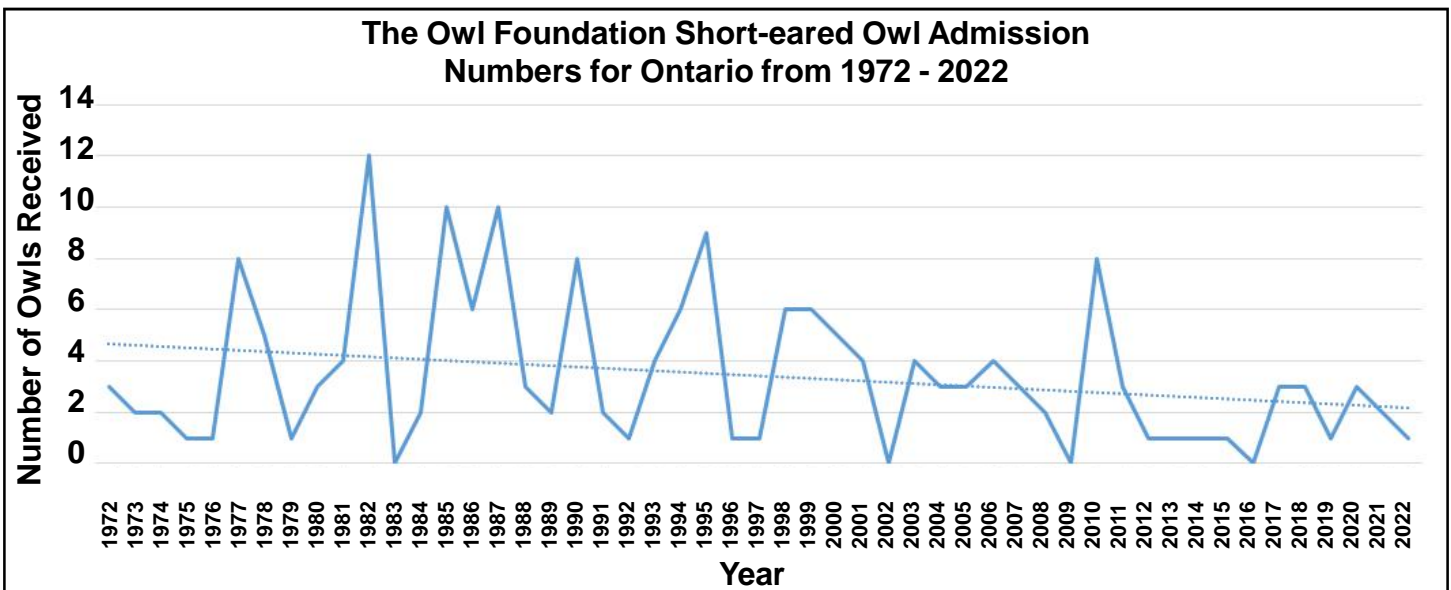
The Short-eared owl is a medium size owl that breeds in open grassland, tundra and wetland habitats. Their nomadic nature poses challenges is determining their population numbers as well as their preferred habitats. They nest on the ground and predation from wild and domestic animals is a factor in their decline. In addition, habitat loss and fragmentation of existing habitat has had a serious negative impact on their population numbers. Short-eared owls prey heavily on small mammals but will also eat small birds, reptiles, amphibians and arthropods for food.

The Owl Foundation maintains yearly records of injured and orphan wildlife admitted to the facility. Since 1972 there has been a cyclic pattern that has emerged - every 6-10 years there is a peak in Short-eared Owl admission numbers. The cyclic pattern in admissions mimics their shift in population numbers as they cycle with the availability of their prey. However, there is an underlying trend that is showing a steady decline for this species. (The most common circumstance for Owl Foundation admissions is collision.)



The Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) is responsible for assigning risk of extinction of Canadian fauna and flora. Reports created by this committee of wildlife biologists are used to advise the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change to make changes or additions to the existing Species at Risk Act. The COSEWIC Wildlife Species Assessments report from May 2021 has changed the Short-eared Owl status of Special Concern (1994 and 2008 reports) to Threatened. "The Canadian population is projected to continue to decline because of future threats, including reduced availability of nesting and wintering habitat resulting from crop conversion, agricultural intensification, urbanization, and invasive plants. In low Arctic habitats, increased growth of shrubs as a result of climate warming (shrubification) will further reduce prey availability and increase predation risk." *COSEWIC Wildlife Species Assessments (detailed version), May 2021*

In addition, The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) have categorized the global population under Least Concern but have noted their declining population numbers.



Wildlife Artwork For Sale

During our annual donor tours, we offer for sale in our tour centre many things that people have donated, for us to sell. Each year this includes a few works of donated wildlife art from our stock, usually framed prints, occasionally original paintings, drawings and sculptures, but space is very limited during tours for showing art works, and guests have little time to consider whether they want to buy one that we show.

We are offering an opportunity for people who may be interested in buying wildlife art to make an appointment with us in August to view in person all the wildlife art that we have for sale. A few examples are shown on this page. Each work will have a posted price. If you are interested in making an appointment to view the art,

please call Cathy at 905-562-5986 on business days between 10 am and 3 pm. Please note that if you decide to purchase art from us, you must pick it up; we cannot deliver art works as shipping costs are prohibitive.



Volunteer Voice

By Dr. Claire Todd D.V.M. Fonthill Animal Hospital

I have been a small animal veterinarian in Niagara for the last 25 years. It has been such a pleasure for myself and my awesome team to start working with the owls and other raptors at The Owl Foundation in the last couple of years. It is an awe-inspiring privilege to have up close experiences with these magnificent birds. Sadly these experiences present themselves due to some misfortune that has occurred to each bird, but it is so rewarding to play a small part in the dedicated team committed to getting as many of these birds as possible back out in the wild where they belong.

I don't think there is a veterinarian alive that does not thrive on being presented with a challenging problem in need of a creative solution. These opportunities are abundant when working with the owls; from challenging anaesthesia, to figuring out how to insert a breathing tube into a miniature owl weighing 160g, to designing a plan to piece back together a majestic owl that took on a moving car and survived.

This winter has seen an uncanny pattern of Eastern Screech Owls coming to the foundation with injured eyes (and always their left eye! I think there is a research paper in there somewhere ☺). I never would have imagined being to be able to call myself a "specialist" at removing eyes from owls. These remarkable little balls of feathers are so resilient that they overcome their disabilities, complete their rehabilitation and get a second chance at life in the wild.

But these successes don't just happen because the Owls are tough, or because of the medical care I provide. These successes occur after months and months of attentive, skilled care by Annick & Brian with their crew of dedicated volunteers. And all their work is only made possible by the generous and continued donations made by individuals such as yourselves.

Famous words of Mahatma Gandhi, "The true measure of any society can be found in how it treats its most vulnerable members". Gandhi was insightfully referring to vulnerable *human* members. But all of you who support The Owl Foundation also viscerally understand that the calibre of us as individuals and mankind is defined by our demonstration of empathy, sacrifice and appreciation of all vulnerable creatures with which we share this planet.



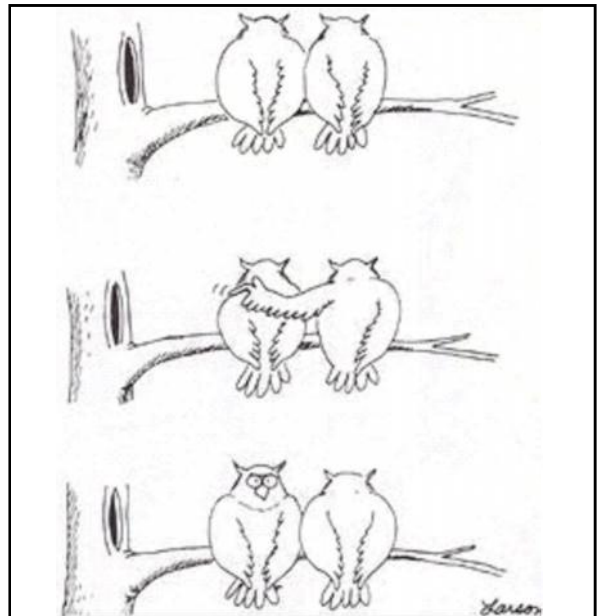
Statistics

In 2022 The Owl Foundation admitted 199 raptors which included 37 juvenile raptors at various stages of development.

We released 117 birds which included three captive bred Great Grey Owls from 2021.

Our volunteers logged more than 2,800 hours consisting of on-site work and owl deliveries.

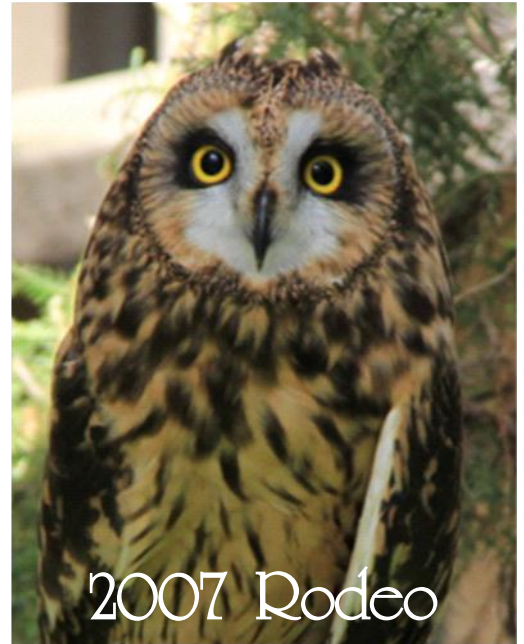
THANK YOU!



Residents Lost



Wawa, a resident Great Horned Owl and one of our oldest and best-known owls, was euthanized in the winter after he was found on the ground in respiratory distress. The postmortem identified atherosclerosis, which might have led to his collapse. Wawa was named after the place where he was found. He was transferred to us in 1998 with a broken wing that had been pinned already. At first he could fly, but this ability declined over time. His white facial disk and grey and white plumage, with little brown, differed from that of Great Horned Owls in southern Ontario. He was thought to be of the subspecies called subarcticus. Wawa was placed with a few different females over his many years with us, most recently with Mary, but he didn't breed here. He helped to foster many orphaned Great Horned Owls.



Rodeo, a resident Short-eared Owl, was euthanized in November. The postmortem found kidney disease and gout. Rodeo came to us from New Liskeard in northern Ontario in 2007 with a broken hand bone in his wing. The fractures did not heal well and he could not fly properly. For most of his years at the Owl Foundation he lived with a few other Short-eared Owls in our very large shared aviary for this species.

In Loving Memory

The Owl Foundation is deeply grateful for so many generous donations in 2022 given in memory of the treasured friends, relatives and animals listed below.

Joan M. Rogers
Jinny Weekes
Steve Oneschuk
Robin Arzt
Cyril Bowles
Zelda Yeoman
Allan Brian Douglas
Allison Jones
Miles Jones
Ron Quinsey
Sam Kingdon
Lhasa de Sela
Betty Henderson
Greg Adamkowski
Alex Zawierucha
Patricia J. Collins
John D. Wismer

Bruce Duncan
Valerie Matthews
Lori-Anne Bastarache
Margaret (Peg) Christie
Peter "Craig" Campbell
Brighton Aysa Bodz
Michael (Mike) Sammons
Daniel Grange Morgan
Carol and Larry Toombs
Jane Ellen Hanlon
Katherine Turner
Betty White
Mickey Delanoe
Theresa (Terry) Swing
William (Bill) Smith
Jan Sharkey Thomas
Elizabeth Anderson

Maurice Hamilton Brush Jr.
Patricia Gansser
Greg Adamkowski
Memorial Golf Tournament
Carl Moore
Geoffrey Zuliani
Berneice (Bunny) & Bob Skelly
Larry J. Blain
Mavis & Franklin Folemsbee
Gregory Jones
Catherine Jones
Wendell Grant
Carole Matthews (MacLeod)
Helen Harris Booty
Merle Stewart
Jen (J.J.) Chester
Mary Hale

Doug Thompson
Holley Schultz
Lou Lisi
Barbara Clews
Liz McFadden
John Epp
Walter Trach
Lucky
Margaret Stevens
John S. Kennedy
William Bearss
Colleen McCarthy
John Fleming
Maurice Mawhinney
Mitch Hunt
Shirley Pielechaty
Laura Chivers



The Owl Foundation

4117 21st Street, R.R.1, Vineland Station, ON L0R 2E0 905-562-5986

is looking for volunteer drivers

If you are interested in being on our list of "on-call" drivers who are willing to transport owls please fill out and return form below.

We will keep your name on file and contact you if an owl in your geographic region is in need of transportation.

We understand that you might not be available each time we ask,
but please indicate when you would normally expect to be available.
If you have previously returned a form please be assured you are still on file,
but feel free to re-submit if your circumstances have changed.

Even if you live far away, we can still use your help.

We hope to establish a large network of drivers to relay birds from anywhere in Ontario to us.

When an injured/orphaned owl is a long way away, we endeavour to have a series
of drivers able to meet up with each other and get the owl to us as efficiently as possible,
with no one person being asked to drive long distances.

www.theowlfoundation.ca

owlmail@sympatico.ca

Name: _____

Address _____

Willing to drive (*please circle*): 1-2 hrs 3-4 hrs 5-6 hrs 7-8 hrs

PHONE

Home: _____ Work: _____ Cell: _____

email address: _____

Days Available (*please circle all that apply*) M T W T F S S

Hours Available (*please circle all that apply*) morning afternoon evening

We would like to reassure you, information is for in-house use only and will not be sold or distributed in any way