



# THE OWL FOUNDATION NEWS

R.R. #1, Vineland Station, Ontario, Canada L0R 2E0

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

December 2012

As we near year's end, we look back on another busy, successful year at The Owl Foundation. Kay was excited this summer as we once again hatched Snowy Owls. SassyQ and Yeti hatched three babies, they are doing well and will be released next spring. Kay was glued to the monitors keeping close tabs on things. Unfortunately, her failing eyesight made this very challenging, so this fall her family bought her a large screen TV for her birthday (this has been added to the monitor room), allowing Kay a bigger, better view of her beloved owls.

Our sponsor tours were well attended and Mother Nature co-operated for the most part. (A big *Thank You* to all our volunteer tour leaders.) An addition to the tour the past three years has been our Education Tent. It is a stop on the facility tour where you learn something very specific to owls. In past years we've talked about admitting procedures for an injured owl, transporting of owls (in automobile and by plane), and capture and restraint techniques. This year we concentrated on 'Anatomy of Hunting'. The tent has become a favourite part of the tour. If you have any suggestions/requests for future tent topics, we would love to hear them.

We completed two major infrastructure projects this year, one to stabilize the foundations of the house and improve drainage around it, and one to renovate the staff trailer home and put it on a concrete pad. We also renovated one of the resident units and replaced some of the old series of steps on the pond bank with new sturdy stairways, as those who attended tours recently will know. Thankfully all those jobs are behind us now and we're back to work on the Northern Saw-whet Owl Complex. It is coming together very nicely and we have owls ready to take up residence as soon as it is completed.

This fall we admitted a very high number of Saw-whet Owls (making the need for the new complex more urgent). We heard from banding stations that the hatch numbers were up this year and we concur, judging by the number that found their way into trouble during migration. As we go to press we've admitted ten Saw-whet Owls.

We had some unusual happenings over the summer that the zoologists, Stacy Campopiano and Annick Gionet Rollick, will discuss further inside.

With Christmas approaching, a reminder that an owl sponsorship makes a unique gift. There is still time...if you hurry! (See page 4) *Happy Holidays!*

Cathy Foxcroft  
Business Administrator



*Rehabilitated Great Horned Owl at release  
photo courtesy of Chris McConnell*



# Wish List

*A very extensive wish list...  
nothing ventured, nothing gained*

- > Owl Perch Support Bracket Builder  
*(very simple carpentry, precise plans available)*
- > Stamps
- > Canadian Tire money
- > Home Depot gift card(s)
- > Copier paper
- > Batteries AAA, AA, C
- > New computer
- > Digital projector - PowerPoint presentations
- > Microsoft Office Pro (2007 or newer)
- > Stainless steel cage bank
- > Oxbow® Carnivore Critical Care
- > Vetrap™ bandaging tape
- > Gauze pads
- > Needles 22, 23, 24 gauge
- > Syringes 1, 3, 20, 30 cc
- > Stainless steel exam table
- > Hibitane™ Veterinary Ointment
- > Hydrocolloid dressing
- > Disposable latex gloves - medium and large
- > Rubber gloves - medium and large
- > Heavy duty leather gloves (for owl handling)
- > 2 hard hats with visors
- > Ceramic crocks and bowls - tip proof
- > Paper towels, full and half sheet
- > Bleach
- > Liquid laundry soap
- > Liquid hand soap
- > Lysol liquid
- > Antibacterial hand sanitizer
- > Dawn dish soap
- > Garbage bags
- > 25 watt light bulbs (for heat boxes)
- > Newspapers
- > Good condition picnic table (for volunteers)
- > New pressure treated lumber (contact us)
- > Pine shavings
- > DRY white pine needles (owl nesting)
- > Fresh cedar boughs (April and August ONLY)
- > Pop up canopy tent
- > Gas snow blower
- > Gas powered generator

*Due to small staff, any donation must be delivered to The Owl Foundation, please contact to confirm need still exists and make delivery arrangements.  
owlmail@sympatico.ca*

# Volunteer Voice



## My Volunteer Experience...by Ursula Penner

"There's nothing more gratifying than donating my time for owls in need, and of course, The Owl Foundation who supports them. I have been helping out for a couple of years doing this and that, including laundry and assisting with the Tour Gift Shop, but one of the most necessary duties is working in the Mouse House every Tuesday. Not a job for everyone, it allows volunteers to take part in the food preparation of mice for the owls.

Volunteering at a wonderful place that cares about the needs of injured and sick owls has made me a "Lifer", who is very happy to be a supporter of such an organization that is The Owl Foundation."

*A BIG THANK YOU TO ALL OUR VOLUNTEERS,  
we couldn't do it without you!*



## Congratulations to our 2012 Sponsor Tour Raffle Winners

**Laura Secord Halloween Chocolate Baskets**  
.....Margaret Massey and Linda Weatherston

**Homemade Rag Quilt** .....Julia Gardiner

**Kim Graham framed Great Horned Owllet Photo**  
.....Debbie Shields

**Screech Owl Nesting Box**....Heinz Vollenweider

# The Return of the White-Footed Fuzzies

It has been some time since we have seen the white-footed gray fuzzies here at The Owl Foundation. Last year SassyQ nested but the eggs were not fertilized so when she initiated her egg-laying again this June we were not optimistic. On camera, we failed to see any “communication” between Yeti and SassyQ so we were uncertain what would happen this breeding season. Yeti continued to perch in the next territory and was rarely seen in the vicinity of the nesting Mama. We did however note that he was more disgruntled by our presence; vocalizing his protests



*Down the hatch*

with great passion.

To our amazement, at the appointed time, a little white creature appeared from under SassyQ's feathers, 24 hours later, another, 48 hours later, another;

three little Snowy owlets! And still, Yeti sits in the next territory! He did provide food for SassyQ at the nest and as his nestlings grew bigger and started to explore their environment. However, once they were able to fly, Yeti became aloof, no longer willing to enter SassyQ's space.

Perhaps their bond is not one for the long haul but a brief love affair? Ah...those springtime love songs!



*Run! Predator!  
(i.e. person with camera)  
Dad sounding the alarm*



*A rare moment captured, Papa with his three teenagers*

# Great Grey's clutching like crazy

The Great Gray Owl creates a life bond once they have chosen that special someone. Fred and Fanny have been together since 2003 and had their first successful clutch in 2004. Typically, we see captive Great Gray's nesting anywhere from mid April to early June. This pair, however, enjoy creating babies so much, they started earlier and earlier with each passing year. This year was no exception, our lovely Fanny was all tucked into her nest by *February 6th* and 32 days later, three little fuzzy owlets started hatching.



*What is that down there? Breakfast?*

One would think that caring for three little owlets would be enough for any family, but Fred and Fanny had other ideas. As we were watching the family grow, the nestlings becoming branchers, exploring their new surroundings, Fanny made her way back into the nest. We thought she was just playing around, but when she assumed 'the position' (we being able to see just the top of her head, eyes peering over the edge of the nest), we knew...a second clutch was on the way. Sure enough, by the end of June, three additional little bundles hatched; a second clutch, a first here for Great Gray Owls.



Don't know what to get someone for Christmas?  
(or 40<sup>th</sup> Birthday, 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, Second Marriage)  
*Give an owl gift certificate!*

You get an income tax receipt and they get

- ☞ A certificate with a photograph of their owl
- ☞ A copy of our latest newsletter
- ☞ A tour for two to our fall sponsor's tour
- ☞ A short note advising them of your gift

Your Name/Address/Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Recipient Name/Address \_\_\_\_\_

Any special instructions (We will do our best to accommodate them. i.e. To Grandma, Love Pumpkin)

- Sponsorship of a juvenile owl \$50<sup>00</sup>
  - Sponsorship of a resident owl \$100<sup>00</sup>-\$200<sup>00</sup>      Amount Enclosed: \_\_\_\_\_
- \$100 = Pygmy Owl, Saw-whet Owl, Boreal Owl or Screech Owl (please circle choice)  
 \$150 = Hawk Owl, Long-eared Owl, Short-eared Owl, Barn Owl (please circle choice)  
 \$200 = Barred Owl, Great Grey Owl, Great Horned Owl, Snowy Owl (please circle choice)

**Mail to: The Owl Foundation - "RUSH GIFT", R.R. #1, Vineland Station, Ontario L0R 2E0**

## Scotty the Stud?

While the more experienced Fred/Fanny family was (obviously) enjoying the duties of parenthood, just across the walkway, another family dynamic was evolving into an interesting and unexpected arrangement. Scotty, now a bachelor after losing his mate Phoenix, was once again on the quest for love. He wasn't lonely for long, because it just so happened there were two available females right next door, Parry and Petra. Parry and Petra had been enjoying a close relationship for about seven years. Parry, eager to have her own family, had been laying infertile eggs for the last two years.

The introductions went well, with all three getting along nicely, but would there be a love connection so soon? Scotty was definitely on the prowl, enthusiastically displaying mice on each of the nest baskets, desperately hoping to catch the eye of one of the lovely gray ladies! Within about two weeks after being introduced, Parry went into nest. Was this a repeat of the previous two years? Or had Scotty made a love connection with her? Only time would tell.

As the weeks went by we watched to see if Scotty was showing any signs of commitment to Parry (mutual grooming, feeding etc.). Occasionally we would see him vocalize from the other empty nest, mouse dangling from his beak. Was he trying for a second nest or still for his first? It was nearing the expected hatch time for Parry's eggs, when something extremely unusual happened. Watching on camera from the monitor room, we saw Parry tending to her eggs, when suddenly Petra joined Parry in the nest. What was going on here? Is Petra going to lay eggs too? In the same nest? Who had Scotty done the "deed" with, if either? Over the next seven days, both Petra and Parry remained in the same nest, side by side. Finally, on hatch day, all was revealed. Only one egg, and it had hatched! Parry and Scotty had indeed made a love connection. Alas for Petra, there were no



*Beloved baby of three*



*Scotty, the Casanova?*

eggs under her. We suspect that Petra was able to hear the baby inside the egg and was excited for its upcoming arrival. We feel since the two females have such a close relationship Parry allowed Petra to remain in the nest with her. Normally in the wild, parents would fiercely defend their nest if they felt it was being threatened.

This little bundle of fuzz did not have two dedicated parents to love and care for him, but three. Initially Parry and Petra shared their warmth and fed the owlet. Once the babe was big enough to explore the nearby branches Scotty took part in the feeding too. Often we would see this well-loved young owl being approached on both sides with offerings of mice or a quick preen. When he had enough, he would attempt to move away only to be confronted by the third well-intended parent offering him yet more love and attention. If he could speak "I'm not hungry", "I just ate" or "stop fixing my feathers" would have been heard on a regular basis. This was one spoiled little owl whether he wanted it or not! Another first at The Owl Foundation for Great Gray Owls.

## New ~~Water Truck~~ Golf Cart



*Summer student Rachel Manjos with our improvised water truck*

During the staff trailer renovations this past summer, our outside water supply was temporarily shut off to the upper cages. Hmm...what to do? Haul bucket after bucket after bucket of water up from the main house? Exhausting even thinking about it.

We devised a solution. Turn our newly donated golf cart (*thank you to Judi and Richard Zirger*) into a water truck. We placed a large barrel on the flatbed of the golf cart and filled the barrel directly from the cistern. Instant (easily converted back) water truck!

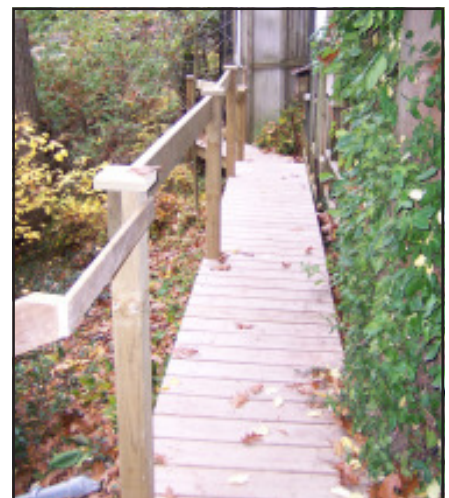
As successful (and ingenious, if we say so ourselves) as this was, we were happy when the water supply was turned back on.



## Walkway Repair



*Different sections of new walkways... much nicer!*



Guests of our sponsor tours will have seen first hand some of the repairs and/or replacements done to our labyrinth of walkways on the bank. While we love our new sections, there are still many more needing replacement. Many sections of walkway are over 30 years old and were built in the pre pressure treated lumber days. Over many years, we have developed better ways to build them.

Thank you to volunteer Dr. Bob for painting the white stripe on the edge of each and every step. He had 100's to do!

## Sadly, It Still Happens...

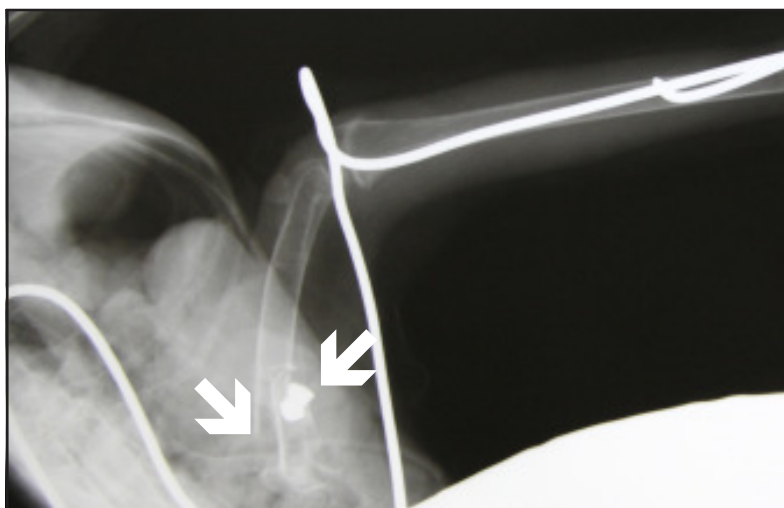
A young Great Horned Owl sits on a branch stretching her wings. She flaps a few times trying to get lift; she is practicing to fly. Her parents are nearby watching over her, caring for her. Suddenly, a loud noise, sharp pain immediately follows and she falls to the ground. She lies on the ground unable to stand. She looks around, her parents are still nearby. What happened?

The property owner, out for a walk, comes across the owl. The owl doesn't want to show her pain, to be vulnerable to attack, so she hisses, extends her wings and stays alert. The owner notices one of the parents above, high in the branches of the tree. He slowly backs away; not wanting to disturb what he presumes is a natural process, a young bird learning to fly with a watchful Mom nearby.

Curious, the property owner came back the next day and the next. On the third day, it was raining; he knew things were not right. The poor young owl, on the ground, was soaked to the bone. He immediately called us for help. Fortunately we were close by. A staff member arrived and quickly scooped up the owl, bundled her in towels and brought her to The Owl Foundation. She was very thin and weak. After receiving fluids to counteract the dehydration she was experiencing, she was placed in a warm intensive care unit to rest. She needed to be stabilized before a full exam could take place. Why is she so thin, and unable to get out of the rain? During our examination we discovered a broken leg. An x-ray confirms a fracture to the left femur (leg) *and* right radius (wing). But what else is showing up on the x-ray?? A lead pellet?! She's been shot! The property owner who respects and loves nature was unaware he had a trespasser with a gun. How long since she'd been shot?

A radius fracture will usually heal without surgery as the neighbouring ulna bone acts as a natural splint, but femur fractures often need surgical intervention. Lucky for us (and for her) we were able to "MacGyver" a splint using a coat hanger that worked beautifully (you can clearly see it in the first x-ray), thus avoiding a surgery.

After six weeks the leg (and wing) had healed and she was stable enough to be placed under the loving watchful eyes of foster Mom Big Red. There she joined three other orphaned owls, all around the same age. She continued her healing journey and after a month was moved with her "siblings" to our release training complex where she proved herself able to hunt despite her previous injuries. Like all owls that leave our facility, she was banded and sent on her way. We hope she is able to avoid humans in the future; especially those carrying firearms.



*Radiographs of the leg injury; before and after. The left showing the leg fracture and the unexpected pellet. The right showing the nicely healed femur (and pellet). A decision was made to leave the pellet alone. Exploratory surgery would have been complicated and the risk great. There were no symptoms of lead poisoning present during the four months in captivity. There has been research done and it is widely accepted that the avian body is able to wall off a pellet, posing no long term risk.*

In order to reduce printing and mailing costs for the newsletter, The Owl Foundation would like to send the newsletter by email. If you would like to receive the next newsletter by email, please send an email to [owimail@symptaco.ca](mailto:owimail@symptaco.ca) with your request giving your name and address so that we can update our records. Thank you.

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R.R. 1, VINELAND STATION, ON CANADA L0R 2E0

The Owl Foundation



*Northern Pygmy Owl*

# Northern Pygmy Owl

*Glaucidium californicum*

The Northern Pygmy Owl is Canada's smallest owl species and North America's second smallest (only the Elf Owl is smaller).

Pygmy Owls are found west of the Rockies. They are diurnal hunters that feed predominantly on small birds such as sparrows. Their body shape and frame is similar to that of the Northern Hawk Owl, a fairly closely related species.

Pygmies are masters of aerial maneuvering. Pygmy Owls have a false set of eyes on the back of their heads made up of a combination of black and white feathers. This is called an "occipital face". The "eyes" are thought to keep predators from sneaking up on the owls.



