



# THE OWL FOUNDATION NEWS

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Another year has come and gone. We've been kept busy. We are over 200 admissions now, with a month to go in 2023. We wish the numbers weren't so high, but we are pleased and grateful that we are here to help injured and orphaned birds of prey.

Our fall tours were a great success once again. The new format of smaller groups, with tours offered both weekdays and weekends, is working out well. Mother Nature co-operated with just one of the 15 tour days having a brief sprinkle. In our tour centre, we sold out of many Owl Foundation T-shirt designs. This year we offered Owl Foundation sweatshirts for the first time. They proved to be very popular and sold out quickly. We'll be sure to restock for next year. Once again, a big thank you to the many (25+) volunteers who help make our donor tours such a success. Speaking of volunteers, we are still looking for more local volunteers to help look after our mouse colony. If interested send an email to [owlmail@sympatico.ca](mailto:owlmail@sympatico.ca).

We continue to make improvements to our facilities. Our biggest project this summer was to replace the roof coverings of our isolation building, which is used mainly to house convalescent birds or to quarantine birds during avian influenza outbreaks. The original roof cover consisted of fiberglass panels, to admit natural light for the birds inside, but the panels had decayed and were leaking, and the building overheated every summer due to sunlight and lack of adequate venting. We replaced the roof with alternating areas of polycarbonate panels for sunlight, and areas of plywood covered in roll shingle for shade and other benefits. The solid areas on the roof made it possible to install large vents near the roof peak to release heated air. These areas also make it much safer to walk on the roof to remove leaves from panels and perform maintenance.

Sadly, we lost a resident owl recently, Cranberry. Cran' was a Great Horned Owl that had been with us since 1999; a transfer from another facility where he had been a resident since 1995. When Cranberry arrived we were told he was a male. In 2010, we had the opportunity to have Cranberry DNA sexed and were told that Cranberry was a female. The tools we use to determine gender (weight, size, wing chord) were all in the overlap areas, so we weren't totally surprised with this finding. In 2015, Cranberry was losing some

weight and we sent her for some exploratory diagnostics and during the procedure they found a testis! Cran' was a boy after all! We learned that there weren't enough reference values of Great Horned Owls when they DNA sexed Cranberry so they compared the DNA to something else, and came to the wrong conclusion. Thank goodness the name Cranberry could work with either gender.

In this issue we are going to highlight four rehabilitation cases. As you know, our admissions cover a wide range of challenges. Upon admission, each bird of prey is carefully examined and a plan of treatment is determined. Some cases are easy (foster care) while others are very complex, with rehabilitation taking a long time to complete.

REMINDER: There is still time to give an owl sponsorship as a gift (see page 4 for details). Please mark GIFT on envelope when returning form, to ensure prompt attention. We'd like to remind you that Revenue Canada requires a donation to be post-marked by December 31 to qualify for a current year donation receipt. If you find that time gets away from you and suddenly it is year-end, you can use our Canada Helps link to donate up until 11:59 in your time zone.

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

Best wishes for a happy holiday season.





This Eastern Screech Owl was admitted in October of 2022. The owl was found on the side of the road in Barrie, Ontario after being struck by a motorized vehicle. There were two fractures present on the left leg and there was large skin abrasion on top of the head which exposed the skull. After many months of bandage changes, suturing, applying casts/splints, and medicating the patient made a full recovery and was released back into the wild almost a year later.



In June we received a fledgling Barred Owl by transfer from Woodlands Wildlife Sanctuary of Minden. We placed the owl with our new Barred Owl resident, Lily (see page 4), who was already fostering another orphaned Barred Owl received from Safe Wings Ottawa. While they grow up, orphaned owls benefit from being with an adult owl of their kind and from interacting with other young owls. In September, each of the young owls was released, close to where each was found.

## Volunteer Voice

*By Kay Ashwood*

My early interest in the natural environment and its wildlife eventually led to a rewarding career in environmental consulting with an international engineering firm. On my retirement, I sought out volunteer opportunities that would enable me to continue my involvement with the natural environment and its wildlife. Back in 2011 I met with Cathy, the business administrator, who explained the various volunteer opportunities available at the time. I couldn't wait to come aboard and thought it a wonderful bonus, while carrying out some of my volunteer duties, to occasionally observe the owls in residence and/or in recovery and awaiting release to the wild once again.

Twelve years later, in 2023, I'm reflecting back on the immensely satisfying experiences I've had volunteering with the Owl Foundation, particularly the range of varied tasks that were offered to me. In my early days of volunteering, I assisted with computer data entry. I've also done mouse house feeding and watering, yard raking, shrub trimming, gift shop assistance, annual log book updates, and in recent years, have been a tour leader for the annual donor tours. In addition, I've been involved in turning Kay McKeever's Owl Rehab Manual into a digital version.



One of my regular tasks involves updating the volunteer drivers list, which I've been doing about twice a year since I started volunteering. When an owl or other bird of prey needs a ride to or from the rehab facility in Vineland, all the options for a nearby ride will appear when the list is sorted by city/town and/or district. If you have agreed to be a volunteer driver of owls, you are on the list!

It has been a really rewarding experience volunteering for such a worthwhile cause and working with all the dedicated Owl Foundation staff over many years. The icing on the cake is knowing that so many owls and other birds of prey are saved and eventually released back to the wild!

# Certainly Not the “Least” Of Our Concerns

The smallest species of weasel, called the Least Weasel, hunts mainly mice and other small rodents, so it competes with owls and other hunters of rodents, but it is able to go through small holes where other predators cannot go. At The Owl Foundation we use welded wire mesh with one-inch wide openings in almost all of our aviaries. Least Weasels can go through a one-inch wide hole.

This spring a Least Weasel was found to be removing dead mice daily from our Screech Owl aviaries on the pond bank. It would wait for feeding time in the afternoon, when we put dead mice in the owls' food boxes, and then it would remove the mice immediately, so the owls were not getting their food. The weasel probably had a family to feed and was stashing mice somewhere. The Least Weasel is a native species and our property is suitable habitat. Small weasels have been seen here many times. Weasels have as much right to be here as owls have, but we need to ensure that our captive owls are getting the mice we provide, and also that young or disabled small owls in our aviaries don't become dinner for a Least Weasel that hasn't found enough rodents to eat.



Photo credit: Jerzy Strzelecki

We responded to the weasel by covering two aviaries for resident Screech Owls with wire mesh having a half-inch opening size. We have also covered one other aviary so far in this way.

Larger weasel species have occurred here, and are a more serious threat to birds in cages. Some birds have been lost to weasels in the past, as a result of cage openings bigger than one inch wide, from holes in ground, erosion, or decay and detachment of cage building materials.



This Great Horned Owl was found late at night in the middle of the road. The bird arrived with a scratch on the cornea of the right eye, bruising on the left hip, emphysema, and a fracture to the right side of the furcula (clavicles are fused in birds). The owl was also suffering from diarrhea and vomiting. There were no signs of internal bleeding on examination or on radiographs. Bloodwork done in house placed the bird as a suspect for rodenticide exposure. After four weeks of treatment for both trauma and poisoning, he got the all clear and was moved through our flight spaces; increasing flight length as we monitored how his flight progressed. After four weeks of flight assessment, he was released by the same people who took the time out of their night to rescue the Great Horned Owl.

In October we received a request from the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry to assist an injured Bald Eagle from a small community near Hudson Bay. Unsure of the injuries the Conservation Officer asked if we could get the eagle here as quickly as possible. We asked the amazing organization

Canadian Wings of Rescue. The MNRF flew the eagle to Timmins and the volunteer pilots from CWOR flew the eagle from Timmins to St. Catharines.

On admission the Bald Eagle was very thin and had a right ulna fracture that had started to heal. The eagle went for x-rays at our local vet and x-rays showed that there were three gunshot pellets in the bird! Fortunately, the pellet damage was minor. The Bald Eagle responded well to medications and treatment. The Bald Eagle has been eating fish donated by a local fishery. We now have the Bald Eagle in our longest flight enclosure where it is increasing its stamina. Soon it will be soaring the skies again.

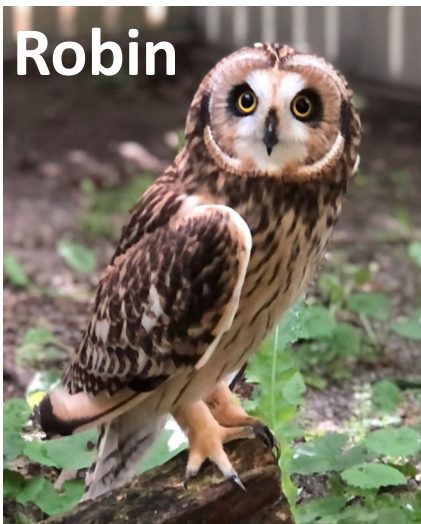
# Welcome To New Residents



Lily is a Barred Owl. She was found below a window of a building in Ottawa in September 2021, and transferred to us by Safe Wings Ottawa. Lily had symptoms of head trauma and retinal damage in both eyes. Her right eye is considered blind, and the other has retinal degeneration. But Lily sees well enough to navigate in her aviary and find her food. Lily laid an egg in her aviary in spring 2022 (she has no mate). This year she was a foster parent for orphaned Barred Owls.



Rose is a Barred Owl who was found beside a road in Roseneath Ontario. She had corneal and lens injuries in one eye, and blood in both eyes, and a fractured left ulna. She was admitted in October 2021. Her fracture has healed, but her left eye has a luxated lens with cataract, and retinal degeneration, and is considered blind, and her right eye has retinal lesions. She sees enough to navigate in her aviary, and has adjusted well to captivity.



Robin is a Short-eared Owl admitted in November 2020, after he was found in Owen Sound with a fractured wing. The wing was pinned at Links Road Animal and Bird Clinic and a long recovery began. After two years of reconditioning, extension of the injured wing improved but remained insufficient for normal flight and release. He can fly well enough to live in an aviary and has adjusted well to captivity. He shares an aviary with another resident Short-eared Owl called Heather.

**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 to ensure a timely delivery. Certificate can be mailed to you for presentation or directly to the recipient, indicate your choice.