



# THE OWL FOUNDATION NEWS

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

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Spring is in the air, which here at The Owl Foundation means babies. As of press time we have admitted five Great Horned owlets and four Eastern Screech owlets. Two of the owlets were reunited with their families. One died and two were euthanized due to fractures and/or tissue necrosis.

We have completed some more improvement projects. We replaced the roof coverings of a small aviary near the barn, and added a central post. One of our large release training complexes with ten units has a flat roof of wood slats and rafters which are decaying. To extend the life of the complex we added some new slats on the roof, improved support for some rafters, and stopped direct drainage from the central hall fibreglass cover onto the wood roof.

During the winter we made some improvements in the Owl Foundation's house. We built an insulated wall to cover part of the inside face of the north cement block wall in the basement to reduce the need for supplemental heating. We raised some internal non-bearing walls that were sloping due to floor slope, levelled the landings at the top and bottom of the main stairs, and added support under the stairs.

This spring we made repairs to the roof and a wall of one of our aviaries for Great Grey Owls, and added an internal wall for roof support and to provide more privacy and perching for the resident as part of a new perching system. In our woodlot we have removed some large dead trees that were hung up on others and some that fell across the paths we maintain.

Again this year, like last year, our two mated pairs of Great Grey Owls, Fanny and Fred, and Petra and Scotty, produced only infertile eggs. Per our last newsletter, only one of the Snowy Owls hatched last year by Astrilla and Yeti survived and it will be released this year in northern Ontario.



*Cathy Foxcroft, Business Administrator, giving a presentation to a local association.*



*Fostered Eastern Screech Owlet*

We continue to receive presentation requests, which we are happy to try and accommodate. We have volunteers who do these for us, but on occasion, staff have had to fill in (see photo) at the last moment. We do have available, for a fee, representatives to come and talk to your group about what we do, if you are not too far away. Email us at owlmail@sympatico.ca if you'd like more information.

Each year as part of continuing staff education the Owl Foundation funds attendance of a staff member at the annual conference of the National Wildlife Rehabilitators Association in the U.S. The conference provides opportunities to learn about new developments in the field and make contacts with other rehabilitators. This spring Brian attended the conference, which was held in Omaha, Nebraska.

And on a final note, we are still looking for more local volunteers to help with the daily care of our mouse colony. You can give a hoot by helping. Contact us if you are interested. owlmail@sympatico.ca

# Eastern Screech Owl Survives Collision

In April we admitted an Eastern Screech Owl as a transfer from Safewings, a wildlife rehabilitation centre in Ottawa that sometimes sends owls to us after initial care.

The owl had flown into the side of a police cruiser in March and was taken immediately to Safewings. They found that it had a concussion, a bulging eardrum, an injured eye and a drooping wing. After about 10 days of supportive care, it was ready for transfer to The Owl Foundation for an extended stay to recover.

The owl was brought to us by a volunteer driver who happened to be coming from Ottawa to Niagara to witness the recent solar eclipse that was in totality in the Niagara area. They were able to transport the owl door to door! Usually for such a long trip we would have to organize a relay of our volunteer drivers.



*Eastern Screech Owl on the road after striking a cruiser*

When the owl was admitted there was still some swelling of the wing, which was wrapped for a time to hold it in place, and some inflammation of the eyes, which were treated with an ophthalmic solution. Later examination showed some retinal damage. The owl was treated for internal parasites. After more than a week in the intensive care room, the owl was moved to a small outdoor convalescent unit, and later to an aviary to get exercise. The owl has made good progress and is expected to be releasable, in spite of some retinal damage. It will be returned to the Ottawa area for release.

The owl's rescue and recovery is an example of successful cooperation of wildlife rescue organizations working together to help injured wildlife.

## Statistics

In 2023 The Owl Foundation admitted 217 raptors which included 62 juvenile raptors at various stages of development.

We released 88 birds which included two Snowy Owls and one Great Grey Owl that were hatched in 2022.

Our volunteers logged just shy of 3,000 hours consisting of on-site and owl transportation.



*Looking much better after some TLC at The Owl Foundation*

# Unraveling the Mystery: Is it a Baby Owl?



Most people can recognize that an adult bird is an owl from the head which appears large and round, with a wide facial disk, large forward-looking eyes and a hooked beak. The head shape and facial disk are formed by feathers. And most owls look like there is not much neck between head and torso, though this is also just because of feathers.

However, many people are not familiar with the fact that there are 11 owl species in Ontario, and that the species differ widely in the size of the adult birds. People tend to assume that owls are big, and when they come across a small one, they may think that it must be a baby. But the feathering of baby owls differs from that of adults. Nestling owls are covered in down at first and feathers develop gradually.

When someone calls the Owl Foundation about a baby owl they have found, one thing we have to sort out is whether it is really a baby owl, or just a small species of

*Eastern Screech Foster Parent Between Two Owlets @ 6-7 weeks Old*

owl being viewed by someone not very familiar with owls. There are two small species that are common in southern Ontario: the Eastern Screech Owl, adults of which range from 16 to 25 cm in length (tip of bill to tip of tail), and the Northern Saw-whet Owl, adults of which range from 18 to 21 cm in length.

The owl species that breed in southern Ontario usually nest in the latter part of winter or early spring. If someone in southern Ontario is calling about a baby owl in the summer or fall, we can be pretty sure that it's not a baby. It may be a full-grown owl of a species that is small, or not an owl at all. We often ask callers for a photograph to be sent to us if possible, so that we can check the species and life stage of the owl, and sometimes this also provides information about its condition, all of which may affect the advice we give.

Young owls leave the nest before their feathers are fully developed and before they can fly properly. They walk out on branches, or may flutter down to the ground and try to climb up a tree. They continue to be watched over and fed by their parents. By the time that young owls can fly they are about as big as their parents and look like them, but retain some fluffy feathers for some time, which helps mark them as youngsters.



*2 week old Great Horned Owlets—already larger than an adult Screech or Saw-whet Owl*



*Northern Saw-whet Foster Parent (R) with 2 owlets of different ages, but note all the same size, yet different colouring/plumage*

# Long-eared Owl Survives Car Collision

In January we admitted a Long-eared Owl that was found near a church driveway in the Brampton area. A woman had noticed the owl standing on the ground and when she approached, it did not fly away. She left a telephone message for us, requesting advice. After we spoke with her she was willing to return to the site, where she found the owl again and captured it easily. She then offered to help to transport it to us in Vineland. She drove about half way to meet with another of our volunteer drivers, who completed the journey.

When the owl was examined during admission, we found that it had abrasions and bruising on the left shoulder, some blood pooled under the skin of the ear canal, and a suspected concussion. These injuries are consistent with collision with a vehicle, which is the most common cause of injuries in birds that we receive. This owl's injuries were less severe than is typically the case with collisions.

The owl recovered from its injuries with supportive care. The owl is of a nervous disposition and when tried in February in large outdoor enclosures where it could fly, it flew into aviary walls or ceiling, trying to escape. This caused abrasions of the cere, the fleshy covering at the base of the upper mandible. The cere abrasions had to be treated repeatedly, but eventually the owl settled down enough to stop injuring itself. The owl is now in a long flight enclosure, flying well and may soon be ready for release back into the wild.

We don't receive many Long-eared Owls. In the last 10 years the average number received was only 2.7 per year. The species has a wide range in North America, Europe and Asia. Population sizes are not well known and estimates vary widely. The Long-eared Owl is considered to be in decline in at least some parts of its range.



## Volunteer Voice

*By Margaret Both*

My earliest childhood memories are of assorted creatures - from bugs to horses and everything in between. I started reading Gerald Durrell's books in the mid 1960's and he talked about Kay McKeever, her husband and their Owl Foundation in Vineland-this would come full circle years later.

As an adult I taught reptile and amphibian classes in schools and libraries for over 20 years. In the 1990's my daughter and I did a two day Falconry course which reignited my love of Birds of Prey.

My husband and I moved to the Beamsville area in 2010. In 2016 my family sponsored "Windy" for me as a Christmas gift. In 2017 we did the tour and it was incredible. I realized then that volunteering in the Mouse House would be a perfect fit as I felt that helping to feed the raptors would be my best way to help. The importance of having a healthy supply of nutritious food for the birds is paramount. I prefer to work with the mice that are in the maternity stage, which includes their babies. Some volunteers prefer to work with mice at other stages such a growing, resting or mating.

One of the unexpected perks has been helping release birds that have recovered. I have released two owls and two red tailed hawks. Once I even got to hold a very unhappy owl for a bandage change. The staff are all very dedicated and fantastic to work with and good friends. I love my weekly shift at the mouse house!!!



# More Roads → More Roadkill

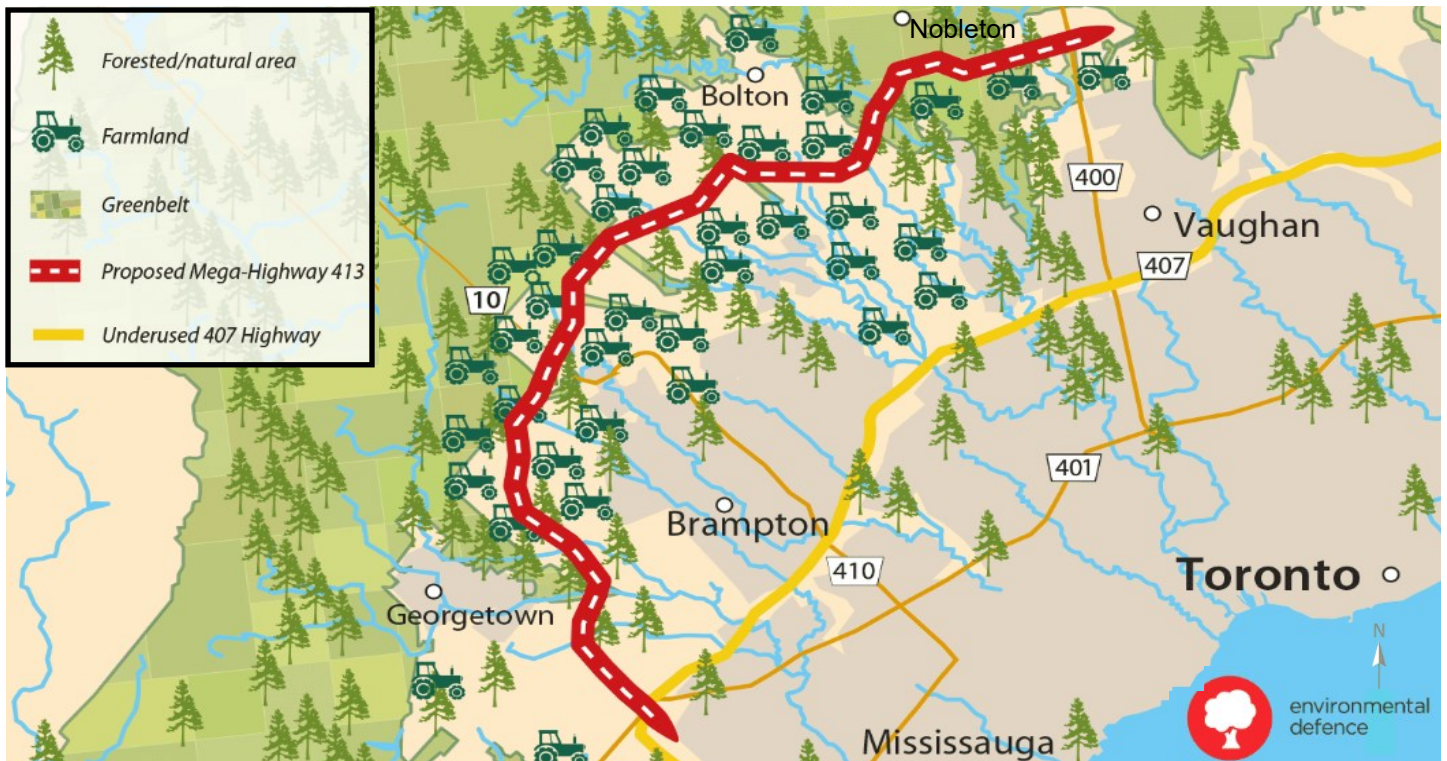
There are many good reasons to oppose the building of Highway 413 in Ontario. For those who care about the natural world, this highway megaproject would destroy a vast swath of wildlife habitat across southern Ontario, erasing woods, wetlands and fields, and wrecking and polluting streams. And that will be just the beginning of the destruction, because major new roads always lead to sprawl, the development of surrounding lands into commuter communities that are based on car use, which means more roads and other infrastructure to serve those developments and even more loss of nature.

One problem with new roads that does not get much press is that every kilometre of new road increases the number of animals that will be killed on roads in Ontario, and it is a permanent increase. Once a highway is built, it will not be removed. The highway will be deemed necessary to serve all the lesser roads it has spawned and will spawn in future. And each of those roads will lead to further permanent increase in killing of animals. There have been studies of roadkill in countries around the world, and more study is needed, but it is estimated that billions of vertebrate animals such as mammals and birds are killed on the world's roads every year, and the number is many trillions when insects are included.

Roads and vehicles are not the only major human cause of harm to wildlife. Wildlife rehabilitation exists chiefly because of the endless hazards that human civilization has created for wildlife, including roads and vehicles, buildings and windows, towers, poles and power lines, fences and nets, farm equipment, logging, industrial complexes, toxic waste ponds, poisons and pollution, pet animals allowed to roam and kill wildlife, etc. But the impact on wildlife of every human activity and development is always among the last things people think of, if they think of it at all.

The Owl Foundation does wildlife rehabilitation, but this is not enough to address the staggering numbers of wild animals harmed by human activity. There will never be millions of rehabilitators to help the billions of animals harmed each year. The vast majority of wild animals harmed never see a wildlife rehabilitator. Most animals are killed by their encounter with a hazard. Many die later of their injuries or illness without being noticed or helped. The small percentage of harmed animals that actually get to rehabilitators is further reduced by death after admission or by euthanasia due to severe injuries or permanent disability. We value the relatively few harmed animals that we can help, but it is far more important to prevent the colossal waste of wild animal lives caused by all the hazards human keep creating.

Collision with a vehicle is the most common cause of the injuries to owls and other raptors that The Owl Foundation receives. For each raptor we receive, many others die as a result of collisions. Please help to stop Highway 413. See <https://environmentaldefence.ca/stop-the-413-3/>



# Red-tailed Hawk Recovers

On a cold and rainy day in January a Red-tailed Hawk was spotted on the side of the road by a citizen who then took the time to gather up and deliver the injured hawk to us as we were only about 20 kms away.

On admission the bird was very thin, weighing 938 grams. The hawk had just one injury. On the right foot one of the toes was almost completely severed. It was an old injury and we suspect the hawk had been struggling to hunt successfully while dealing with something so painful.

Once the hawk was stabilized, she went for surgery at Fonthill Animal Hospital (thank you Dr. Claire Todd) to amputate the toe. After many bandage changes and medications the toe area healed successfully.

Through testing, we determined the hawk was able to fly, hunt and land successfully despite a missing toe. She now weighed a hefty 1445 grams and was ready to return to the wild. The bird was banded and released near where she was found.



*Red-tailed Hawk recuperating under a heat lamp*

## *In Loving Memory*

*The Owl Foundation is deeply grateful for so many generous donations in 2023 given in memory of the treasured friends, relatives and animals listed below*

- |                        |                            |                            |                            |
|------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Joan M. Rogers         | Mickey Delanoe             | Isabel Williams            | Jane Ellen Hanlon          |
| Jinny Weekes           | Maurice Hamilton Brush Jr. | Claudette Duggan           | Paul Michalko              |
| Steve Oneschuk         | Greg Adamkowski            | Hans-Erich & Ellen Buetter | Robert Owen                |
| Robin Arzt             | Memorial Golf Tournament   | Catherine Hooper           | Janet "Sam"antha Lee Brown |
| Cyril Bowles           | Berneice (Bunny) & Bob     | Deborah Lefebvre           | Robert "Bobby" Gordon      |
| Zelda Yeoman           | Skelly                     | Paul Hutchinson            | Brown                      |
| Allan Brian Douglas    | Gregory Jones              | Peter BonEnfant            | Graeme Whistance-Smith     |
| Allison Jones          | Catherine Jones            | Herbert Davis              | Peter Whistance-Smith      |
| Miles Jones            | Wendell Grant              | Harvey (dog)               | Chris Cressman             |
| Betty Henderson        | David Seldon               | Jim Ford                   | Marion Rozycki             |
| Greg Adamkowski        | R. Alan Stewart            | Henry/Harry/Stu Stuart     | Ida & Fred Karain          |
| Alex Zawierucha        | Michael Deeley             | Zachary Junkin             | Louis Rodgers              |
| Bruce Duncan           | Ken Clark                  | Leonard King               | Mary Thomas                |
| Lori-Anne Bastarache   | Ron Sigston                | Lois & Bill Salo           | Linda Tait                 |
| Peter "Craig" Campbell | Dave Dewey                 | Philip Parkes              | Ruth Morton                |
| Brighton Aysa Bodz     | Phyllis Marr               | John Potter                | Betty Stanley              |
| Michael (Mike) Sammons | Helena Czerwinski          | Alan Pickering             | Robin & Nancy Carter       |
| Daniel Grange Morgan   | Judy Gittings              | Don Kernohan               | Roger Legon                |
| Carol and Larry Toombs | Bernadette Marie Galway    | Donald Aylward             |                            |
| Betty White Challenge  | Freddy Whillans            | Margaret Grace             |                            |

# Proper Disposal Please

In November the Greater Niagara Humane Society (GNHS) received a call to rescue a Short-eared Owl that someone found ensnared in fishing line in a tree in Welland. Fortunately, GNHS acted swiftly and were able to capture the owl and transport it to The Owl Foundation.

Fishing line that is discarded on the ground or in water is a hazard for birds and other wildlife. Wild animals can become entangled in discarded line easily and may be unable to free themselves. As the animal struggles, the situation may become worse due to constriction of the line around a leg or wing or the neck, or by immobilizing the animal, or trapping it in a location where it is vulnerable to additional hazards at the same time, such as attack by other animals. Entanglement alone can lead to serious injury and death, from stress and overexertion, or by constriction or starvation or drowning.

Everyone has seen photos of whales and other marine mammals entangled in fishing lines or nets, but entanglement can occur anywhere with any species. It is often the result of careless disposal. It is a preventable wildlife hazard, if people care.

If you see an animal entangled in line or anything else, try to get help for it as soon as possible, because the stress of entanglement can kill. If you find discarded fishing line somewhere, pick up the line, put it in a bag or other container and dispose of it properly. You may be the only person who sees it or who will act in time to prevent another tragedy.

It has taken months for this Short-eared Owl to recover from the trauma of being entangled. It would not self-feed for a long time and was slow to regain its strength. It is possible that it had a condition called capture myopathy which is muscle damage caused by physiological changes in response to overexertion, as when animal tries to escape from a trap. Capture myopathy often results in death, or euthanasia due to lameness from permanent muscle damage, but fortunately this Short-eared Owl has recovered and is in release training. We hope we will be able to return it to the wild.



## Don't Use Poison or Glue Traps To Control Mice/Rats

Poisons for killing rodents are called rodenticides. They are sold in the form of poisoned bait for rodents to eat. They do not kill instantly. They cause illness and slow cruel deaths. Poisoned rodents are eaten by other animals, such as owls and other predators and scavengers, which then suffer illness and death through this secondary poisoning. The use of rodent poisons is killing animals that are the natural controls on rodent numbers, which means more rodents. When dead owls are tested for rodenticides it is often found that their tissues contain multiple types of rodenticides.

If you have a rodent problem, poisoning will not solve it, nor will glue traps, which also cause cruel deaths for rodents and non-target animals. The sellers of these products will claim that these are good ways to kill rodents, as if animal suffering does not matter, but the rodents you kill will soon be replaced by other rodents, and then it will be suggested that you buy more product. A long term solution to a rodent problem in a building is to exclude them from the building by blocking all openings and to put anything that attracts rodents into airtight containers that rodents cannot get into or chew through. Use mechanical traps for rodents already in the building.

Please do not use poisons and glue traps, and please support efforts to ban these products in municipalities and provinces.

For more information see Rodenticide Free Ontario at [www.facebook.com/ROntario](http://www.facebook.com/ROntario)



*While we appreciate and welcome drivers from across Ontario, we currently have a shortage in Markham, Goderich, Grey/Bruce, Caledon, Orangeville and the Oshawa to Kingston corridor*



# The Owl Foundation

4117 21<sup>st</sup> 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](http://www.theowlfoundation.ca)

[owlmail@sympatico.ca](mailto: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*