

# RIVER RAISIN RAPTOR CENTER

A newsletter with some of the interesting doings in the world of raptor rehabilitation  
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**By Dody Wyman**

## A look at 2000

We had a really good year. Lots of great support, interesting birds and fun projects. Thanks to a successful year-end fund raising effort, we finished the year in the black. Our operating budget (not including new caging) grew to over \$5,000 which includes everything from veterinarian care to equipment and supplies, to training and transportation.

We had 49 critters come through the doors. These included 32 raptors, 15 song birds, one squirrel, and one turtle. The turtle had been hit by a car and after consultation with our turtle advisor, Paul McCormick, we patched the shell and released it. Most of the songbirds and the squirrel we transferred to other rehabilitators.

Among the raptors, perhaps the most interesting one was a short-eared owl. This species is listed as endangered in Michigan. Some very caring people near Blissfield found this bird, unable to fly. X-ray showed some very interesting history for this bird. He was shot some time ago and still has three pellets in him, one of which had broken his leg. Somehow he managed to survive in the wild and the leg healed. What a shame that he was later hit by a car which broke his corcoid bone, a major flight bone near his collarbone. The break was quite bad, and he continues to recuperate in the clinic. We are very hopeful that he'll get yet another chance to live in the wild.

Our educational programs also grew during the year. We presented the birds at twelve programs reaching a total of about 1,000 people. It is always so rewarding to see the look in people's eyes as they get their first close-up look at a bird of prey. It is particularly rewarding to watch children react to the Great Horned Owl. There is so much written about these birds that

youngsters easily identify with them and feel almost immediately that they "know" the bird personally.

In addition to all the hands-on work, we also received almost 100 phone calls from people with injured or orphaned wildlife in hand. We spend a lot of time teaching people on the phone about the world of wildlife. Spring brings the most calls that begin "I found a baby bird". Luckily for the birds, the vast majority are fledglings just doing what fledglings do - spending the first couple of days out of the nest on or near the ground. They look helpless and abandoned, but the parents are protecting and feeding them until they perfect their flight skills.

## New people

I was delighted to have Adrienne Malley agree to join our small board of directors. Adrienne and I have worked together on and off for many years on the wildlife rehabilitation front. She has wonderful, fresh ideas which she very willingly shares and is very knowledgeable about rehabilitation.

I want to also introduce Kathy Judge as our newly appointed Assistant Director. Kathy lives "just down the road".



Last summer, without having yet met me, she was searching for a place to learn about wildlife rehabilitation. Imagine her surprise to find a facility "just up the road"! Imagine *my* surprise to have a neighbor who has exactly what it takes and who truly "gets it" when it comes to wildlife and rehab. Kathy has come to a couple of presentations with me and is very comfortable in

front of groups of people. The birds are very relaxed with her and happy to be on her glove. It is a real pleasure to have Kathy be a very important part of River Raisin Raptor Center!

### **Big thanks**

We are very grateful to Animal Kingdom Veterinary Hospital in Ann Arbor for the wonderful work they have done for our birds. A special thanks to Dr. Valerie Pratt and Dr. Vicki Marsh for their expertise in raptor medicine and their willingness to share their time.

We are also very grateful to Kelly Veterinary Clinic in Adrian for being such close partners in getting sick or injured wildlife to appropriate rehabilitators. Debbie Lakatos, licensed veterinary technician, is particularly knowledgeable about wildlife. This clinic serves the Lenawee County area very well.

### **Trouper**



Many of you know Trouper, our non-releasable red-tailed hawk. She's had a particularly tough couple of months this winter. In early January, she somehow injured her knee, which later pooled with blood.

An injury of this sort is practically unheard of in wild raptors, and so it took Dr. Pratt some time before she discovered the reason for Trouper's unwillingness to put any weight on one leg. Even after knowing what the problem is, it's been a very slow, long haul to recovery. We're not there yet, but we're slowly going in the right direction. It will be another couple of months before Trouper is back to her old self and ready to meet the public again. Her knee needs to heal, and then she needs to have some time to learn to trust me again. For the last two months, coming out of her cage has generally meant fear and pain for her. We'll get back to a good, trusting relationship again with time.

### **A bit about permits and wildlife rehabilitation**

Most people are unaware of the permits that are required in order to work with native wildlife. It is illegal to have any native mammal in your possession without a written permit from the State of Michigan. It is illegal to have any native bird in your possession without also having a permit from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.

Not too long ago, these permits were given freely to most anyone wanting to "raise" an orphaned animal or bird. The only requirements then were a love of animals and a desire to work with them. Over the course of the last decade, however, the profession of wildlife rehabilitation has progressed to much more of a science. There is one national and one international organization devoted entirely to furthering the skills and professionalism of rehabilitation. It is now expected that wildlife rehabilitators will not only network with each other, but will also attend continuing education workshops and conferences.

That said, it is a wonderfully rewarding experience to help wildlife in need. If anyone reading this would like to pursue rehabilitation, please contact me. I have a brief informational brochure I'd be happy to send you which will get you started in the right direction! There are also two great web sites about wildlife rehabilitation: [iwrc-online.org](http://iwrc-online.org) from the International Wildlife Rehabilitation Council, and [nwrwildlife.org](http://nwrwildlife.org) from the National Wildlife Rehabilitation Association.

### **A bit about funding**

Many people think that wildlife rehabilitation is funded in part by money from the Department of Natural Resources, or the State of Michigan, or the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. In fact, there is no funding from any of these sources. Wildlife rehabilitation is expensive. As a non-profit organization, we do a lot of fund raising. Wildlife in need does not come to us with insurance. It is because caring people open their wallets, and donate goods and services that we are able to continue to help wildlife.

## Projects

Speaking of donating services, we're looking for someone capable and willing to build a couple of indoor hospital cages to house injured or sick birds while in confinement. We're also looking for someone to build traveling boxes for three of our educational birds to use when going to programs. We'll supply all the materials and most of the design.

### Flight cage update

All of the 34 panels (each 12 feet by 8 feet) are built, stacked up, and ready to be put together. As soon as spring rolls around, we'll get the ground leveled, and have a couple of work-party days to get them bolted together. It will be really exciting to see it take shape. Then on goes the roof and we should hopefully have the first bird in it by the end of the summer.

### Adventure!

Mid-February, we received a call about a red-tailed hawk near Manchester that had a broken leg. The bird was flying well, but had one leg dangling. This bird is a juvenile - she doesn't have the red tail that comes in after the first year. An intriguing thing about this bird is that she is wearing an official Bird Banding Laboratory silver band. It was quite an adventure trying to trap this bird, and took Kathy and me well over a week to accomplish. She came to one of the traps and was caught briefly, but then managed to escape. Darn!! We then set a different kind of trap and succeeded in catching her the next day. The bird's broken leg has begun to heal, and the outlook is good. We'll give her a few weeks of quiet and then begin to exercise her and get her back out to the

wild. The entire neighborhood had been watching the hawk - and watching our antics as we tried to outsmart the bird. We are known as "The Hawk Ladies" and have thoroughly enjoyed talking with many people about hawks, falconry, trapping, and raptors. The bander who banded her hasn't submitted his/her report to the Bird Banding Lab yet, so we will have to wait a bit to learn of her history.

### Wish List

**\$\$\$\$** We are beginning construction of a new cage to house a hoped-for peregrine falcon. We have applied for a permit to acquire a peregrine as an educational bird. My son in NY state (also a rehabber) has a non-releasable one that we would love to have transferred to us. There is much paper work we need to go through, and permits and permissions from many different agencies. We didn't budget for this cage, so any contributions earmarked for this would be greatly welcomed and recognized with a thank you plaque on the cage.

**Centrifuge** We are trying to find a hematocrit type centrifuge so that we can begin to do some of our own simple blood work to help with triage and diagnosis.

**Incubator** We would love to have a human type infant incubator for those birds that are starving or severely injured. Being able to control temperature and humidity can make a huge difference in recovery.

**\$\$\$\$** Of course we are always looking for donations to meet all the other expenses - educational programs, vet bills, cage maintenance, transportation, staff training etc.

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**100% of your tax deductible donations go "to the birds".**

Please put toward peregrine cage

Please put to any good use "for the birds"

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**Thanks heaps!!!**