

# Medina Raptor Center

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Fall 2005

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## Dear Friends,

It has been a very busy summer. We have already seen over 270 new patients this year. In June alone, we treated 120 patients of all kinds. Everything from hummingbirds and baby bunnies to Peregrines, Eagles and Osprey have come through the Center. I am officially calling this the year of the Peregrine and the Rabbit.

We received an award from the Osprey Watch of SouthEastern Michigan. This organization was impressed with our work to heal an Osprey that was illegally shot. The bird was successfully banded and released in September.

As always, I couldn't achieve the mission of rescue, rehabilitation and release without your ongoing support. Thank you for everything.

## Educational Birds

We have spent a lot of time training educational birds this summer. Four of the training graduates are joining our educational staff. We transferred three graduates to other facilities – including Cincinnati, Louisville, and the Cleveland Museum of Natural History. More birds are nearly ready to graduate – Havok, a male Peregrine Falcon will move to Carlisle Reservation in Lorain County Metro Parks, Gandaulf, a Turkey Vulture, and Half Pint, a male Peregrine Falcon, will transfer to another facility once paperwork is completed. Gennie, a female Peregrine Falcon, will transfer to Minnesota Raptor Center for post-graduate training prior to release.

Now let's meet our new educational staff – Sky, Pitt Stop, Aurora, and Mischief. Sky, a Red Tail Hawk, joins Lazarus to show everyone how beautiful a Red Tail can be. Sky was hit by a car and still has some head trauma. But Sky loves programs. She can be the center of attention for an entire day and outlast several handlers.

Pitt Stop, a female Anatum Peregrine Falcon, has been with us for two years. Pitt Stop was born in Pittsburgh but hit a building in downtown Cleveland. The vet has determined that Pitt Stop

can not be released. You are going to be surprised at the size difference in size between Pitt Stop and Victory.

Aurora, a Barred Owl, originally came to us with West Nile Virus. She was conditioned and released last April. Within three weeks, she tangled with a car. We know she was doing fine hunting because she was healthy and well fed. The second accident causes a partial loss of sight. So Aurora joined others birds for educational training.



## Aurora, Out for a Stroll

Mischief, an Eastern Screech Owl, came in last December as a first year bird having been hit by a car. She was conditioned with other Screech Owls over the winter. We tried to release her in April but she didn't have the ability to sustain good flight. We tried more conditioning but Mischief didn't have the muscle mass to fly. Mischief lives up to her name in many ways. In traveling to programs, she does somersaults around her perch. So we have to untangle her before we can get her out of the carrier. Her latest stunt is perching on the post above her door. That makes it tricky going into her cage.

We just completed permanent caging for Mischief, Aurora, Aspen and Pitt Stop. There was a moving party over the Labor Day weekend. You should have seen Mischief's eyes when she saw her big new cage. The birds are settling in nicely. Not to

worry, we didn't forget a cage for Sky – she shares a large cage with Lazarus.

### **Summary of Rehabilitation Activities**

It was a very busy summer with all the nestlings without parents and other animals getting into trouble. In the summer, we see lots of songbirds – everything from very young birds without feathers to the fledglings. We also have to adjust to preparing lots of different foods for the songbirds. Not all songbirds will eat a diet of worms – they eat everything from fruit to seeds to insects. So meal time can be a challenge to make sure that each bird gets the right food. For the very young birds, we have to hand-feed them unless we are lucky enough to have a surrogate parent.

Once the birds can eat on their own, we have to give them room to fly. At one point, we had four songbirds in a small flight cage. It was so cute to see two Cedar Waxwings perched on the same branch as a Robin and a Blue Jay. Part of the conditioning is to provide them with natural food so they learn how to find their own food.



### **Nighthawk Waiting for Food**

We had two little Nighthawks for a few weeks. These were an interesting little bird to deal with. They are completely insectivores and used to catching their prey on the wing. So we had to hold out meal worms and wax worms for them to fly to. The two birds were successfully released into a flock of Nighthawks. They were last seen heading south with the flock.

In the last newsletter, we told you that Bandit, Akron's male Peregrine Falcon, was recovering

with us. We also treated two of his chicks when the new male drove them from the nest. The chicks were placed in new foster nests. Bandit was released in Lorain County on July 6. He very quickly made his way back to Akron and took over his nest from a new male interloper. We got a scare when we got a call a few weeks later of a downed Falcon at Bandit's location. It turned out to be a Kestrel who was released after a few weeks of treatment.

As we move into fall and winter, things get quieter at the Raptor Center. We released lots of animals in July, August and September as they gained the strength and skills to survive. Now instead of so many very young animals who need our help, we see the first-year birds who are having trouble surviving on their own. A Red Tail Hawk just came in with puncture wounds on his legs from tangling with an opossum that was too big for him.

### **Your Support Has Been Wonderful**

Your response to my request for maintenance help has been tremendous. It is so nice to get things fixed like doors that are sticking, old wood replaced on cages, locks adjusted, etc.

I want to say a special thank you to the anonymous donors like the folks who put money in the donation box at our programs. A doctor is kind enough to regularly have cases of paper towels delivered to us. We have others who donate game including last year's deer roasts. All of this helps so much.

I certainly appreciate your comments on our newsletter. We are trying to keep you informed as well as providing information about wildlife. Feedback on what you would like to see in the newsletter is gladly welcomed.

### **Educational Outreach**

We provide programs to churches, 4-H, and scouting groups, senior centers, libraries and other community groups. We also enjoy a very special partnership with the Medina County Park system.

### **Public Appearances and Upcoming Events**

During the summer, we spent most of our time rehabilitating birds. But with the start of school, our "feathered ambassadors" hit the road. Of

course, we have four new “staff” that are eager to meet the public. Sky, Aspen, Aurora, and Mischief are getting to be old pros at programs. Pitt Stop will make a special debut of her own.



### **Pitt Stop in Training**

Our “educational staff” consists of three teams: the Owls (Sierra, Mischief, Phantom, Eclipse, Aurora, Bumbles, Aspen, and Cricket); the Hawks (Lazarus, Sky and Orion); and the Others (Matilda the Turkey Vulture along with Victory and Pitt Stop, the Peregrine Falcons). Some of the educational programs and public appearances we have upcoming include:

- Wrap for the Raptors at Sieberling Nature Center on Dec. 17 at 1 pm. (Public is welcome)
- Keep checking the Calendar of Events on the web site for upcoming programs.

The fees that we charge for our programs are used to support the costs of our rehabilitation efforts. Many of the groups we see also provide us with donations of supplies for the rehabilitation center. Thanks to everyone who, in big ways and small help support our efforts. If you know of a group that might be interested in a program, please contact us for fees and schedules.

### **Highlights of the Educational Outreach Programs**

We had fun at a wet and cold Chatham Fall Foliage tour. It’s great to watch the expression when a person realizes they are seeing a live bird. Of course, so many folks think that all owls are large like a Great Horned Owl. So they are quite pleasantly surprised to see a Screech Owl or Saw-Whet Owl. I’ve even heard Cricket being compared to a stuffed little Beanie Baby. These folks have never watched that little guy go after his food.

### **A Volunteer’s Day**

You hear a lot about how great the volunteers are and how much they contribute to our mission. I thought you would like to know some of the things that a volunteer might do on any given day.

First and foremost, everyone has to get food and water. If there are songbirds, we have to make sure they each get a diet that meets their needs. This can be anything from seed to insects to fruit. Even more fun is hand-feeding the babies – baby birds, baby mammals – they have to be individually fed. Now we move on to the raptors – we have to give the appropriate portions of mice, rats, chicks, quail or fish with maybe some donated rabbit or venison. Do you comprehend how much water has to be carried for water bowls in 50 cages? Feeding is still not done – we have to feed the rabbits, pigeons, mice and rats. All of this can take several hours in the summertime with all the babies.

Now the day can take several twists. It could be a program day – so load up display material, load up birds, drive to program, conduct the program, drive back and unload. It could be a calm day where we have to clean out empty cages and rebed them with pine needles. Do you know how many bags of pine needles are needed for a 12x20 foot cage? A LOT!!!! Some of the more experienced volunteers will take our educational birds and birds in training out for walks. They make sure that we keep track of each bird’s weight. If we get in an injured bird, volunteers will help by holding the bird while I examine the bird. They may also be called upon to hold a bird that needs to be force fed – doesn’t sound bad until you realize that they may be holding a Great Horned Owl or Red Tailed Hawk.

Day still isn't over – dishes have to be washed, hospital area needs to be swept out and food prepared for the night feedings. But there's even more – records!!!!!! We have to keep track of all the patients that we see, where they came from, what cage they are in, date of release or other disposition, what programs we conducted and what birds we took to each program, plans for rehabilitation of each bird, maintain the mailing list for the newsletter so you are sure to get your copy, etc.

It seems that the work never stops. But I think you understand why I truly appreciate all the time dedicated by my volunteers. If you are interested in joining this dedicated group, contact me.

### **Educational Focus: Osprey**



#### **The “Osprey Do”**

We learned so much about Osprey in treating and conditioning the Osprey this year. The full story about our Osprey can be found on [www.owsem.org](http://www.owsem.org) or as a link from our home page. Please take the time to read the story by Annette Piechowski which includes lots of photos including creancing and imping.

Osprey can be found over most of the planet except the Arctic and Antarctica. Catching fish is the Osprey's specialty, often earning it the name of “Fish Hawk”. They hover above a potential meal and then plunge feet-first into the water, sometimes submerging themselves in the progress. An outer toe that can rotate to the back and feet that are covered in tiny spines help the Osprey grasp

slippery fish. When it clears the water's surface and starts for a suitable feeding perch, an Osprey often holds its catch so the fish's head and tail are oriented in the same direction as the bird. This reduces drag. There are reports of Ospreys attempting to catch fish that are too big and drowning because they can't free their talons from their prey.

Ospreys are a migratory bird. They don't just fly south for the winter. They fly to South America even to Chile. The Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) used transmitters on a pair of Osprey this year to track the migration. They found that the pair did not travel together but did follow very similar paths. By early October, the birds were in Brazil.

Ospreys are endangered in Ohio. ODNR had a goal of 20 nesting pair by 2007. With the transfer of birds from coastal areas, this goal was achieved in 2003. Each spring, ODNR bands the young of the nested pairs to track the birds. Incidentally, our Osprey arrived unbanded. One of the final steps before release was giving her a band.

So next summer if you are near Portage Lakes, watch for the Ospreys.

### **Educational Focus: Eastern Screech Owl**

Eastern Screech Owls are one of the most familiar owls of the southern Great Lakes region. For their size (similar in length to a Robin), they are fierce predators, taking a variety of prey, including birds much larger than themselves. The Screech Owl has the widest variety of diet of any Owl. It will eat insects, crayfish, fish, or small mammals.

Eastern Screech Owls appear in two distinct color variations – gray and red (cinnamon rufous) color morphs. While the red morph is more common to the South and the gray morph is more common to the North, it is very possible to have a red morph and a gray morph as a nested pair.

The Eastern Screech Owl does not migrate – no journey to South America for them. They stay in the same range all year round. They are cavity nesters but also adapt well to nesting boxes. The Screech Owl is adapting to human-altered landscapes and is not uncommon in the suburbs. I

have even heard of a group of Screech Owls taking advantage of a birdbath on a hot summer evening.



**Mischief, one of our Educational Screech Owls**

During the nesting season, the Screech Owl is serious defender of its territory. It will attack other animals and human who get too close to their fledged young. They have been called a “feathered cat” in the way they attack.

The Screech Owl and the Great Horned Owl are the only owls who have their ears located symmetrically. Remember, those feather sticking up aren’t really ears. The ears are located on the side of the head.

Screech Owls have two defense postures. First, they try to blend into the tree by drawing themselves up very straight and tall next to a tree branch. Secondly, they will try to intimidate predators by puffing up their feathers to three times their size. We see a lot of Screech Owls as patients. It is so funny to see this tiny little bird puff up to fill up so much space.

Watch for Screech Owls in your area. If you are near woods, you might want to find out more about placing nest boxes to encourage Screech Owls.

## Raptor Migration

Migration is a regular shift from a breeding range to a nonbreeding range. The distance involved may be relatively short or span thousands of miles. The purpose is to give the raptor the best possible conditions year-round. Some insectivorous raptors like the Kestrel will shift from insects to other foods in the winter.

The migration distance is widely varied for raptors. Tundra Peregrines from the Arctic migrate far down into South America, as do Osprey. Rough-legged Hawks leave the arctic coastal plan where they breed, but their migration takes them no further south than the northern United States.

Other raptors hardly migrate at all. The Screech Owl remains in the same range year-round. Other species are partial migrants, retreating from portions of their range while remaining resident in other portions. The pale Prairie Merlins of the Northern Plains mostly migrate into northern Mexico but some stay put through the winter.

There are complicated migratory patterns in Red-Tailed Hawks, Cooper’s Hawks, and Kestrels in a phenomenon known as “leapfrogging”. In this pattern, northern birds migrate over and beyond resident populations.

Migratory patterns are not cast in stone. As hydroelectric dams and warm water discharges from power plants have increased in number, keeping large stretches of rivers ice-free, Bald Eagles have begun to winter much further north than in decades past. Garbage dumps in some areas have permitted Turkey Vultures to stay further north than they once did.

### **Your tax-deductible contribution will help support the work of the Medina Raptor Center:**

Amount: \$20.00 <input type="checkbox"/> \$50.00 <input type="checkbox"/> \$100.00 <input type="checkbox"/>
Other <input type="checkbox"/>
Name <input type="text"/>
Address <input type="text"/>
Please mail to:
<b>P. O. Box 74</b>
<b>Spencer, OH 44275</b>

***Ask us about our Adopt-a-Bird Program. It makes a unique gift. Or visit our Web Site under Educational Programs for more information.***

The **Adopt-A-Bird** program allows an individual(s), families, organizations, teachers, and classrooms to adopt one of our educational birds for one year. The adoptor receives a certificate, the center's newsletters, and a photo of their adopted bird. Your gift will help support the bird and its care for one year. Remember, all donations go toward the purchase of food and medication for the Center's patients and permanent residents. Please visit the web site for more information on becoming a foster parent to one of our marvelous birds. On the web site, you will find various pictures of our birds, the individual bird's history and some facts

about the species. We will be adding more pictures as we go along so check back often.

The adoption fees are as follows:

Saw-Whet Owl (Cricket)	\$50.00
Screech Owl (Sierra)	\$50.00
Screech Owl (Mischief)	\$50.00
Barn Owl (Phantom)	\$75.00
Barred Owl (Eclipse)	\$100.00
Barred Owl (Aurora)	\$100.00
Red-Tailed Hawk (Lazarus)	\$100.00
Red-Tailed Hawk (Sky)	\$100.00
Rough Legged Hawk (Orion)	\$100.00
Turkey Vulture (Mattie)	\$200.00
Great Horned Owl (Bumbles)	\$200.00
Great Horned Owl (Aspen)	\$200.00
Peregrine Falcon (Victory)	\$300.00
Peregrine Falcon (Pitt Stop)	\$300.00

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