



Spring 2009

Ljordan@medinaraptorcenter.org
(330) 667-2386

www.medinaraptorcenter.org

FROM THE DIRECTOR,

2008 was quite a year. We saw more than 420 more birds than ever before. We met some new friends and volunteers and had some old friends come back to help again. We had two wonderful volunteer senior interns from Hiram College who helped us out tremendously and we wish them well on their new adventure in life. We were able to release 180 birds back to the wild again and have sent two birds on to become educational ambassadors for other facilities.

We received a generous grant from the Haslinger Foundation to repair and replace some of our old flight cages. This will be a major project taking place this Spring and Summer. We also had a remodeling job accomplished by one of our donors who is also a cabinet maker. We now have a beautiful new cabinet and laminate countertop with a double sink for our food prep room, as well as a new food preparation table. Now it is actually fun to do the dishes.

We had a generous gift from the Wild Bird Center in Akron and they have also agreed to put a donation box in their store for us. We also had some wonderful generous donations from our wonderful supporters. We have also added Pay Pal to our website so now our donors can easily donate to us via the internet. We have also added a way for our supporters to get their newsletters online and save some trees and ink.

Last month we had one of our favorite Peregrine Falcons return to us from The Cleveland Museum of Natural History. He was no longer needed so they offered him back to the Center. We were thrilled to have him back. He has joined our educational staff and will be doing programs soon.

Check out wild4ever.com website for their June 13 at 10am Walk on the Wild-Side Pet Walk and our Medina Raptor Center website for more details on the July 12th fundraiser at the Eagles Lodge in Medina.

Thank you all for your generous support and your kindness.

Thank you,
Laura Jordan

Tundra Ghost, Arctic, Great White, Ermine, White Terror of the North

"What's in a name? That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet?" That holds true for the well-scripted Snowy Owl; a large diurnal white owl of the upper tundra; the official bird of Quebec, Canada. MRC would like to introduce to you our Highland Tundra Owl or Snowy Owl, "Ella". We call her Ella since the Snowy Owl frequents Ellesmere Island, a part of Queen Elizabeth Islands in the Qikiqtaaluk Region of the Canadian territory of Nunavut.

Ella came to the center with a head trauma, probably from a collision with a car. She was totally rehabilitated and released in great condition only to return once more having hit a power line. Her injury has prevented her from being released so now she has become a wonderful addition to our educational program avian family.

They are a diurnal owl, meaning they are active during the day, they have a round head, black bill, yellow eyes and heavily-feathered feet. The males are almost all white with up to three tail bars while the females and juveniles are overall barred or speckled and can have four to six tail bars. Adults can grow up to 20-27" tall with a wingspan of 54 to 65 inches. The females can weigh about 4 pounds while the males are less. Wild Snowy Owls live at least nine and a half years and in captivity can live upwards to about 35 years. The Snowy enjoys the smaller prey such as mice, squirrels, rats, rabbits but have known to also feast on ducks, geese, pheasants, coots and the occasional fish.



Our "Hats Off" To Our Newest Volunteers And Some Veterans

An organization such as this would not survive without the dedication of volunteers and MRC would like to acknowledge the following individuals who have recently joined the Medina Raptor Center's long list: Janet Alexis, Shannon Benedick, Karen Clark, Susan Stone and Glenn Feldhake and Gabie Fuller. And to Karen Sandstrom and Claire Weldon – welcome back.



Springtime with Raptors

During the fall and winter, most raptors are solitary birds but spring brings with it courtship rituals marked by aerial displays and distinctive calling among the birds. Eagles will fly high up in the sky, lock talons and spiral downwards. The female is always the one who decides which mate she will take for the mating season. Then the female must decide on her nest.

Raptors have a variety of nesting sites. Snowy Owls and Turkey Vultures nest on the ground. Some Turkey Vultures have been found to nest in old buildings. The hawks prefer stick nests in trees. Peregrine Falcons have adapted to use the ledges of tall buildings or bridges. The larger owls such as the Great Horned Owl use stick nests while the smaller Screech Owls, Saw-Whet Owls, Barred Owls and Kestrels are cavity nesters using tree holes created by woodpeckers or other birds.



While song birds will build a new nest each year, raptors will usually return to the same area each year. They will add to the nest with new sticks and other materials each nesting season. The largest nest recorded was an eagle's nest in Vermilion, Ohio. It was 9.5 feet wide and 20 feet deep. The usual size of an eagle's nest is between five to eight feet wide. The nests of hawks range from 1 ½ to 2 ½ feet wide.

However, Great Horned Owls use the nests built by other birds or squirrels and do not add any materials to their nests. Since the Great Horned Owl is the first bird to nest, it has its choice of hawk or eagle nests.

The females settle into their nest to begin laying eggs. The Great Horned Owls are the earliest nesters in Ohio and can begin laying their 2-3 eggs as early as mid January. Ohio Eagles can also start their nesting cycle as early as mid January, but can actually lay their eggs up to mid April. Eagles can lay from one to three eggs, with two being the most common size of an eagle's clutch. The Barred Owl begins to lay their 2-3 eggs in March. They are followed by the Turkey Vulture, Osprey, Red Tail Hawk and Red Shouldered Hawk in April. The Kestrel, Screech Owl and Saw-Whet Owls lay their eggs in May. Barn Owls can have more than one nesting cycle in a year with clutch size ranging from 2 to 7 eggs each if the prey is plentiful. Turkey Vultures have two eggs each while Kestrels and Coopers Hawks will have 4-5 eggs in a year. Tiny Saw-Whet Owls lay 5-6 eggs. While hawk and falcon eggs are multi-colored, all owl eggs are white providing no protective coloring for the eggs.

The eggs are laid over many days with 1-3 days between each egg. The egg laying is tough on Kestrels whose eggs represent 11% of the female's weight. As soon as the first egg is laid, the female begins incubating the eggs unlike ducks and geese who wait until all eggs are laid to begin incubating. Because the eggs were laid over a period of days, the chicks hatch over a period of days. A nest of newborns will look like a series of stair steps. But within a month, all chicks are approximately the same size.

After the incubation period of 27-43 days, the chicks begin to chip out of their shells. Every hatchling is armed with an egg tooth – a hard sharp projection on the tip of its upper beak that it uses to free itself from the shell. The chick must wiggle, kick, squirm, stretch and chip its way to freedom without any help from its mother. The power for its first pecks comes from a specialized hatching muscle on the back of its neck. Later the muscle atrophies and the egg tooth fall off in about a week.

The chicks are born with a uniform coat of whitish down. Within a few weeks, this natal down is shed and replaced by a second thicker coat of down that is distinctive for each species.

The nestling period lasts anywhere from about three and a half weeks for Sharp-Shinned Hawks but the average for medium size raptors like Red-Tailed Hawks is five and a half to six and a half weeks. The down gives way to flight and contour feather. The last areas to retain down are the head and the neck.

Fledging marks the chick's departure from the nest and the beginning of its independence. Leaving the nest may not even require flight; many raptor chicks become "branchers", working their way among the limbs of the nest tree, but returning to the nest at night. You may see many raptors down on the ground during the period, especially Screech Owls, Great Horned Owls and Red Tail Hawks. Cooper's Hawk's won't always take care of their young on the ground because of the vulnerability of being attacked by a predator such as a dog or coyote. Mothers have to encourage their young to return to a high branch on their own. Hawks have no way of picking up their young like a dog or cat.

The fledglings learn to fly and to hunt. The parents continue to provide food for the youngsters as they are learning. Gradually the chicks roam farther and farther from the nest area and become more proficient hunters. The adults may actively chase the chicks away, although most of the time, the parents simply cease providing food. This period from fledging to independence can be as short as two weeks for Kestrels to well into autumn. Great Horned Owls stay with their parents the longest, sometimes well into the fall.

Once the chicks have fledged and gone out on their own, the first year of life is the most difficult for the raptor due to the many challenges they face. It is estimated that only one out of three chicks survives the first year. Those that do survive their first year go on to live their life in the wild and raise new young of their own.

There's No Place Like Home Depot

On a rainy Saturday night at 9:00 p.m., three volunteers from Medina Raptor Center drove 50 miles to Lorain to rescue a Barred Owl that had flown into the Home Depot store on Leavitt Rd. The bird had been in the store for three days. We tried to contact several closer facilities but no one was able to help this unfortunate bird. It took about four hours but we were successful in capturing the bird and bringing it to safety.

The Home Depot crew was helpful and glad the owl was captured safely and was not injured. He was starving and was extremely dehydrated but we are hopeful that he will be released into the wild after rehabilitation.



Wildlife Without Lead



We have seen increasing cases of lead poisoning in the raptors being brought to us, especially the Bald Eagle. Raptors feed on water birds, fish, and game left over from hunters and become routinely exposed to lead. Being on the top of the food chain, raptors, like us, are susceptible to the effects of lead poisoning. As a toxic substance moves up the food chain, each organism experiences a higher concentration than the organism below it. A single lead sinker or a few buck shot can be lethal.

Birds effected from lead poisoning act very strangely. They often have difficulty flying and are affected by tremors. This affects their daily life with eating, nesting, caring for their young and reproducing. They become weak and are vulnerable to the elements and predators. The picture here is an eagle that "fell out of the sky" on a hunters property in rural Ohio. It is presently being rehabilitated here at the Medina Raptor Center.

What can we do to help? For you fisherman, sinkers and jigs do not have to be made of lead. Inexpensive and safe alternatives to lead fishing weights are made from non-toxic materials like steel, tin, ceramic and bismuth. Discard old lead sinkers and jigs properly. Make sure you ask your local sporting goods store to expand their selection of non-lead alternatives.

Hunters can help in a lot of ways, also. There are alternative ammunitions out there that work just as well and even better than lead ones do. Collect the spent ammunition and any meat that may contain lead. Bury the carcass and any remains of the animal so scavengers do not find them. And spread the word around to other hunters about the dangers of lead and ask for non-lead alternatives from your ammunition dealers.

If everyone pitches in, this issue of lead poisoning can be eliminated in our wildlife.

The Low Down on Deer

In 2008 the estimated white-tailed deer population was 700,000. Approximately 300,000 fawn deer are born annually in Ohio. Statewide, there was a total of 26,304 reported deer/vehicle accidents in 2007. In 2007, a total of 1,677 crop damage complaints were received by the Division of Wildlife. Therefore the Division of Wildlife has said there will be no rehabilitation of White-tailed Deer fawns in 2009.



What if you come across an orphan? Leave it alone . . . it probably is not an orphan. Adults often leave fawns alone in a secluded spot when they are off feeding. If you have taken a fawn from the wild because you didn't see an adult near by PUT IT BACK! Then stay away from the area; she may not return until dark to retrieve her young. The fawn's survival drastically decreases if you interfere. Orphan fawns will often be adopted by a doe with only one fawn. Rehabilitators will have to return the fawn to the area it was taken, also.

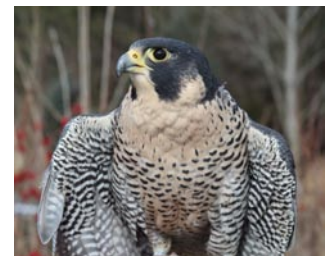
Native wildlife is legally protected and it is illegal for anyone without a permit to raise a wild animal.

What is the Difference Between a Hawk and a Falcon?



One question that has been coming up at numerous programs lately is "What is the difference between a hawk and a falcon?"

Falcons are a specialized type of bird that are very fast fliers with long narrow wings and kill their prey, other birds, in flight while hawks, with shorter and wider wings, mainly eat mammals on the ground.



A falcon's beak has a notch on it used for breaking the neck of it's prey while the hawk's beak is simpler with a smooth curve used to tear into it's prey. Falcons fly very fast. The peregrine falcon, which is the fastest bird in the world, can reach speeds of over 200 mph in a dive. Hawks tend to fly much slower and glide with each stroke of their wings.

Hawks are usually larger than most falcons. Falcons have longer talons for grasping their prey and have black coloring under their eyes to aide in their vision by reflecting sunlight.

How You Can Help . . . Sponsorship Programs



Want to become directly involved in the rehabilitation of injured and orphaned birds? You can by becoming a sponsor of one of our seventeen program birds. Our program birds consist of the following:

the Owls (Mischief, Aurora, Aspen and Cricket); the Hawks (Lazarus, Sky, Red, Cloud and Orion); the Others (Matilda, the Turkey Vulture; Henrietta the Great Blue Heron; Victory and Pitt Stop, the Peregrine Falcons and Feathers, the Kestrel and Migisi, the Eagle) and let us not forget our retired program birds (Sierra, the Screech Owl and Victoria the Barred Owl). For a \$50.00 annual sponsorship, you will receive a certificate of sponsorship with a photo of the bird of your choice. For a \$100.00 annual sponsorship, you will receive a certificate of sponsorship, a photo of the bird of your choice except the eagle and will have the opportunity to come to the Medina Raptor Center to be photographed with the adopted bird. For a

\$200.00 annual sponsorship you will receive a certificate of sponsorship and a photo with our eagle, Migisi.

Visit us on the web at www.medinaraptorcenter.org and view our wonderful program birds. Your gift will go toward the purchase of food and medications for your bird. All contributions are tax-deductible. By sponsoring one of our program birds for yourself, your group or school, or as a special gift for someone else, you are personally involved in our rehabilitation and educational efforts. You can download a sponsorship form from our website for your convenience.

Medina Raptor Center

P.O. Box 74

Spencer, Ohio 44275