



On mended wing

■ Injured barn owl rescued and nursed back to health.

By RITA BOYD

BERLIN, Ohio — "Home to roost" is more than an expression for a barn owl that was recently released on a Holmes County farm.

Earlier this spring, the owl was injured in a collision with a vehicle.

A concerned local farmer made the connections to have the owl taken to the Medina Raptor Center, even though he feared the owl might not survive.

Two surgeries. At the center, it was determined that the owl had a broken leg.

The leg was set, but a week later it didn't seem to be healing properly. Surgery was performed and a pin was placed in the broken leg.

Weeks of healing was followed by another surgery to remove the pin.

According to Laura Jordan of the Medina Raptor Center, as soon as the pin was removed, the owl began using the leg and exercising his talons.

At that point, she felt much more confident about his recovery and eventual release back into the wild.

Band tells story. From the leg band on the injured owl, it was determined that the owl had been nesting in a box on Paul Boyd's farm in Holmes County (about 2 miles from where it was injured).



(Rita Boyd photos)

Counterclockwise from top left: Tom Henry, a retired wildlife supervisor from the Ohio Division of Wildlife who holds a permit to band owls privately, rebanded and supervised the release of a barn owl recovering from a broken leg and two surgeries. Laura Jordan, from the Medina Raptor Center, helped nurse the barn owl back to health.

Observers of the box had noted that the male owl was no longer around, but until they were notified about the injured owl, they didn't know why.

By necessity, the female owl would leave the nest — and the eggs and young chicks — for extended periods of time to hunt.

Unable to successfully incubate the eggs and care for the chicks herself, the nest was eventually lost.

Two other nests on the same farm were also lost, presumably because the same male was working all three nest boxes.

Ready for release. Once the injured owl was fully recovered, the likely spot for his release was back on the farm where he had been nesting.

On a beautiful summer evening, the owl was rebanded (the original band had been removed in order to



properly care for the broken leg) by Tom Henry, retired wildlife supervisor from the Ohio Division of Wildlife who still maintains a permit to private band birds, and released.

Without hesitation, the owl swooped around the side of the barn, through an open window, and perched on a rafter in the barn.

He was home!

Update: Since his release a few weeks ago, the owl has been observed in a second barn on the farm and a barn owl has been heard on several occasions in the early morning hours.

Hopefully, he's home to stay and will be nesting again soon.