

MEDINA RAPTOR CENTER



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Winter/Spring Newsletter 2014

Established in 1990, The Medina Raptor Center is a leading raptor rehabilitation facility in Ohio. Our purpose is to rescue, rehabilitate and release injured and orphaned raptors. We specialize in birds of prey and treat over 400 birds each year. All receive individual attention, appropriate veterinary care, physical therapy, training and conditioning before returning them to the wild.

MRC is a non-profit 501©(3) organization and permitted by State and Federal Agencies. We depend solely on volunteers and there is no paid staff. We operate solely on the donations of time and funds.

News From The Mews

This winter has been extremely difficult on Ohio's birds as well as Ohio's citizens. Many pelagic (northern) water birds have been caught in a fatal situation because Lake Erie has frozen completely. Our songbirds have been stressed by extreme low temperatures and winds making their existence very precarious. Even migratory swans, trumpeters and tundras, have been found starving to death throughout the state. I think this winter we will lose a lot of owls and hawks due to inability to hunt and maintain weight during this critical time.

I became one of the wounded landing myself in the hospital after suffering a fall on the ice. I have been unable to be at the raptor center for the last 4 weeks.



Fortunately my wonderful daughter is covering for me so we can stay open and continue to help the injured birds coming in. I will be rejoining our volunteers at the center in June. This brings me to talk about how amazing the other wildlife facilities have been during this difficult time for me, they have helped us out by taking birds and offering assistance wherever needed. It is wonderful feeling to know that we can all work together.

Laura Jordan, Director

P.S. (Our WISH LIST)

Some of the items we are in need of are: forever stamps, gas cards, gift cards from office product stores, Home Depot gift cards, computer paper, bird seed-cardinal mix for rehabbing songbirds, power washer to clean cages, donation for raptor transport carriers for educational programs(\$300) each, donations to send one of our volunteers to IWRC in Cincinnati (\$100.00), 4-wheel drive gator-type vehicle to take food out to feeding stations so released young raptors can have food support while learning to take care of themselves in the wild and to assist volunteers to managing bluebird trails and keeping trails open and clear for school programs.

Thank you so much!





IRRUPTION OF SNOWYS

The mid- and northeastern US is currently experiencing an unusually large invasion of Snowy Owls, known as an irruption. Snowy Owls usually winter in Canada but this winter has been unusually cold, affecting owls' food supply. Seeing one or two farther south is normal, but seven, thirteen, fifty? This year sightings have ranged from Maine to northern Florida, and as far inland as Indiana and North Dakota! North Carolina birding enthusiasts have spotted their first two Snowy Owls in thirteen years and one was spotted in Bermuda (which has only ever recorded thirteen). Washington DC avidly followed the movements of their visitor until it was hit by a bus in January. (Don't worry, she was immediately taken to the Smithsonian National Zoo and is now doing well at City Wildlife, a DC rehab facility.)

Snowy Owls are causing a stir outside the US, too. Over 300 of the owls were spotted in Newfoundland during the weekend of December 7- 8th. They're hanging out on the oil rigs of Cape Race and on fishing boats at sea off the Grand Banks and southern Newfoundland. A few of the birds even travelled from NYC to the Netherlands during December on a container ship.

So why so many this year? Ornithologists aren't entirely sure but there are a few suspected factors. A high lemming population last summer probably supported a successful breeding season for the owls. Irruptions tend to happen in four-year cycles, right in line with the four-year boom or bust lemming cycle. Once the weather gets cold (and boy, has it been cold this year!) there's not enough food for the enlarged owl population and they move south in search of food. Snowy Owls are highly mobile birds. In addition to winter movements, they may move over 1000 km across the Arctic in summer to locate areas with enough prey for their young. Where prey is abundant, Snowy Owls may nest in fairly high density. Scientists are taking advantage of the irruption but netting, banding and releasing Snowy Owls in unprecedented numbers.

In addition to rodents like lemmings, Snowy Owls eat lots of birds, especially small water birds. Many owls on the Great Lakes and Atlantic coast prey heavily on water birds, flying out over the water to hunt them, especially in the evening. Their preferred habitat is a large open area such as grasslands or sand dunes. Loss of natural habitats to human development has driven them to find new stomping grounds, and airports seem ideal.

Soon the weather will warm up, the food sources in the Arctic Circle will stabilize, and the owls will head north again. They'll be back, but we can't predict when the next mass invasion will occur!
(Some information obtained by eBird online).

Very Special Friendships



Winton and Izzadora sailed proudly on our lakes for five years. Both were friendly except during breeding season, then they became dangerous. Trumpeter Swans are the largest North American waterfowl.

"Izzy" was older by 16 years than Winton so this last summer she started slowing down after laying her eggs. The eggs didn't hatch and she became very depressed and we would often find her sitting alone. One morning she settled into the grass in her favorite spot and never got up again. Winton mourned for her for several days.

This was Winton's first winter alone. He did well for a while but around early February winter started taking its toll on him. The low temperatures and constant struggles with ice and geese were too much for him. We found him curled up on the shore of my daughter's lake not feeling well. So we brought him into the hospital.

At about the same time I received a male mallard duck with frostbitten toes. We named him "Bob." When Winton was starting to feel better and the mallard was able to walk again we put them together. They became very attached to each and could be found sleeping and eating together.

I then received a call about an injured female trumpeter in Upper Sandusky. When we brought her home we discovered her injuries were severe enough that she would not fly again. We hoped that she and Winton would be friends. So our new swan sits next to Winton and Bob's cage. She would like to be friends, but Winton is not interested right now. Right now he is a true friend to his little duck. I guess my planned marriage between Trumpeter Swans will depend on the blessings of a little mallard duck.





Pond Visitors

With record ice coverage on the Great Lakes, open water was in short supply over the past few months. This winter's harsh conditions brought some unique species of waterfowl to Medina Raptor Center's lake. Both of our lakes have bubblers to keep the waters open.

We enjoyed the presence of both Common and Red-breasted Mergansers. Mergansers are very large diving ducks. We had both male and female visitors of both species, offering an excellent chance to brush up on the differences. The male Common Merganser supports a bright white body with a black back and large greenish head and long red bill with a hook at the tip. The females have a grey body with a brownish head and a white chin patch along with a long orange/red bill. The Red-breasted Merganser males have a dark green bushy head with a white neck. The body is black and white with a rusty colored speckled chest and gray tail with a orange bill and red eyes. The females are mainly brown with bits of grey and black throughout the body. Common Mergansers winter in our area whereas the Red-breasted Mergansers are currently migrating north.

The Canvasback was another migrating visitor making a pit stop. The male supports a white body with black around the chest and tail end and red head. These large ducks are also migrating north.

Mixed in with our usual mob of Canada Geese and Mallards was a Bufflehead. This large-headed little duck can be seen constantly diving for food. It has a white body with black on top and a dark head with a large white patch behind the eyes. These birds winter in our area and spend the summer in Canada and parts of Alaska.

Lastly there were about four Redheads that made our lake one of their stopovers for a part of the winter season. These diving ducks are grey bodied with bright red heads and a blue beak with a black tip. Males have black tails and chest. They summer in the upper northern regions of the US and Canada.

Food Glorious Food

We received some sad news this month. Our most important source of food for our raptors Charles River Labs is closing its doors in May 2014. I feel bad for all the employees that have lost their jobs. The effect on our budget will be dramatic - Charles River has been donating food to rehabilitation centers in Ohio for 20+ years. Because of this closing we will need to purchase our food online which will increase our budget quite a bit. In 2013 we spent \$10,000 dollars on rodents for the birds. We are projecting that in 2014 we will need to spend about \$15,000 to continue to care for an estimated 420+ injured birds this year and our educational birds. You might ask why so much money? Currently, full-grown mice cost anywhere from \$.35 each plus shipping. One Great Horned Owl eats about nine mice daily to maintain a healthy weight; females eat more because they weigh more. Red-tailed Hawks and Red-shouldered Hawks eat six to eight mice daily. Smaller birds like Kestrels and Screech Owls eat 2 mice daily. There's plenty of other food we need, too – quail and chicks for accipiters and falcons, worms and insects for songbirds, fruit, and seed to name a few.



What Can We Do??

We already raise lots of mice to help us with our needs, but we can't come close to raising the amount we need. Caring and feeding mice is also expensive and labor intensive. We hope that through donations from the public and increased fundraising, we'll be able to make up the \$15,000 gap, but it's a long way to go. For those who have donated money and material in the past, THANK YOU, and please consider us again this year. Every little bit helps. To those who talk about us, THANK YOU TOO! The more people who know about our mission, the better off we are! We happily accept deer meat during the legal bow hunting season, and deer that have been hit by cars. (We do need tag information for our records when you drop off the meat. Unfortunately deer and other animals killed with lead shot are unusable since lead is poisonous to birds. Copper and steel shot will not hurt the birds.



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HOW CAN YOU HELP?

The MRC is staffed entirely by volunteers and funded solely by donations. We receive no State or Federal funding. Your generosity helps provide medication, food and housing for them.

Our wish list and Bird Sponsorship information are available online at MedinaRaptorCenter.org. Checks should be made out to The Medina Raptor Center and mailed to PO Box 74, Spencer, OH 44275.

Visit MedinaRaptorCenter.org to donate by *PayPal* also. Thank you for your support!

_____ SPONSOR A BIRD \$50
▪ Bird Name _____
▪ (SEE WEBSITE FOR BIRD'S NAMES)

_____ BALD EAGLE SPONSORSHIP \$200

_____ One Year Newsletter \$10

_____ DONATION (specify amount) _\$ _____

Name

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Contact Phone Number

