

Wildlife Rescue News

WILDLIFE-RESCUE.ORG / SUMMER 2025



Dear WRR Members,

There are many things that trigger memories. A song first heard long ago, a scent that immediately transports us back in time—we have all had these experiences that moved us to recall an important, moving, or in some way memorable moment from our past. So it was for me late one night when I sat listening to the hauntingly beautiful calls of two great horned owls. Their calls, certainly meant for each other, drifted down through the dense foliage of the trees to gently disturb the stillness of the night. As I listened, I remembered another owl from many years ago.

It was not an unusual call for Wildlife Rescue—an owl had been shot in the face and her left eye was badly damaged but still in place, which meant there could be hope for her vision. But there was other extensive damage and her left wing was broken. When I lifted her from the deep cardboard box she arrived in she seemed to have almost given up. She did not put up a fight; her long talons were bloodied as was most of the body, and there was no way to know how long ago she had been injured.

Because these were early days for WRR and we were still located on a tiny four-acre site, our accommodations for this owl were minimal. We had to

get to work on constructing rehabilitation quarters as the veterinarian worked on saving her life and left eye.

I digress a bit now but I want to tell you how we came to have this four-acre site. I owe it all to the kindness of a wonderful woman, Betsy Damon. I had helped her with some raccoons who were living in her coach house. It was necessary to make several visits to her home to help with repelling techniques. She was always so gracious and loved the very concept of WRR and over our weeks of working on her resident raccoon family she grew more and more familiar

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OUR MISSION

To rescue, rehabilitate, and release native wildlife, and to provide sanctuary, individualized care, and a voice for other animals in need.

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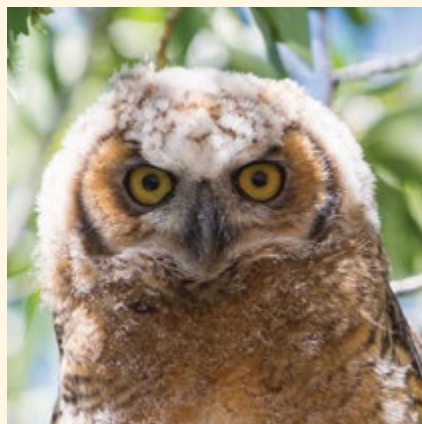
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Lynn's Letter

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with Wildlife Rescue and all it strove to accomplish. She too felt strongly about ensuring the safety of the raccoons and working with her was a pleasure.

One day she sent me home with a quiche recipe written on an index card. I did not pay much attention to it as I had little time for cooking those days. But a few days later when I gave it a closer look I noticed there was a paper clip attached to the card. I removed it and a check fell to the floor. It was a check for ten thousand dollars. To me, and to this fledgling organization, that



was like a million. Betsy's kindness enabled WRR to purchase four acres that would become our first sanctuary. There was a small, old rock house on the property where I could live and, in the coming months, with the invaluable help of volunteers, we constructed several wood-framed cages for the smaller mammals. And now we had to build a temporary home for this owl, if we could only manage to save her life.

After a lengthy surgery the vet worked a few miracles and saved both her wing and her eye. Her wing had to be pinned in three places and her left eye was for now sewn shut. But with care and rest



and her own determination, her chances for a full recovery were good. It was not easy to determine but when watching this owl during her recuperation, she struck me as being somewhat old. As all animals do, she possessed a calm dignity but her approach to this tragedy was one of utter serenity. Here she was, confined by the very species that she feared and could never dare to trust, badly injured, only partially sighted and her ability to flee by taking flight had vanished.

But even with her broken body, her spirit remained fully connected to Nature and the Oneness that had always held her in good stead. We had to administer medications and check her eye for infection, and this required that she be held and restrained so no further damage would be done to her battered body. This dignified bird kept her calm, her single eye peering holes through my heart as my every action was surely one she feared and loathed. But through it all she clearly wanted to live. She ate and through her own determination regained her ability to hold tightly to a perch; her days, when not interrupted by treatments, were spent mostly in slumber. I interpreted her every action as a sign that these traumatic days and weeks would not defeat her.

Since I was living in the small house on the property night rounds were

easy to do. It was quiet there and going animal to animal to make sure all was well was a necessary ritual I enjoyed. One night, several weeks after the owl was brought to WRR, I stood quietly under a huge oak tree that beautified this small parcel of land. In only minutes, an owl, through the soundless flight of massive wings, landed in the old oak. There was no mistaking the presence of a great horned owl. Desperate not to frighten the visitor, I didn't budge an inch. The darkness of this night, the stillness of the oak tree, the scent of rescued raccoons, skunks, and bobcats hovering in the air came together in that moment and as they did the call of the visiting owl joined them.



These are the moments in our lives that live on in memory, unmatched. Each of these would have been enough to take in but when the recuperating great horned owl answered the newcomer's call, suddenly everything changed. Now this night was poignant, tragic in its way, and yet filled with hope. The two owls continued their conversation. I cannot tell you how long they conversed or what was said, their language an enigma to me, but when the owl in the tree once again took flight,



the night was soaked with the deep silence left behind.

It was difficult to sleep that night, knowing the owl in our care would probably have flown to meet the owl of the oak tree, but when three o'clock the next morning came around so did the owl. The hooting and obscure vocabulary of their language once again filled the air, and I was relieved that surely the injured owl's captivity must now be more tolerable. Because the hoots and calls from the visiting owl were deeper than those of the injured bird, it was my hope that these two were male and female. No matter their sex, the two owls could be heard throughout many nights at our little sanctuary and over the coming weeks the rescued great horned owl's condition improved. I had to believe that knowing she had a friend in the wild world must have helped her heal.

When the morning came for the stitches on her eye to be removed, we held our breath as vision is of course critically

important to the survival of owls. One by one each thread was gently unwoven and as the last one fell to the clinic floor there looking out at us was a perfectly bright, golden eye. She continued to blink as her coal black pupil had to adjust to the dim light of the treatment room. A closer examination would confirm that her vision was sound. Her next ordeal was the removal of the metal pins that held together her shattered wing. Because she had to be anesthetized this stage of the recovery was even more dangerous for her. She remained groggy for a time but we were then able to get x-rays that told us this was one wonderfully resilient bird. Her wing too had fully mended.

The time to strengthen her wing muscles would be spent in a small flight cage; it was far from ideal but it was all we had and she made good use of the area to exercise and use her once damaged wing. Finally the time to set her free arrived. The

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Lynn's Letter

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dilemma was whether to take her back where she had been found injured, where perhaps a mate was waiting for her even now. But here at the sanctuary there was another great horned owl, one who came one night to call and perhaps comfort the caged bird who could now join him. Animals know what they want; they know what is best for them far better than we ever can, but this was a time when I had to decide. Was it the right decision, I can never know, but what I do know is that around three o'clock in the morning, when all was quiet and the air was cool, I opened the door of the cage that held a magnificent great horned owl who had been brought to Wildlife Rescue broken and hurting and who now was well and once again could reclaim her life. As she flew free from that somewhat crudely constructed cage her wings were sturdy, her vision clear, and her voice strong as she took flight and called to her fellow owl who had found her in her time of peril and who even now perched waiting, high up in the old oak to join her.

Lynn

New WRR Executive Director



Dear Members,

My name is Ashton Kuhn. Early this year I had the honor of becoming the Executive Director at Wildlife Rescue. I started working at WRR over six years ago as a Coordinator; in that role my main responsibility was to process the donations we received and update donor records. Over the years, I became familiar with the names on donation envelopes or online forms and was continually amazed at how often people kept WRR in mind for their support.

As I became more involved in the organization and moved into more responsible positions, I had the pleasure of meeting some of the people whose names I knew so well. Through those meetings it became apparent that the kindness witnessed before this point was just a fraction of the kindness each person held toward animals and WRR. It is not lost on me that most of you have not seen the inside of the rehabilitation hospital, Sherman Animal Care Complex, vet suite, nutrition center, or Sanctuary. We share updates with you through different communications to make up for this; however, for the most part, you give your support without seeing firsthand the ones your generosity benefits. This trust in Wildlife Rescue and what we do for the animals in our care is deep, and the trust is mutual. We call on each of you for volunteer help, financial help, or help to spread the word about an important issue—and our members always answer the call. The trust that we put in you to help us fulfill the mission we all so deeply believe in is not a light weight to carry and not one we take for granted.

I write today to introduce myself and express my gratitude, but also to share one of the moments from WRR I reflect on often. In early spring, I was checking on some of the animals shortly after they arrived from the fur and urine facility we wrote to you about in our last newsletter. I sat and watched a fox now living in Sanctuary; she was lying under a juniper tree and seemed to be relaxed and enjoying the breeze. Not wanting to disrupt her, I sat a few yards away until she lazily opened her eyes; we held eye contact for just a few moments before she drifted back into sleep. I started quietly crying, seeing that her eyes were closed and she was at ease in the presence of a human, a species she previously had no reason to trust.



There was a part of me that was deeply relieved that she didn't have to be on high alert around people anymore and she could just enjoy her nap in the shade. However, there was a larger part that was heartbroken that being around humans was part of her norm. This was a fox who was, at one point, living in the wild. That portion of her life was stolen from her because someone deemed that her existence was secondary to theirs. Now, even though she will never be harmed by humans again, she will also never be wild again. This injustice can

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Baby Shower Update



Thank You!

Thank you to all WRR Members, volunteers, staff, and sponsors who made the WRR 2025 Baby Shower for Wildlife such a success! With your help, we were able to raise close to \$40,000 for the baby animals in our care. With Baby Season starting earlier and ending later each year, it is your continued support that helps us provide food, formula, medicine, and care for each animal who is brought to us in need of help.



Thank You to Our In-Kind Sponsors!

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What Is It Like to Be an Owl?

During the summer of 2024 the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFW) approved a plan intended to save the spotted owl, a species that has been on the endangered list since 1990. The plan called for killing, over the next thirty years, almost a half million barred owls who are expanding their range from the east into territory that the spotted owl inhabits, in shrinking numbers, in the western regions of Northern California, Oregon, and Washington. Barred owls are larger and more aggressive than spotted owls and so outcompete them, and they can and do interbreed. Naturally, a species "conservation" plan that recommends killing of this magnitude has aroused controversy.

There are a host of reasons to challenge the practicality, efficacy, cost (said to exceed a billion dollars), and most assuredly the ethics of this approach to saving a species. Congresspeople have proposed a bipartisan resolution opposing it, USFW is being sued, and over a hundred animal protection



Spotted Owl

organizations have petitioned against it. So there are reasons to hope for its demise, which we at Wildlife Rescue earnestly hope for. The reason I write about it here, in addition to being sure our members are aware of the matter, is to focus on one aspect of the plan that arises not infrequently when species protection is discussed but never before involved disposing of the competing species at a level such as this. I refer to the practice of killing members of one species to preserve another.

As mentioned, the owl plan differs more in scope than concept from other species protection plans that have been considered and occasionally implemented, sometimes even aiming to kill one threatened species to protect another, absurd as that

seems. Among these have been proposals to kill great white sharks to protect sea otters; seals and sea lions on behalf of salmon; and ravens to save desert tortoises. And now barred owls for spotted owls. There are essential points of similarity among these.

Invariably, as far as I know, none of the species to be protected have fallen into endangered status owing to the behavior of the competing species. They are threatened owing to low remaining numbers and those numbers are low because of human activity, such as habitat destruction, exploitation, and pollution. Think back a few years and the culprit was logging and spotted owl habitat loss. It still is, but I doubt anyone thinks killing loggers a good way to save them. My point being that when we set out to protect a species by killing animals of another species typically the guilty party in this drama is the species designing the plan to kill them, none other than ourselves. And taking life seems a singularly strange way of saving life, not to mention that it bears a strong resemblance to the brutality that originated the losses that set all of this in motion at the beginning.

Additional Information

For comparative information on spotted owls and barred owls, go to: birdsauthority.com/spotted-owl-vs-barred-owl

For information on the "conservation" plan that recommends the killing of barred owls, go to these websites:

animalwellnessaction.org/?s=barred+owl+and+spotted+owl

npr.org/2024/04/01/1241874707/california-spotted-owl-barred-owl-usfws



Barred Owl

None of us wants to see a species go extinct. When not a natural occurrence in the evolution of ecosystems, it is surely tragic because avoidable. Yet, it is the human way of life that is driving untold numbers over the cliff to perpetual nonexistence at upwards of 1,000 times the normal rate. Which makes our killing some to protect others, along with the so-called "de-extinction" movement that wants us to believe it is right, good, and possible to bring species back from oblivion, not just wrong but misguided. If things take their course between the spotted owls on the Pacific coast and the barred owls who are expanding their range as animals often do, it may well be that over time and inter-breeding the distinct spotted owl lineage will disappear and their current range taken over by barred owls and hybrids. Granted we mourn the loss of a species, but when a similar species thrives doesn't that mitigate the tragedy somewhat? And certainly we can agree that avoiding the killing of 470,000 owls is a better outcome.

The existence of a species matters but so do individual animal lives. If we want to

avoid the repetition of these conflicts over endless time we will probably do the most good through self-reflection, adjusting our values, changing our behavior—All of which are gargantuan tasks whose mere contemplation stirs serious doubt that we can achieve them. But without that, and for a lot of reasons beyond the one under discussion, what will we have, what will we be, in its absence? My vote is to leave the owls alone and to conscientiously decide to avoid precipitating such debacles in the future.

Craig Brestrup, PhD

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New Director

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and does cause outrage and heartbreak, and it highlights why we have to continually pour ourselves into so many different components of animal protection. We cannot just provide Sanctuary or care to animals in need, but also have to constantly advocate and educate to intervene before Sanctuary or Rehabilitation are the necessary options for them.

I share this with you because it is a great example of how we always have to do more. While we are so thankful the animals were rescued from that horrible facility, we know there are countless others like it that still need to be shut down. When WRR hotline staff returns a call about orphaned opossums, there will be 30 other calls waiting to be returned. When Rehabilitation staff release animals, there are hundreds more in our care who need to be fed and cared for until they can be released. When Vet staff finish intake exams, they immediately start administering medication or performing surgery. When WRR Facilities staff finish working on an enclosure, there will be another that is in need of repairs. The work is endless, and we all gladly do it because it needs to be done to help animals who require it through no fault of their own.

I thank each of you for being a WRR member and for helping us do this work. I look forward to working with you for many years to come.

All my thanks,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Henton".



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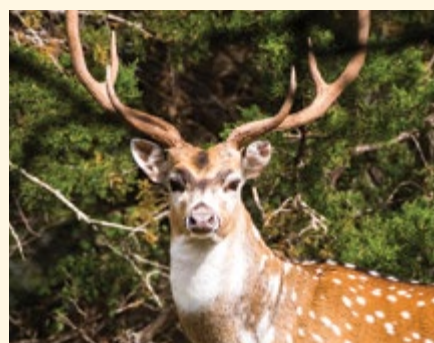
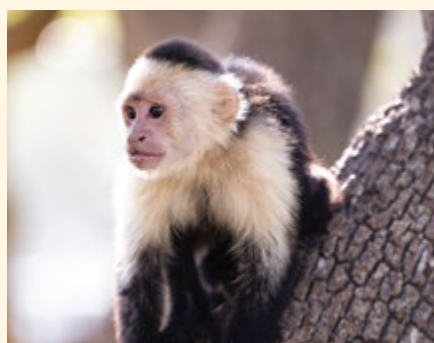
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Sights from the Sanctuary



Photos clockwise, left to right: Great horned owl, capuchin monkey, male axis deer, Tortoise, juvenile opossum.

Photos © Jay Kazen