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Terry Heitz

AVIAN HAVEN

2008

Year End Report

According to a proverb, an eagle does not catch flies. A Bald Eagle might snatch a young Osprey, though—this Osprey lived to tell about it. For her story and more, read on!

Rehabilitation 2008 Overview

In all, we cared for 1228 birds in 2008 (1207 new admissions plus 21 carried over from 2007) – a total almost identical to last year’s 1223. Among the 108 species for the year, the American Robin was once again our most commonly-admitted bird, though its number (125) was down slightly from previous years. Among the species native to North America, others in our “top ten” were Eastern Phoebe (58), Herring Gull (57), Mourning Dove (50), Blue Jay (47), Barred Owl (39), American Crow (38), Chipping Sparrow (34), Song Sparrow (31), and in a tie for 10th place, Chimney Swift and Osprey (28 each). The number of Herring Gulls was more than double last year’s, with the other big increase seen in Song Sparrows; however, all of these gulls were injured adults, whereas most of the sparrows were orphaned nestlings. The most substantial decrease was in Gray Catbirds; we saw only 5, in contrast to an annual average of 16 in the previous 3 years. We admitted only 3 House Finches (all adults), the lowest in a number that has steadily declined over the last 3 years.

The 161 raptors with us in 2008 were an increase over last year’s 133; after Barred Owl and Osprey, the most common were Bald Eagle (20), Broad-winged Hawk (18), Great Horned Owl (11), and American Kestrel (10). Eagles represented the most dramatic incre-

ment, with the new admissions in 2008 more than those of the previous two years combined. Among the more uncommon raptors in our practice were one Great Gray Owl, one Snowy Owl, and one Short-eared Owl. Our non-native admissions were roughly similar to previous years (66 Rock Pigeons, 54 European Starlings, 28 English Sparrows). In addition to birds, we treated 75 reptiles, most prevalent among which were 41 Snapping Turtles (29 of them hatched here from eggs) and 19 Painted Turtles. The rare species among them was a Blanding’s Turtle.

As is typically the case, roughly half of our admissions were hatchlings or nestlings. In the majority of cases, they were found on the ground with the nest location unknown. Other circumstances included a known nest with a missing parent, a nest destroyed by pruning or tree cutting, and kidnapping by an outdoor cat. Among fledglings or adults admitted with injuries, where a cause was reported, car hits (101) and cat predation (95) were nearly even, with window strikes (59) less common. Among some relatively unusual causes of difficulty were lead poisoning, gunshot, and submersion in oil pans in barns or garages with active nests. However, for 282 other injured birds, a cause was not known.

Our mission includes not only rehabilitation per se, but also rehab education. We gave four presentations at the 2008 National Wildlife Rehabilitation Association conference; their topics were songbird nestling nutrition, eagle rehabilitation, recovery from emaciation, and avian caging. An update to our nestling formula was published in the Wildlife Rehabilitation Bulletin as well as in several state rehab association newsletters.



Amy Campbell

As mentioned above, we had a large number of Song and Chipping Sparrow nestlings this season. The nests of Song Sparrows are usually on the ground, hidden in tall grass, in flower beds, under a bush, in a brush pile, etc. The nest shown here, like several others of the season, was discovered during weed-whacking that destroyed its cover. Admitted on 7/27, the birds were released on 8/20. Chipping Sparrows nest in trees or shrubs, usually within 10 feet of the ground. Their nests are most commonly disturbed by outdoor cats or by people with pruning shears. The bird shown here has just fledged and was among a group released in August. ■



Amy Campbell

The Flock

Helpers at our nests make quality care possible during the long summer days of breeding season. The alpha among them this year was Shelley Spanswick, a former Unity College intern who joined our staff after five years at The Raptor Trust (NJ). Interns from the College this year were Jess Brummel and Jill Travisano; on-site community volunteers were Amy Campbell, Amy Dillon, Charlene Friedrich, Laura Lecker, Kim Mullen, Caren Plank, and Janet Wiseley. Equally valuable in our practice are the volunteer transporters who drive birds here when people who have discovered them are unable or unwilling to help. Those we saw the most frequently or who made the farthest journeys included Anne Beaulieu, Angela & Jim Bellegards, Dennis Dyer, Steve Harris, Ed Hinckley, Gabrielle Isenbrand, Carol & Bob Jones, Darcie Lamont, Don Lecker, Carmine Leo, George Klueber, Katy McCormac, Eleanor & Bill Murley, Bill Reid, Yvonne Pollien, Carolyn & Steve Richens, Susan Smith Hudson, and Lisa Walker. Each trip saved a life, and though space does not permit us to thank all individuals in print, we hope that, upon reading this, any unnamed above will know the thanks in our hearts.

We are most grateful to wildlife veterinarians who share their expertise in our most challenging cases: Drs. Erica Miller and Sallie Weltie (Tri-State Bird Rescue & Research, DE); Drs. Mark Pokras and Flo Tseng (Tufts Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine, MA), and Dr. Andy Major (The Raptor Trust, NJ). Here in Maine, we are lucky to have Dr. Judy Herman (Animal Wellness Center in Augusta) as a surgeon and homeopathic consultant, and Judy's staff for information and supplies (thanks, Gina and Jamie!). For nutritional consultations, we thank Dr. Mark Finke (AZ). For counsel and support, we appreciate long-time board members Judy Herman and Allen Stehle. We owe our beautiful home on the web (www.avianhaven.org) to James Skowbo; here in Freedom, Kathy Kandziolka designs and tends the grounds around the habitats.

We are honored to have a close working relationship with many kinds of wildlife and other animal professionals, including local veterinarians, wildlife biologists, game wardens, animal control officers, and other rehabilitators. For assistance and advice from Maine's Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, we are especially grateful to biologists Brad Allen, Buster Carter, Keel Kemper, Jonathan Mays, and Charlie Todd. At the federal level, our primary contacts are Mark McCollough, Eric Holmes, and Rob Rothe (U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service); and also Robin Dyer and Adam Vashon (Wildlife Division, U.S.D.A.). Outside governmental agencies, biologists we particularly appreciate include Bill Hanson and Kyle Murphy (Florida Power & Light Energy), plus Chris DeSorbo and Rick Gray (BioDiversity Research Institute). Among our rehab colleagues, we are most grateful to Lynne Flaccus, Jen Lewis, and Kappy Sprenger for retrieval efforts. Last but not least, we thank nearby animal control officers who help with bird rescues, especially Pat Faucher and Cathie Virgie.

The Roost and the Nest

We took a year off from new construction in order to renovate some of the older habitats and add finishing touches to some of the newer ones. Terry Heitz is as skilled and

Each year we admit a number of immature woodpeckers whose nest tree has either been cut or has fallen in a storm. Among them in 2008 were several Pileated Woodpeckers. Two arrived on 6/4 (accompanied by a third that was dead); one had a fracture in each leg. Another bird on 6/9 had a wing fracture (and also a dead sibling). A 4th on 6/19 had been caught by a cat when the nest fledged; miraculously, only feathers were damaged. All the fractures in the injured birds healed very well. The middle bird had been older than the others, and was released on 7/5, with the remaining three released on 7/13. In the wild, Pileated Woodpeckers remain dependent on their parents for some time after fledging, so it was not surprising that we saw these birds at our feeding stations for some time after release.

Two eventually moved on, but two others, male and female, continue to make appearances at least weekly, sometimes together, sometimes separately.

An interesting sidelight to the release on 7/13 was its filming by ornithologist Louis Bevier. Louis was here for a similar purpose in 2006, and subsequently compared videos of our Pileated Woodpeckers in flight with those of a bird claimed to have been an Ivory-billed Woodpecker. For a look at those comparisons and an update on the "Ivory-billed debate," visit Louis's website: <http://web.mac.com/lrbevier/ivorybilled>. ■



Amy Campbell



Terry Heitz

creative with refurbishing as he is with design and building; some of the enclosures now have better features than when they were new. Those renovations, payroll, and general corporate costs (insurance, fees and registrations, telephone, postage, etc.) each comprised roughly 20% of our overall expenses. The remaining categories included equipment and supplies, fundraising and publicity, food, travel, etc. Private donations comprised roughly a quarter of our income in 2008, with foundation grants contributing about three-quarters. Among private, corporate and foundation contributors, we thank especially the American Foundation, the Baker Street Trust, Bangor Hydro, the Grace Butnam Foundation, Mary Offutt, Mid-Coast Audubon, the Osprey Foundation, the Roy Foundation, Charlie & Nancy Shuman, and the Winn Foundation Trust.

Services, goods, discounts, and other kinds of non-cash contributions are extremely valuable. Many businesses and individuals helped in many different ways; among them, we thank especially David Asselin, the Belfast Cooperative, Don Bonica, the Chewonki Foundation, Craig Brook National Fish Hatchery, Dutton's Nursery & Greenhouse (Morrell), Ellsworth Builders Supply (Belfast), Fosters Family Pet (Belfast), Charlene Friedrich, Harvest Time (Augusta), Heron Dance Ltd., Larry Keating, Kisma

This fall, several concerned citizens sent us descriptions and photographs of birds with wart-like nodules on their faces, usually around the eyes and beak. Most of the affected birds observed were Mourning Doves, though we received similar reports involving American Crows and even a Bald Eagle. These birds appeared to have a viral disease called avian pox. The many species of pox virus are each associated with a particular bird species or small group of species, being most common in songbirds, upland game birds and marine birds. The virus is spread by contact; it cannot penetrate intact skin, but can enter through tiny wounds such as those caused by biting insects. Pox outbreaks are common in summer and early fall, when mosquitoes are plentiful. Mosquitoes that have fed on an infected bird can harbor the virus, during which time they transmit the disease by feeding on healthy birds susceptible to the same strain. Typical sites of infection are unfeathered areas of the body that are vulnerable to mosquitoes. Avian pox may manifest in several forms, the most common of which is wart-like pustules. There may be just one small mass, or many large ones that interfere with vision or feeding. The virus per se has no cure; treatment is supportive care that helps the patient survive long enough for the virus to be eliminated by the immune system. Nutritional supplements and topical treatments can help the skin pustules heal quickly.



Terry Heitz

On Sept. 12, we admitted a fledgling Northern Mockingbird that had been brought to our Lewiston-area colleague, Jen Lewis, the night before. The person making the delivery had kept the bird for several weeks; by her own description, it had been raised on "junk food." Though old enough to be self-feeding, the bird begged almost incessantly. One leg had a greenstick fracture, presumably from a calcium-deficient diet. The most obvious problem, however, was the pox pustules on the face.

Our first priority was getting the bird onto a nutritionally-balanced diet that contained supplements for the bird's condition. A few days later, we began topical treatments. Improvement was rapid and dramatic, as shown in the second photo, taken on Sept. 20. We upgraded the bird through an ever-larger series of indoor cages, and made a transition to food items appropriate for an adult. Following the example of a self-feeding robin fledgling, the mocker was soon eating on its own and restless. We moved both birds to an outside cage near the end of September.

On 10/6, there were robins in the yard, so we released the one that had been the mockingbird's companion. We wanted to hold onto the mocker just a little longer, and moved him into a larger flight cage to make sure flight was strong and give the lesions a last bit of healing time. We had a hard time catching the bird for this last photo, which was taken on 10/14 – about a month after admission. The bird was released a few days later. ■

Preserve, Level Best Land Services, Mac's True Value Hardware (Unity), Maine DIF&W Fish Health Lab, Micro Technologies, Jim Parker/Aerie East, the Penobscot Nation, PetCo (Augusta), The Raptor Trust, Raelene & Ray Rogers, Sand Hill Strawberry Farm, James W. Sewall Company, Tufts University, Wal-Mart (Augusta), and Craig Wood/Lightnin' Lumber.

Looking Back

Avian Haven incorporated in February 1999; we've just completed our 10th year of operation. The 1999 Year End Report described our mission, treatment philosophy, facility, and a few of the 305 birds we admitted that year. We had started the season with two songbird cages, building our first raptor cage that summer. Since then, our case load and our number of flight cages have both quadrupled. All told, in those 10 years we treated 8,842 birds, 753 of which were raptors, among which 78 were Bald Eagles. Raptors initially comprised only 2% of our total case load, but that figure was 13% in 2008.

Almost all of the income in that first year came from our own savings accounts, and we had only one part-time volunteer. Avian Haven's annual income and annual expenses have also

quadrupled; Diane's and Marc's personal financial contribution has dropped over the years toward zero (and our salaries have remained at zero). Avian Haven's summer volunteers now typically number 8-10, and we have an awesome network of volunteer transporters. Consistent with our mission of rehabilitation education, we have given approximately 10 workshops and 20 conference presentations, published about 20 articles in state association newsletters, and another 10 in peer-reviewed journals. Sixteen Unity College students have completed internships here.

One constant amidst all this change has been Terry Heitz, who designed and built our ever-expanding complement of habitats. His work has made Avian Haven a showplace for innovative designs that maximize flight conditioning opportunities in compact footprints, and that are beautiful as well as functional. Another constant is our commitment to the work. In reading over our year end reports from the last decade, this comment from 2001 seems more true now than ever: *Despite the hard work and the occasional heartbreak of the ones we couldn't save, we wouldn't trade our life with the Bird People for any other we can imagine. The more closely we work with them, the more privileged and blessed we feel.*

In Maine's Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, the wildlife biologist who specializes in eagles is Charlie Todd. Charlie keeps close tabs on the state's eagle nests, assisted in that regard by landowners who monitor activity at the nests, particularly around the time eaglets fledge. The first foray from the nest can be a clumsy one, particularly if the youngster exits before mature enough to fly. Premature fledglings tended by parents can and should be left alone. But human activities can complicate the situation, especially when nest sites are in popular recreational areas and can be approached by boat.

Two nests in the town of Sebago were well known to Charlie – one at Hancock Pond and one at Outer Island (Sebago Lake). The first of two eaglets left the nest at Outer Island on 7/22, but it may have been a premature departure. The bird was on the ground the next day, and calls from alarmed onlookers to another office within IF&W prompted its retrieval by wardens. Initially brought to the Maine Wildlife Park, the bird was transferred here within a few hours. In discussing the situation with Charlie, it seemed at first that the best option was a return to the nest site within a few days. But the bird was limping, and there was concern about the adverse impact of excessive human attention to a grounded eaglet. So we set up the bird in the aerie of our eagle habitat, where he could be in visual contact with the birds at the main level.



Jill Travisanò

By Aug. 3, the limp had resolved; we opened the doors into the main cage, but the bird seemed content to remain in the aerie. Over the next week, release options were discussed, as watchers of the nest Claudia Lowe and Linda Panzera continued to send Charlie reports of the recently-fledged sibling. On Aug 12, Charlie gave the green light for release, taking advantage of favorable weather and a mid-week reduction in local recreational activities. The next day, wildlife biologists Brad Allen and Judy Camuso returned the bird by boat to Outer Island. Brad placed the bird and several fish on a large boulder near the nest tree; the sibling was in a nearby tree, and one adult was seen as they approached the island.

Brad and Judy monitored the situation for an hour or so, as a number of people in boats converged for a close look at "Big Guy." Concerned that their presence kept the adults from coming to the juvenile, Brad talked to some of the people, asking them to maintain a respectful distance. After Brad and Judy left, we could only hope for the best and wait for news. Linda let everyone know that the bird had stayed on the rock for most of the first day, was seen there briefly the following day, and not seen at all on the third day. But on the morning of the 16th, Linda saw him about 20' up in the nest tree, and that afternoon, in a different tree, within a foot of his sibling. One of the adults was in a nearby tree keeping a close eye on both youngsters: the family reunion was successful!

Meanwhile, another drama was in progress on another Sebago area nest at Hancock Pond. One of the two eaglets there had left the nest about a week before the Outer Island bird had been captured. Although this was also a high-disturbance area, Charlie wanted to let the situation play out, so the



bird could have the benefits of parental care. Over the next few weeks, the youngster was occasionally tended by an adult during early morning hours, but for much of the day, the many onlookers who approached by boat for a close view seemed to discourage parental visits. After four weeks on the ground, the bird finally flew, and there seemed to be a happy ending. However, after about



Mary Stitzell

two weeks in the air, the bird was back on the ground. On Sept. 8, the watcher of that nest, Mary Stitzell, e-mailed Charlie some photographs that seemed to show a slight wing droop; Mary also reported that the bird was "hanging out" near a home, showing little if any alarm when approached. Charlie went for the bird two days later. When the bird arrived here, we could find no injury to the wing, but she was thin (only about 7 pounds) and listless. It took just a few days for her to become restless inside, and on the 13th, we moved her down to the aerie. A week later, she weighed 10 pounds; we opened the door into the main cage, and she joined another bird there almost immediately. But it was another week before she flew to the high perches in that habitat.

We moved her into the flyway of our large compound on Oct. 11 for some serious flight-conditioning, and discussion turned to release options. Young eagles do not remain with their parents through the winter; they disperse from their nest area, and in perhaps the best of conditions, join other "floaters" where a food source is available for the winter. By the time the Hancock Pond bird was ready for release, most of her age cohorts had already left, and as various options were considered, the one we all kept on the table was Quabbin Reservoir in MA, an area where 40-50 eagles typically overwinter. Charlie made the arrangements with his counterparts there, and though plans were postponed a couple times due to inclement weather, Marc made the trip on 11/17. This photo shows John Maslon, a Quabbin Park Ranger, holding the bird just prior to lift-off, and finally, the bird heading into the wild blue yonder. It was a good day to fly. ■



Dale Monette



Dale Monette

On August 7, a group of family and friends vacationing on Great Pond were out for a paddle, when they heard Osprey alarm calls that seemed particularly shrill. This tale was told by one of the participants, Charlie Kellogg: In the distance, a very large bird was seen diving toward the water, while chased by an Osprey. As the boaters moved closer, they identified the “very large bird” as an eagle, which by then was perching just a few feet over the water, not far from a tree with an osprey nest. The approaching boats and the frantic Osprey soon prompted the eagle’s departure. It was then that one of the children in the group noticed a mass of feathers in the water near where the eagle had been ...



Terry Kellogg

and the feathers had the head of an Osprey! Charlie carefully guided his kayak close to the disabled bird and maneuvered his paddle under her belly. Once she had a grip, he was able to draw the soaked and shivering bird onto the boat’s fore-deck. With her right talons holding the paddle and left ones grasping a deck bungee, she was just able to hold her position. But bare muscle was exposed under the right wing, and blood-stained fluid dripped from her bill. At this point, it seemed obvious that the bird had been grabbed by the eagle and then dropped into the water, where she had nearly drowned. (This was the second such incident we knew of in 2008; three weeks earlier, we’d admitted another Osprey chick taken from the nest by an eagle, then dropped, fatally injured in the process.)

Charlie was now unable to paddle, but one of the accompanying boats towed his kayak to the camp dock, about a mile away from the rescue scene. By the time they arrived, the bird’s shiver-

...

Twice this year, we received young Ospreys whose nest had been destroyed by storms with high winds. The first was on 7/13; two nestlings were found on the ground at a site in Albion, one fatally injured from the fall. The parents were in the area and had been seen with the fallen birds; but the youngsters were not mature enough to be out of a nest. Terry and Marc quickly put into effect an idea they’d discussed earlier in the season: they built a nest platform, secured it to a pole, and took it plus the uninjured chick back to the scene. When they arrived, a third nestling, also unharmed, was discovered nearby. Marc and Terry mounted their contraption with a “Post-Up” and arranged the nest remains on the platform. Both birds were placed in the substitute nest, to which the parents soon returned.



Terry Heitz

ing had intensified, and she was too weak to protest as she was gathered up and placed into a newspaper-lined cooler. Meanwhile, a call to Maine Audubon had provided the rescuers with our phone number; we gave them directions and they set off for Freedom. As they pulled in the driveway, the young Osprey had revived enough to exit the cooler and perch on the back seat!

As Charlie had already reported by phone, there was a large gash under one wing; miraculously, however, no bones were broken. We cleaned the wound and stapled it closed; because eagle talons often harbor unfriendly bacteria, we started the youngster on antibiotics. From there, recuperation was routine. The wound did not become infected; ten days later, it was still scabby, but the bird could fly, hover, bank and turn. Her family was still in the area, so on 8/22, Terry drove the bird back to Great Pond, where he met Charlie for a boat trip to a release site near the nest tree. Terry handed Charlie the bird, and took this photo seconds before Charlie opened his hands. We can’t say



Terry Heitz

whether the bird recalled her previous boat ride or the circumstances that led up to it, but here, with her face to the wind, we do believe she looks eager to fly home. ■

...

After these youngsters had fledged, Terry retrieved the platform – just in time for a second incident in West Gardiner on 7/26, reported to us by nest-watcher Fred Drew. This time again, one chick was brought in, with another found dead at the scene. The chick was unharmed; Terry took the bird and the nest contraption back to the site, where again, a third nestling was found uninjured near the nest remains. As previously, the substitute nest was mounted, and the nestlings placed inside, along with a few fish. And again, the parents were nearby, and returned to their offspring as soon as Terry and Fred moved away. ■

...

By the mid-1960s, organochlorines such as DDT had caused severe population declines in Ospreys, largely due to the effect of eggshell thinning on reproductive success. The greatest losses occurred along the northeast coast of the U.S., where breeding populations were reduced by as much as 90% in some areas. Populations rebounded after DDT was discontinued; in the 1980s and 1990s, Ospreys returned to their New England breeding grounds. Today, however, another toxin is a threat. Mercury in industrial emissions is deposited in water, where it cycles into fish eaten by Ospreys, other fish-eating wildlife, and people. For more information, visit BioDiversity Research Institute’s website, www.briloon.org, and follow the link to the Mercury and Toxin Information Center. ■

Amy Campbell



During the third week of January, a Great Gray Owl on private property in Jackson was reported to a birding email list. The rarity of this northern owl soon attracted bird watchers and photographers from as far away as New York. On Jan 29 we received a call from the property owner, Bill Maseychik, who was concerned that the bird had not

been moving around much, and had even been on the ground for part of the morning. A rumor that the bird had been hit by a car added to his worries; he asked if someone could come over and take a look. Marc and Terry were there within the hour; the bird was in a low shrub and readily captured. The bird's extreme emaciation was evident by palpation (photo below) and made for an easy decision to bring the bird in. But despite a conservative protocol for recovery from emaciation, the bird died two days later.

Our subsequent necropsy revealed several things about the bird's condition. First, the bird had no body fat at all and significantly diminished mass of the breast muscles used for flight. In the catabolic state that occurs when no energy is available from food, a starving animal will derive "fuel" from parts of its own body – first from stored fat, and then from the protein of muscle and other tissues. Second, we saw no sign of life-threatening trauma likely to have been caused by a car strike. Third, there was evidence of a respiratory tract disease process: one lung and nearby air sacs had several opacities and two granulomas (chronic inflammatory nodules). We took tissue samples of these areas for laboratory analysis; the conclusion of an extensive pathology report was a diagnosis of chronic protozoal pneumonia. The granulomas and other respiratory disease processes would have taken weeks to develop, so were already in progress when the bird arrived in Jackson.

What made this case particularly poignant was the property owner's perception that the bird had been "harassed from dawn to dusk" by visitors numbering as many as 20 per day. Although a few folks who had been there told us they had witnessed no misbehavior, it seemed clear from other reports that not everyone who came to see the bird was respectful; some seemed more interested in getting a close-up or action photo, for example. Whether such conduct compromised the bird's ability to hunt, or created stress that exacerbated his disease process, is impossible to say; anonymity might not have made any difference in the outcome. But a rare bird far from its home range in winter is often a bird in trouble. We trust that any unruly "raptorazzi" would have behaved differently if they had known that this particular celebrity was on a downhill and soon-to-be fatal trajectory. ■



Peter Manship

On Oct. 30, IF&W biologist Jonathan Mays brought us a turtle with an unusual history. On or about Sept. 20, an Old Orchard Beach resident had seen a turtle crossing a road. He captured the animal, and gave it to his visiting grandson, who in turn, gave it to his girlfriend in CT as a gift. The girlfriend's mother did some research in order to identify the species, and discovered it was a Blanding's Turtle, which is endangered in ME. Early in October, she turned the animal over to a museum in Hartford, and authorities in its home state were contacted. Maine Audubon's Linda Woodard was planning to be in the area later in the month; she graciously offered to bring the turtle back to Maine.

Immediate release was discussed as a possibility, but two factors argued against that idea. First, the turtle's shell had a dent of unknown origin. Second and more importantly, it was about the time of year when Blanding's Turtles would be going into hibernation. But this animal had been in captivity for several weeks, in less than ideal circumstances, and unlikely to have been able to have put on the weight needed to enter hibernation. Jonathan's decision was to have us overwinter the turtle, which we were happy to do.



Terry Heitz

As these photos reveal, Blanding's Turtles are very different in appearance than the more common Snapping or Painted Turtles. This lovely lady was soon at home in a roomy habitat filled with bark mulch and leaves alongside a small pool. Although she frequently digs into the substrate (apparently to be closer to a heating unit), she spends time in the water each day. She eats well and has gained weight; come spring, Jonathan will take her where she belongs for release. ■



Looking Ahead

Plans for next year DO include new construction! Terry has designed a compound for Barred Owls; it will house our permanent residents (surrogate parents for orphaned owlets), contain limited-activity habitats for owls recovering from injuries, and provide a flight-conditioning arena for birds getting in shape for release. A nearby industrial development that became operational late in 2008 poses a safety hazard for some species that we will no longer release on site. However, we are delighted to now have an option for release (and someday, for expanding our physical plant) on property adjacent to our present location but farther away from the project site, thanks to a bequest from the estate of Marilyn Littlefield of Brewer, who passed away in July after an illness. Though the property transfer officially occurred early in 2009, Lynn's friend and personal representative, Mary Ellen McKenney, contacted us in August of 2008 to tell us of Lynn's wishes. We are grateful not only for Lynn's generosity, but also to Mary Ellen as well as family and friends of Lynn's who supported the bequest.

On 5/5 we were brought a Turkey Vulture that had been found in a road in Palermo, unable to fly. The bird's ulna (one of the bones in the "forearm") had been fractured, though the injury did not seem to be recent. The next day, when we took an x-ray, what appeared to be pieces of metal appeared in the stomach area. We took blood and checked it for lead; sure enough, the bird had a high blood lead level, supporting our hypothesis that the bright spots in the radiograph were lead. Scavengers like vultures can acquire lead poisoning by feeding on carcasses containing spent lead ammunition.



Amy Campbell

We started chelation therapy and implemented techniques to encourage the bird to either vomit or defecate the pieces of lead. They were still present in a radiograph taken on the 11th, but gone on the 17th. Meanwhile, the chelation therapy had been successful; the blood lead level diminished substantially. On the 18th, we moved the bird to an outside cage for some fresh air, and over the next three weeks, upgraded to successively larger areas. Despite opportunities and a fracture that seemed to have healed well enough for at least limited flight, the bird did not try to fly. This

particular nonreleasable bird was lucky; we knew that the Buttonwood Park Zoo in New Bedford, MA (www.bpzoo.org) was looking for another vulture. On the 24th, the head keeper came for the bird, and as we go to press, reports that the vulture is "doing great!" in his new home. ■



Marc Payne

Each year we admit eagles with lead exposure, and 2008 was no exception: a second-year bird admitted on 2/1, and another juvenile on 12/13, both died within a few days despite treatment. Sadly, by the time birds are debilitated enough for capture, too much damage has already been done. Significant quantities of lead

can be absorbed within a few days of ingestion, impacting many parts of the body, but especially nervous, digestive, and blood-forming systems. Degeneration of nerves in the extremities can affect wing posture, as seen in our third lead-poisoned eagle of the year, a bird admitted from Lewiston on Christmas Day (and still alive, but still not flying). For more information about the effects of spent ammunition on wildlife and people, visit the website of The Peregrine Fund (www.peregrinefund.org); follow the link to the May 2008 conference on this topic. ■

In Closing . . .

The post-DDT repatriation of Ospreys to New England brought joy to many; David Gessner expressed it well in his *Return of the Osprey*. Shortly after returning himself to his Cape Cod hometown after some years out west, he describes a walk to a jetty he had taken many times before. "I didn't expect to see anything new. And not expecting to see the new, I didn't, not even the huge tattered nest that drooped over the small warning light at jetty's end ... Surprise came in size and movement. The flash of wings and a high-pitched warning cry, as loud and unmistakable as a car alarm. It was too big to be a bird, but a bird it was, dropping off the nest and lifting skyward with strong eagle flaps. The shine of white and chocolate brown – a white, proud chest and black-brown wings and bandit eye-band – against a green sea that heaved up as if trying to knock me into it. For almost as long as I could walk, I'd come out to the end of these rocks and never seen a sight like that. For the first time since I was born, a pair of ospreys was nesting at the end of the western jetty...."

The recovery of Osprey populations reminds us that effective measures can be taken, even when considerable damage has already been done. Other kinds of birds are in trouble now; in March of 2008, 51 bird species were placed on Maine's "special concern" list; soon, they too may face the challenges of threatened or endangered species. Among diverse strategies such as removing toxins, conserving habitat, protecting food sources, safeguarding nests, decreasing light pollution and reducing cat predation, the small role we play is returning rehabilitated individuals to their populations. Your tax-deductible contributions support Avian Haven's part in preserving our wildlife heritage.

If you'd like to receive future annual reports electronically, let us know by e-mail: info@avianhaven.org.

Until next year –

Diane & Marc

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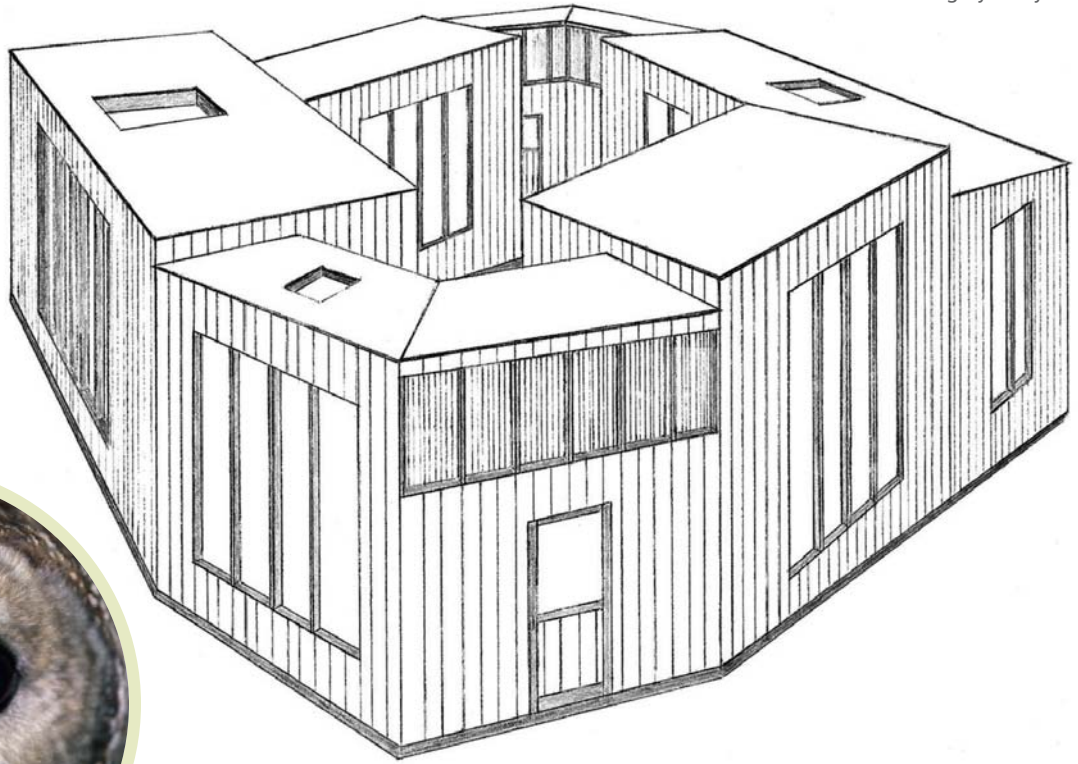
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Credit card and PayPal donations may be made through our website: www.avianhaven.org.

Your donations help save birds' lives. Thank you for joining the community of our supporters.

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Owl Compound Planned for 2009



Avian Haven strives to act responsibly in the use of forest resources. This annual report as well as past annual reports are available on our website: www.avianhaven.org. If you'd like to receive future annual reports electronically, let us know by e-mail: info@avianhaven.org.

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