

# On the Horizon



## Horizon Wings Newsletter – Winter 2013

[www.horizonwings.org](http://www.horizonwings.org)

Welcome to Horizon Wings' quarterly newsletter – On the Horizon. We would like to keep you informed of happenings, events, and news going on at Horizon Wings.

Our mission at Horizon Wings is to rehabilitate birds of prey for release into the wild, in order to maintain their population and to educate the community to enhance awareness of the environment. It is our hope by doing this that we reach people of all ages and create the desire in them to help preserve our natural world.

### Dante's Debut

Horizon Wings had two success stories in the month of February in the education arena. We officially have two new educational ambassadors. Dante the Turkey Vulture made his public debut on February 4th at the Masonic Lodge in South Windsor, and Stevie Ray the Black Vulture made his debut on February 23rd at Mystic Village. Both of them did excellent during their first public programs. Dante came out of the travel box and immediately spread his wings to show off his magnificent wingspan. What a great first impression! Although he was a bit shy and didn't want to face the audience, he made it through the program. Dante even managed to make the audience laugh by knocking off the glasses of his handler. At Stevie's debut, he appeared very relaxed and seemed like he was an old pro at it. He did a fantastic job and was a huge hit!



It's amazing the progress that Dante and Stevie Ray made through their training periods. At first the only thing Dante wanted to do was fly away from us. Then, he would let us get close but wanted to bite. The next step was sitting on glove but only for a couple of seconds before jumping off. After getting over that hurdle, the next step was going in the travel box. Dante wanted no part of this and kept his wings spread open making it very difficult to go into the box. But, eventually he learned to trust us each step of the way.

Stevie Ray wasn't as shy with us as Dante so his training progressed a bit faster. He still needed to trust us and learned to sit on a glove and then go into a travel box. We are so excited to have both of these birds available to travel to educational programs now and teach everyone the importance of vultures and the role that they play in the environment. Great job Dante and Stevie Ray! Welcome to your new life as educational ambassadors.

*Written by Jeanne Wadsworth*

### Wish List

#### Materials:

- Lumber (Plywood, 2x4s, 2x6s)
- Roofing material
- Hardware (deck screws, rafter hangers, hinges, hasps)
- Pea stone for aviary flooring
- Zip-Loc freezer bags
- Cleaning supplies (paper towels, bleach, Simple Green)
- Office supplies (Postage stamps, paper, envelopes, card stock)
- Gift cards for building supplies
- Hardware cloth
- Disposable vinyl cleaning gloves
- Small P.A. system.
- 500 gigabyte external hard drive

*Please support your local merchants whenever possible!*

# Earth Day Fair 2013

It's that time of year again! It is our 4th annual Earth Day Fair on April 27th from 10:00 a.m. to 3 p.m. Admission is a donation of \$5.00 for adults, \$2.00 for children, free for children under 5 years old.

Come and see Horizon Wings in all its glory, with a live program, fun family activities, and tours to see all of our birds! You can see any of the 13 species of raptors, 17 birds total! There is no other event like it here Horizon Wings, so don't miss out on the fun!

As we celebrate the conservation of our Earth, we offer our own Earth day event to welcome all people to visit Horizon Wings. Last year we celebrated the day with nature-based activities, various raptors on glove, tours of our aviaries, various crafts and face painting, refreshments and baked goods, raffles, live llamas, and a formal educational program. Make sure to join us this year for what is guaranteed to be another success!



*Conserve Raptor Habitat*

This year's event will feature the following:

- 11:30 am and 1:30 pm: formal programs featuring 4 of our program birds.
- 1:00 – 1:30 p.m. a special story telling featuring our Great Horned Owl, Oscar.
- Tours of our aviaries. We currently have 13 species of raptors here at Horizon Wings including: two American Kestrels, a Peregrine Falcon, two Eastern Screech Owls, a Barred Owl, a Barn Owl, a Great Horned Owl, two Red-Tailed Hawks, a Red-Shouldered Hawk, a Broad-Winged Hawk, a Crow, a Raven, a Turkey Vulture, a Black Vulture, and a Bald Eagle!
- Throughout the day we will have some of our raptors out on glove with our volunteers so you can see them up close. This will be a great opportunity to learn more about these spectacular birds and for photographs.
- Live llama.
- Face painting,
- Nature related Arts and Crafts activity.
- Refreshments & baked goods.
- Raffles.

Bring the whole family to this fun spring event and visit our amazing birds!

*Written by Colleen Backman*

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## Raptor Rehabilitation at Horizon Wings

As Spring approaches, we are getting ready to deal with the inevitable increase in the number of injured and orphaned raptors that we will be receiving for treatment and re-nesting. But Winter has presented its own set of hazards. The following are examples of just a few.

On the evening of December 6th of last year, a tiny Saw-Whet Owl (probably focusing intently on pursuing his prey), collided with the side window of a moving car. Then another car came along and ran over the top of her, sending her tumbling even farther down the road! This resulted in severe head trauma and injury to her eyes. Fortunately, the eyes have healed, but she is left with a permanent head tilt and is unable to fly well enough for release at this time.

Just days before the massive February blizzard, a Barred Owl was found on the side of Route 44 near Mashmucket State Park, presumably having been hit by a car. Suffering from a bad concussion, he was initially brought to Bolton Vet by a DEEP conservation officer. One of our rehabilitators braved dangerous road conditions the day of the blizzard ( February 8th) to pick up the owl and take him back for rehabilitation. He had to be given daily pain medication and hand fed until he was able to eat on his own, four days later. The force of the impact may have caused permanent damage to his eyesight, but it is still too soon for a prognosis. As always, time, close observation and patience are required.

During this time, on February 6th, a call came in regarding a Red-Tailed Hawk found at Rentschler Field in East Hartford by security

guards. X-rays revealed that she was wounded by a gunshot resulting in a fractured radius. They further revealed an old, healed fracture of unknown cause in the radius of the same wing. The band on this Red-Tailed Hawk told us that she had been banded on release in June of 2009, after having been cared for by another rehabilitator. She was estimated to have been about 2 years old in 2009. We are hoping this fracture will also heal, and that we can release her to her mate at Rentshler Field.

On February 10th, another Barred Owl needed rescue. This poor creature was found completely tangled in the plastic netting used to protect bushes from wildlife such as deer. Unfortunately this netting can be a hazard to birds of all kinds. This owl had netting stuck around his toes, cutting into his skin above the talons. But this situation had a happy ending. He was able to be released back to the wild just two days later.

As it happened, February 10th was also the day of yet another owl rescue. One of our rehabilitators responded to a call regarding an injured Great Horned Owl happened upon by two snowshoe hikers and their dog on the acres of land near a bird sanctuary in South Windsor. This adult, presumably female, owl was stuck in the snow on the ground with a bloody injury to her ear and side of her face and bruises to her wing. Since Great-Horned Owls are very large, strong and aggressive, they have few predators. Most likely this bird was injured by another Great-Horned Owl during a dispute over territory, or could even have had a tussle with a Bald Eagle! Following a course of antibiotics and anti-inflammatory medications administered twice daily, she began to regain her strength. But once the swelling went down, it became apparent that there was a problem involving her wing and she was put in a body wrap. Also of concern at this point was her ear, which presented a small bony protrusion. While she had already been seen three times by a local avian veterinarian, the rehabilitator decided the situation warranted further evaluation with the wildlife specialists at Tufts Wildlife Clinic in South Grafton, Massachusetts. Once there, we were initially encouraged to discover that the fracture was in the elbow, because such injuries often heal well enough for the possibility of release. But while the bird was under anesthesia, further examination revealed that her mandible had been fractured with such force that part of the bone had been forced into her ear. Unfortunately, there was only one option left. She was humanely euthanized while still under anesthesia. With heavy hearts and an empty carrier, we began the drive back home to Connecticut, when we received a call regarding a Red-Tailed Hawk in trouble.

And the work continues...

*Written by Patricia Cebrelli*



## Put the Baby Back!

Spring is almost here, and with it comes the annual influx of “orphaned” babies.

In many cases these orphans are not orphaned at all. They are young birds learning to fly, or mammals exploring their surroundings with their parents nearby. Before you handle one of these orphans please check to see if there is a nest, or a parent nearby. Many times the parents are watching from a safe distance waiting for you to leave before gathering their young. It is always best whenever possible to reunite the young with their parents as they are best raised in the wild. Young birds will live on the ground and in lower branches and bushes until they master the skill of flying while their parents stay nearby, and continue to feed them. They can

be picked up and put back into the nest, or a nearby bush to get them off the ground and away from danger. Owlets, if big enough can use their beak and talons to climb back up into a tree.

A nest can be constructed if need be to replace the young. Strawberry baskets, milk cartons, and laundry baskets are a few items that have been used successfully. Make sure they have proper drainage and they aren't so deep the parents can't see over the edge.

In the case of a true orphan, or injured animal please call the CT DEEP 860-424-3333 for the name of a wildlife rehabilitator in your area.

*Written by Mary-Beth Kaeser*

## 2012 Rehabilitation Statistics

2012 was a below average year for rehabilitation at Horizon Wings with only 52 birds coming through our doors (we typically see well over 60 per year). A mild winter and re-nesting young birds instead of raising them in captivity for future release are some of the reasons.

Of the 52 birds brought to us 22 were released back to the wild; 5 were transferred to educational facilities (including our black vulture Stevie Ray); 6 are pending release in the spring; 9 died due to their injuries and 10 were humanely euthanized. This is a success rate of 63% including the transferred birds.

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Would you like to help Horizon Wings? Fill this form out and mail back with a donation.

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Mail to:

Horizon Wings Raptor Rehabilitation and Education  
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