

On the Horizon



Summer/Fall 2023 Edition

www.horizonwings.org

Welcome to Horizon Wings' semi-annual newsletter – *On the Horizon*. We want to keep you informed about happenings, events, and news at Horizon Wings.

Our mission at Horizon Wings is to rehabilitate birds of prey for release back to the wild, to maintain their populations and to educate the community to enhance awareness of the environment. We hope to reach people of all ages and inspire in them a desire to help preserve our natural world.

Rehabilitated bald eagle released

On September 24, Environmental Conservation Officer Britni Scatena responded to a call about an eagle that had been hit by a car in Mansfield. She quickly transported the eagle to Horizon Wings, where the bird received emergency supportive care. X-rays showed that she had a possible fracture of her scapula and a fractured clavicle as well as a break in her beak.

After six weeks of strict cage rest, the eagle was able to be moved out to one of our small aviaries, where she stayed for another week and a half before moving to our largest flight aviary. She gradually regained her strength and was flying well enough to be released on December 3.

I have said before, and I say it again: It truly takes a village to do this work. We thank all the people involved in this rescue:

- Justin and EJ Julian, the hunters who found her by the side of the road and stayed with her until help arrived.
- EnCon Officer Britni Scatena, for her quick response and transport to Horizon Wings.
- Horizon Wings first responders Dr. Ann Bourke of the Northeast Bird Clinic and Beth Andrews, who immediately replied to my text requesting help and came to assess and treat the eagle.



Many thanks to Dr. Bourke for her ongoing care throughout this bird's rehabilitation process.

Thank you also to Brian Hess from Connecticut DEEP for making time to band this bird for release, and to Mike O'Leary for his help with the banding. And of course, thank you to all the volunteers of Horizon Wings, who are always so instrumental in every phase of our operation.

Written by Mary-Beth Kaeser

Turkey vulture rescued, rehabbed, and released



Turkey Vulture released

As I was leaving my house on June 27, I was surprised to find a neighbor, along with a woman and her two children, at my door. They pointed to a turkey vulture lying wrapped in a blanket on the ground and proceeded to tell me how the bird hit my neighbor at about 50 miles an hour while he was riding his motorcycle! Apparently, the vulture had been spooked while feeding on a deer carcass on the side of the road, and according to the motorcyclist and the woman who witnessed the incident, flew straight into the biker's chest, almost causing him to lose control of the bike. Luckily for both vulture and motorcyclist, he was able to maintain control and safely come to a stop.

The witness took a blanket from her car and wrapped the vulture, placing it in her car for transport to Horizon Wings. Thankfully it was barely a mile away, and the bird immediately received emergency care.

The motorcyclist received scratches from the encounter. The vulture was badly stunned and needed oxygen to stabilize.

After a week in our care, the vulture was ready to go and was released in a nearby field.

Lucky vulture and a lucky motorcyclist!

Written by Mary-Beth Kaeser

Rescued baby opossum will be an educational ambassador

While running errands on July 22, I came across an opossum and her babies that had been hit by a car. Sadly, Mama had passed, as had the majority of her 12 babies. I gathered up the surviving five babies and started the process of warming them, wrapping them in a blanket with the hand warmers I keep in my car for such emergencies.

I contacted Ferncroft Wildlife Rescue, who specialize in opossums, and made arrangements to transfer the babies to them. They were all in critical condition from the car strike, one in particular whose tail had a severe wound. We decided that due to the open wound and the fact that opossums are known to cannibalize others in a weakened condition, he would best be raised separately from the others.



Dobby

While it had been many years since I raised a young opossum, and although it meant around-the-clock feedings, I eagerly looked forward to raising this little one. It was soon clear that the injured part of the tail needed to be amputated and that the little opossum, now named Dobby, would not be releasable.

Without his tail, Dobby would have had a hard time climbing trees and balancing. He also would not have been able to gather the bedding needed to keep him warm in his winter den. It was decided that Dobby would go to Roaring Brook Nature Center in Canton to become an educational ambassador for all opossums.

Dobby moved to his new home November 27 and has adjusted wonderfully to his new surroundings and handlers. Thank you, Nancy and Liam, for giving Dobby his forever home.

Written by Mary-Beth Kaeser

2023 Owl Prowl captivates owl fans despite weather

A rainy forecast presented a challenge for Horizon Wings' 2023 Owl Prowl, slated for Saturday, October 14. Fortunately, Ashford's Knowlton Memorial Hall was available, and the Owl Prowl, an important fund- and friend-raising event for the organization, went on as scheduled. Notices of the change were sent out on social media and Horizon Wings' website, and a couple of volunteers remained at Horizon Wings to direct anyone who hadn't seen the notices to the substitute venue.

While enjoying cookies, brownies, cider, coffee, and hot chocolate, guests visited the owl education table's display of wings, talons, and sterilized owl pellets for dissection and the activity table, where young visitors used markers and crayons to color Halloween ornaments and witch hats, pumpkins, and spider webs.

Visitors entered a drawing for owl-themed items that included a wonderful new book, *What an Owl Knows: The New Science of the World's Most Enigmatic Birds*; note cards, a wall hanging, a kids' activity basket, and a woodcut image of an owl made by a young man who came to his very first Owl Prowl as an infant.

Nearly 100 visitors settled in for the program, which featured presentations of screech owls Oakley, Jade, and Sassafras; barred owl Asha, barn owl Tyton, and Oscar, the great horned owl. In addition to hearing the individual owls' stories, visitors learned about four remarkable adaptations that owls depend on to survive in the wild and heard about some of Horizon Wings' rescue and rehabilitation efforts. Reminders of what members of the public can do to lessen the possibility of harm to owls and all birds of prey included using snap traps for rodent control rather than poisons or sticky traps; not throwing food waste out car windows, capping chimneys, and properly disposing of fishing line.

Following the presentations, visitors were invited to meet the birds—and Dobby the opossum—up close. Many visitors shared their own owl stories with Horizon Wings owner Mary-Beth Kaeser, volunteers, and board members.

Thank you to all who helped make the 2023 Owl Prowl a success! Follow us on Facebook to stay up to date on Horizon Wings' activities and programs.

Written by Sara Putnam



Photo by Ali Ritchie Parkes

Thank you to our friends and supporters

At this writing, Horizon Wings has taken in 63 rescues during 2023, including a hoary bat, which once stabilized was transferred to bat expert and rehabilitator Maureen Heidtmann. We like to share our happiest and best stories with you. I wish they had all ended happily, but there were many fatalities this year due to the number of birds we received that had been struck by cars. Unfortunately, the large amount of trash thrown onto our roadways and the increased speeds at which people seem to be traveling have not helped. We had our share of rodenticide poisonings as well.

Thank you to our grantors:

- Connecticut Ornithological Association
- Hartford Audubon Society
- Community Foundation of Eastern Connecticut

Thank you to our long-time supporters:

- Vaughn and Sheila Numrych.

Thank you for food donations from:

- Trinity College
- Envigo
- Jackson Laboratory
- Charles River Laboratories

Thank you to our veterinarians:

- Dr. Ann Bourke, Northeast Bird Clinic
- Dr. Maureen Murray and staff, Tufts Wildlife Clinic
- Dr. Catherine North, Fenton River North Veterinary Clinic
- Dr. Betsy Japp, Eastford Veterinary Hospital



And a big, heartfelt thanks to the hardworking and dedicated volunteers of Horizon Wings and our many followers and supporters. We appreciate all of you and wish you a wonderful holiday season and a happy, healthy New Year!

Wish List

- Lumber (Plywood, 2x4s, 2x6s)
- Office supplies (Postage stamps, paper, envelopes, card stock)
- Roofing material
- Gift cards for building supplies
- Hardware (deck screws, rafter hangers, hinges, hasps)
- Hardware cloth
- Pea stone for aviary flooring
- Disposable vinyl cleaning gloves
- Zip-Loc freezer bags
- Amazon (https://www.amazon.com/hz/wishlist/genericItemsPage/2QDT9KR9W3EX2?ref=wl_share)
- Cleaning supplies (paper towels, bleach, Simple Green)

Please support your local merchants whenever possible!

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www.horizonwings.org

Visit us for current news, photos, and information on upcoming programs.