



# Wingover Newsletter

1<sup>st</sup> Quarter 2014

Dear Friends,

Spring is on its way! There are baby squirrels and Great Horned Owl chicks out there right now! Here at the IRC we are getting ready for “baby season”. This is our busiest time but I do plan on getting more newsletters out to you. I believe I will because we have such a wonderful group of volunteers at the center right now. They put in over 2,100 hours of volunteer time last year. This has allowed Jacques and me more time to work on organizational tasks that are critical to making a nonprofit successful.



*The 36 unit mew complex as seen from the IRC conference room.*



*(L to R) Kenny (IRC Bald Eagle), Jacques Nuzzo (IRC Program Director), Valerie Wells (H&R Reporter), Richard Mark (chairman, president and chief executive officer of Ameren Illinois), Riley Adams (Ameren Illinois Avian Protection Plan Manager), Ron Pate (vice president, Operations and Technical Services for Ameren Illinois)*

Many of you may already know about the grant we received from Ameren Illinois. That generous \$50,000 grant has allowed us to build 36 new raptor mews (cages) for our education raptors. That leaves all of those existing mews free for use by rehabilitating or orphaned animals.

We have more mews now than we have ever dared to dream we could have. During our talks with Ameren Illinois, the IRC has learned a great deal about avian protection equipment and Ameren Illinois has learned a great deal about wildlife rehabilitation from the IRC. Just think – neither avian protection plans nor wildlife rehabilitation existed a hundred years ago!

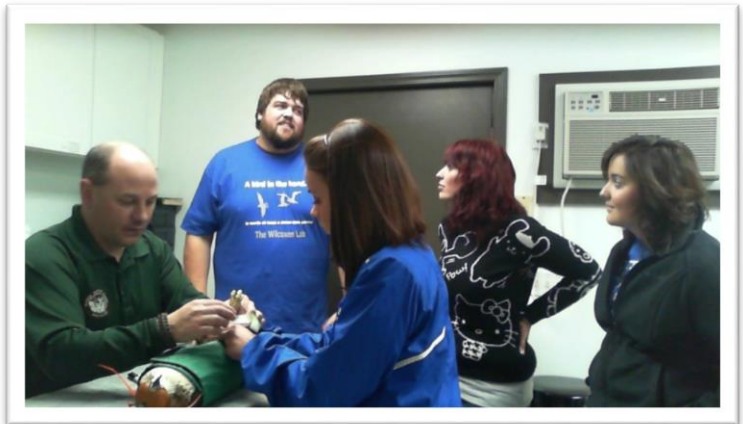
May I take you back in American history for a moment? From 1917 to 1952 the United States Government paid \$ .50 to \$2.00 bounties per bird for people to shoot Bald and Golden Eagles. These large birds were seen as “competing” with humans for salmon and game animals and needed to be eliminated. Our government paid for 128,000 pairs of Bald Eagle talons during those years. No figures were kept on eagles not turned in or ones that were wounded and later died.

Then there was DDT, an insecticide that was invented for use against malaria and was used extensively in the jungles during WWII. When the war ended it was used in large amounts on American croplands. It was even sprayed directly on people and on the walls inside their homes. Its inventor won the 1948 Nobel Prize for Physiology or Medicine. It wasn't until people began to see evidence of environmental and toxicological effects such as the absence of juvenile Bald Eagle that they realized the insecticide was getting into the food chain. By 1963 there were only 487 nesting pairs of Bald Eagles left in the lower 48 states. Use of DDT in our country was discontinued in 1972 and is listed as a probable human carcinogen with reproductive effects.

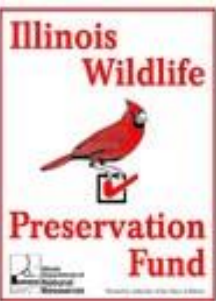
The Great Plains Dust Bowl in the 1930's was a man-made environmental disaster and evidence of how naïve people were about our impact on the Earth. No one gave much thought to conservation as we enthusiastically entered the mechanized age. But on the other hand, could anyone have envisioned back then how mechanized farming, power poles, towers, barbed-wire fences, glass, tall buildings, factories, automobiles, chemicals and human populations would eventually effect our environment?

The words "environmentalism" and "environmentalist" both date to the 1970s when the world woke up to see the massive problems we had created not only for wildlife species but for ourselves. Stricter conservation laws now exist and are working. (Bald Eagles are back!) People now realize the importance of protecting our natural resources and are willingly making changes for the better. As Ameren and other power companies continue, as mandated by law, the overwhelming, time consuming and costly task of equipping long-standing power lines with avian protection equipment, Ameren is also partnering with nonprofit organizations and governmental agencies to go the extra mile to help in other ways too. Ameren's grant will allow the IRC to shorten the time that an animal spends in captivity. No animal will ever again have to stay inside the hospital because there isn't an outdoor space available. Preventing electrocutions is good for Ameren in that it will save money for repair costs in the future, good for wildlife in that it will eliminate electrocutions and injuries, and good for Ameren Illinois customers in that it will stop outages caused by animals on power lines. Environmentalism can be a "win, win" for everyone.

Another grant! Dr. Travis Wilcoxon, Assistant Professor of Biology at Millikin University and a member of the IRC board, has received a grant from Millikin for a study in partnership with the IRC to capture data on raptors that are admitted to the wildlife hospital. Specifically, the study will assess long-term health in birds that are taken in for rehabilitation. Dr. Wilcoxon's study hopes to gain a better understanding of the individual health of the birds prior to a trauma or disease. And to get some parameters that indicate a bird is healthy enough for release. The research will include hematology panels, calcium levels, antioxidant capacity, disease and parasite assessment, bilateral symmetry and nutritional history. Nutritional history can be determined by measuring the growth bars on a feather. This study will offer an excellent opportunity for students and a basis for impactful, meaningful research.

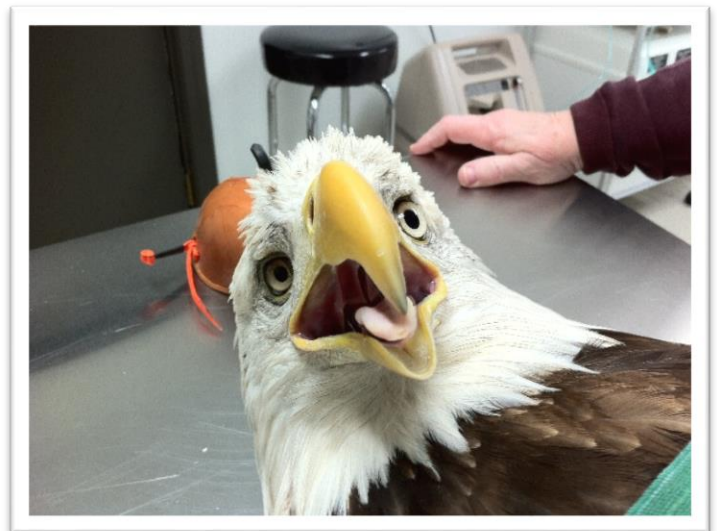


(Above) Jacques Nuzzo, Dr. Wilcoxon and 3 pre-vet biology students go over the study procedures.  
(Below) An injured Bald Eagle has no idea that he will be participating in a study that may help his species someday in the not so distant future.



I would also like to mention again the wonderful grants that we received from the Wildlife Preservation Fund this year. The Wildlife Preservation fund is administered by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources. A portion of the fund gives grants for maintenance and repair of wildlife rehabilitation centers that care for endangered species. Remember to donate \$1.00 on the bottom of your state tax form to the Wildlife Preservation Fund every year!

This year the IRC received a Wildlife Preservation Grant to replace an aging air conditioner in the wildlife hospital, a grant to replace the sinks, faucets and cabinets in the wildlife hospital and a grant to repair the barn which is going to eventually become a facility dedicated strictly to rehabilitating the state-endangered Barn Owl.



We are very proud of the work we are doing here. We hope you are too. While wonderful grants, bequests, and large gifts provide the tools to do our work, you, the individual contributor, provide the funds to carry it out. You feed the animals, you provide the medication, and you keep the incubators warm. When people care about wildlife - it shows! The IRC is proof!

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Jane Leitz'.

(Just in time for spring!)

## Illinois Raptor Center How to Help Without Hurting (A guild to rescuing wildlife)

The wildlife baby season begins in Illinois with baby squirrels and Great Horned Owl chicks being born/hatched in February! Our experiences in wildlife rehabilitation at the **Illinois Raptor Center** have shown that far too many animals brought to our center for treatment were unnecessarily rescued, or that their injuries were preventable. Many of the following guidelines and instructions were written to address true events and situations involving the public and our encounters with wildlife over the last 22 years. With this basic information, we believe people can be better equipped to live side-by-side with their wild neighbors.

**ORPHANS & UNNECESSARY RESCUES.** Animal parents may leave their babies for hours at a time in search of food. Some animal parents stay away from the babies as much as possible so they do not draw a predator's attention to their young (especially rabbit and deer). You must wait for several hours before you decide to rescue. Do not stay around for the parents to see you - they will not return with you there. Never try to protect a baby animal by putting it in a cage or bucket. Never surround it with fencing or boards. This will only scare the parent away.

Signs of a truly injured animal are bleeding, open wounds, broken bones, patches of missing fur, dragging legs, weakness, shock, tame-like actions, lethargic or parasites. Don't rescue an animal unless it really needs rescuing! Don't put human feelings on animals. Pain to an animal that willingly swims naked in a pond when it is 10 below zero must certainly differ from that of a human being!

**ABOUT RABBITS.** Bunnies open their eyes at 7 days and are out of the nest and on their own at around 2 to 3 weeks. Cottontail rabbits are nocturnal (night) animals. The mother comes to feed about twice a day - at dusk and at dawn. You will probably never see her. Mother rabbits cannot protect their young. A mother will stay away from the nest in order not to draw predators to her babies. If you are worried about a nest because you found a dead rabbit, don't automatically assume it is the mother. There is a 50% chance it is the father!

Baby bunnies do not follow their mothers, their mothers do not teach them anything, and they do not stay in family units while they grow up. All a bunny needs to know to survive is to eat, run and breed. If you find a bunny with its eyes open and fully furred - leave it alone! If you have to chase a bunny down to catch it, it certainly doesn't need rescued!

Bunnies with their eyes closed can be put back in the nest. Don't worry about touching them - the mother will take them back! Cover the nest with the nesting materials and put two short strings forming an X across the nest. If the X is moved the next morning, then you know the mother has returned.

**ABOUT SQUIRRELS** Mother squirrels build more than one nest. When a nest gets damaged or full of parasites, she will move her babies to another nest. Some people don't realize squirrels have babies so early in the season (February) here in Illinois and proceed to do spring cutting without checking for nests. If you are cutting down a tree and realize that you have damaged a squirrel nest, just go away and wait for the mother to move her babies. If a baby falls out of the nest, put it in a shallow box so the mother can see it and leave the area. Watch from your window so as not to frighten the mother. Give her plenty of time and she will retrieve her baby.

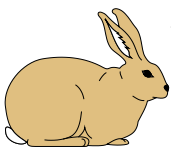
**ABOUT FAWNS** Never assume that a lone fawn is an orphan. Mother deer have no way of defending their young so the fawn has to defend itself. Believe it or not, it is born with three built in defense systems. 1.) Newly born fawns have no scent for 30 days. *Predators cannot smell them!* 2.) They have spotted camouflaged fur. *Predators cannot see them!* 3.) Baby deer cannot run and keep up with their mothers so they lay very, very still, usually in tall grasses. *Predators cannot hear them!* So you see, mother deer help their babies by staying away from them as much as possible so they don't draw in predators. When the fawn is able to run fast enough to keep up with his mother, he will follow her and stay with her. They are about a month old by then.

Deer are nocturnal (night) animals. You probably won't ever see a mother deer but she will probably see you. Wait at least 24 hours before you check on a fawn the second time. If it isn't weak, crying continuously, injured or covered with parasites, leave the fawn alone!

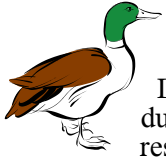
**ABOUT SONGBIRDS.** If a *featherless or downy baby bird with eyes closed* falls from a nest - put it back into the nest. Don't worry about touching them - the parent birds can't smell - they will take them back! Just make sure you put it back into the right nest!

If a *partially feathered baby bird with eyes fully opened* falls from the nest, leave it alone! This little bird is called a "brancher" and they have "fledged" from their nest. They will spend the next week or so hopping around beneath trees and shrubs, growing their flight feathers, learning to fly and learning to eat on their own. The parents are still around feeding the babies that, by now, are scattered throughout the neighborhood. Don't go near them! Keep cats, dogs and children away! Give the parents a chance to raise their young. If some birds are dive bombing you - those are probably the parents!

If the complete nest falls out of the tree with the baby birds in it - carefully put them back in the nest and put the nest into the tree as closely to its original position as you can get it (use twine or duct tape if necessary). If the nest is destroyed, a plastic butter-type tub with slits cut in the bottom for water drainage can be a substitute nest. Fill it with clean, natural nest materials. Place the babies in the new nest and secure it with twine or duct tape to a location closest to the where the original nest was located. When the babies start cheeping again, the parents will return, locate the babies and start feeding them again. Stay far away so as not to scare the parents away.



Never try to help baby birds by feeding them bread and/or milk. And never feed baby birds water, you may aspirate them. In the wild mother birds have no way to give their babies water! Baby birds only get moisture from their food – which is normally insects for any nestling songbird.



**ABOUT DUCKS and GEESE** Mother ducks typically stay near their ducklings but use patience and observe for quite a while before assuming she isn't coming back. A duckling completely alone needs rescued. Do not try to put orphaned ducklings with another mother duck. Ducklings that are alone will be killed by other ducks. Geese on the other hand are wonderful at adopting orphaned geese the same size as their own. If you have rescued a duckling or gosling they do not require water and do not need to swim. They become cold and soaked without its mother's feather oils and her warmth. A jar lid of water sprinkled with a small amount of food is sufficient.



**ABOUT BIRDS OF PREY (RAPTORS)** A bird of prey or raptor is a bird that is specially equipped with a sharp beak and powerful talons to hunt, kill and carry their prey away. Owls, hawks, eagles and falcons are raptors. These birds can be extremely dangerous. Their feet and talons (claws) are used to hold and kill their prey so they can easily sink them into the hand or arm of a rescuer. Even baby raptors can strike with their feet. Special care must be used when dealing with these birds. Do not try to rescue a large raptor without professional help or advice.

Many raptors do not build nests. Some take over the empty nests of other birds. Some nest in cavities and some nest right on the ground. If a *featherless or downy baby raptor with eyes closed* falls from a nest - it can be put back into the nest.....But sometimes putting the baby back in the nest is best left to the experts. It may be too high. Or if the parents are near and see you with their baby the situation can be very dangerous for you! Some of these birds can hit with 10 times the force of a bullet. They can strike your head or knock you from a ladder. Call a wildlife rehabilitator.

If the raptor is *partially feathered and eyes fully opened*, they are called a "brancher" and they have "fledged" from the nest. Leave these chicks alone! They will spend the next few weeks (or months) testing their wings and learning how to fly. The parents are nearby and are still feeding them. Don't go near them! Keep cats, dogs and children away! Take some pictures if you want. This may be a once in a lifetime for you but please give the chicks and the parents a chance to go about their lives undisturbed. Stay away so the parents don't fly at you. Most birds of prey are very protective of their young and have the skills and the weapons to defend them against most predators - that includes people predators. Raptor chicks not only have to learn to eat on their own during the brancher stage of their lives but they have to start to hunt on their own. They must watch their parents and be exposed to live prey in order to learn these skills. A bird that is not able to sharpen his hunting skills before winter weather comes will surely die of starvation. Only rescue a TRUELY orphaned chick.

**THE RESCUE!** It is always a good idea to call a wildlife rehabilitator before rescuing a wild animal. Rescuing a wild animal should be the absolute last resort and the rehabilitator can help with that decision. Most rehabilitators work out of their homes or are with small nonprofits organizations with limited funds. And we all get very busy during the season so have patience with us. Chances are, you will have to transport the animal to the rehabilitator. If you are rescuing an orphaned or injured wild animal, use gloves, nets or towels to pick up the animal and put it into a secure box or pet carrier. Small birds and baby mammals may even be placed in a paper sack or small plastic container with holes for air. A raptor or larger animal should be swept into a prepared box with a broom and the lid secured. This way there is no need to touch the animal and risk the chance of getting hurt.

**ADULT WILD ANIMALS** like, coyotes, raccoons, badgers or weasels can be very dangerous. Do not risk being bitten by any animal! If you are bitten, the animal must be euthanized (killed) and tested for rabies. Keep pets and kids away from all wild animals! If you are not absolutely sure that you can rescue the animal without injury to yourself or another person - do not try it! Never, never try to rescue an injured adult deer! Wildlife rehabilitators are not allowed to rehabilitate adult deer. Call the local Conservation Police Officer, Animal Control, or local Police Department about injured deer.

**ABOUT WILDLIFE AND PETS.** If a wild animal is in danger of being injured by a cat or dog - remove the cat or dog - NOT the wild animal! Pets are not naturally occurring predators and are not part of the food chain in this hemisphere of the world. Cats running at large kill an average of 11 small birds and mammals every day - hundreds of millions are killed each year!! More than the Valdeese and Gulf oil spills combined!!!! Bells and declawing have absolutely no effect on a cat's ability to hunt baby birds or mammals with eyes closed in a nest, branching birds just learning to fly or roosting birds. Because of the bacteria on the teeth, even tiny dog and cat bites are almost always fatal to a wild animal. Don't let your pets run loose! Don't support cat TNR (trap, neuter, release). Keep dogs and cats inside, safe, warm, well fed and loved. Without responsible pet ownership, the lives of our native wildlife will always remain in jeopardy!

**ABOUT WILDLIFE LAWS.** All native wildlife is protected by law. Pigeons, European starlings and sparrows are non-native and are not protected under these laws. It is against the law to possess and/or care for native wildlife, whether mammals or birds, without permits from the State of Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), even if you intend to return the animal to the wild. Wildlife rehabilitators have state and federal permits, caging and training to care for wildlife.

### EMERGENCY CONTACTS

Illinois Department of Natural Resources 217-782-6431  
Illinois Raptor Center 217-963-6909

A list of Illinois wildlife rehabilitators can be found on the Illinois Department of Resources Website at:  
<https://dnr.state.il.us/law3/Documents/IllinoisFaunaRehabilitationPermitHolders.pdf>

## 2014 Summer Camps at the Illinois Raptor Center

Visit our website at [www.illinoisraptorcenter.org/public.html](http://www.illinoisraptorcenter.org/public.html) and sign up today!

**Adult Birding Camp** (must be 16 or older) It's never too late to start birding May 18<sup>th</sup> - 8am to 10am \$35.00 fee

**Beginning Birders** (5 through 10 years old) A hobby for a lifetime June 9<sup>th</sup> - 9am to noon \$50.00 fee

**Brancher Camp** (5 through 10 years old) An intro to the outdoor experience June 16 - 9am to noon \$35.00 fee

**Youth Raptor Camp** (11 through 15 years old) A week long experience Starts June 23 - 9am to noon \$150.00 fee

**Adult Raptor Camp** (must be 16 or older) One intense day with birds of prey September 29<sup>th</sup> - 9am to 5pm \$165.00 fee

Illinois Raptor Center Board of Directors



Jane Seitz

Jacques Nuzzo

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Travis Wilcoxon

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when you shop on line!



Once each year the Illinois Raptor Center accepts a group of individuals to be trained together as volunteers for the facility. The next volunteer orientation is September 2014.

If you would like to be considered for a volunteer position please email to [ircinfo@comcast.net](mailto:ircinfo@comcast.net) for information and an application.

Mail your application to the IRC by August 31, 2014.

# Illinois Raptor Center

Serving the wildlife and people of Illinois with wildlife rehabilitation and conservation education since 1991.

**DONATE, PARTICIPATE, VOLUNTEER!** When a community cares about wildlife ---- it shows!

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The Illinois Raptor Center is a 501 (C)(3) nonprofit organization. Your gifts are tax deductible.

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**5695 W. Hill Road**  
**Decatur, Illinois 62522-9520**

***THANK YOU!***

\*For donations of stocks and investments to the IRC "Forever Fund" please contact Lee Morthland at Raymond James Financial Services Hickory Point Bank, 225 N. Water St., Decatur, IL 62523 217-872-3909