



3rd Quarter 2014

Wingover Newsletter

Oil flows into Springfield's Washington Park

On September 9th the IRC received a call from an IDNR Wildlife Biologist. **He had been notified that there had been an oil spill** in Springfield and was on his way to the scene.

A fire the night before had caused plastic storage tanks with 500 to 1,000 gallons of used oil to melt. The oil washed into storm drains, entered a nearby creek and was about to upset the wildlife that live in and near the stream and ponds in Washington Park.

He called to ask if the IRC could help with the rescue of oiled birds if it became necessary. We have training in oiled bird rescue but if the number of victims reaches a certain point, then large, professional oiled bird clean-up crews and equipment would have to be called in.

Jacques and I decided to take our kayaks upstream to assess the situation but heavy rains soon caused the creek to rise to levels too dangerous to navigate. We were told to stay put for the time being. It wasn't until the following day that Jack and I got to Springfield for a first-hand view of the spill.

Remember, in our last newsletter we wrote about how it takes a village to release Osprey in Illinois? Well that also is true when it comes to limiting the damage of an oil spill. The quick actions and cooperation of individuals, city government, state government, nonprofits and specialized environmental workers during this emergency diverted what could have been a huge disaster. The IRC found no oil covered birds at the park.

Jacques did fly our drone over the ponds with our GoPro camera and shared those pictures with the EPA. Our pictures provided strategic operational changes to the boom locations.

An environmental emergency can happen at any time or any place. The IRC is prepared for just about anything. And we are ready and willing to do whatever we are called upon to do.

Jane Seitz/Executive Director



Present at the press conference were (R to L) the Springfield Park District, Sangamon County Office of Emergency Management, Springfield Fire Department, Illinois Environmental Protection Agency, Illinois Department of Natural Resource, Illinois Raptor Center, & Village of Jerome. Bodine Environmental Services was hired to do the cleanup.

Finding Purpose through a Baby Great-Horned Owl

From a Volunteer Perspective

Soon after I retired from full-time Occupational Therapy, I was interested in pursuing volunteer work, preferably nature-related. I considered the Animal Protective League, but a baby Great-Horned Owl introduced me to the Illinois Raptor Center. After falling from its nest and a week of its parents caring for it on the ground, my husband and I noticed that it was starting to do poorly. I brought it in to the IRC. While at the Center, I was so impressed with the work being done, that I immediately signed up as a volunteer.

Four years later and I have learned so much. And every day I realize how much more I could learn! And I love to learn! Whether it is through the volunteer training sessions, attending educational programs, listening to stories of past adventures or under the tutelage of Jane and Jacques, there are so many opportunities to learn.

And I have been given so many opportunities for experiences that I never would have dreamt of experiencing: from releasing a Red-Tailed Hawk, Barred Owls and Kestrels, to riding a zip line, helping with prairie burns, creating a tree for the Learning Center, working with an incredible group of volunteers, doing photography during events, and creating paintings and notecards for fundraising.

But it is not what I have gotten that is important, it is what I have had the opportunity to give. I am grateful for the opportunity to give back to nature, whether it is in the return of injured animals to the wild after they have healed or through education to the community about keeping nature wild and healthy. A week does not go by that I am not telling someone about the wonderful work that goes on at IRC. And I am grateful every day that I show up to work at IRC and the opportunity to ask “what needs done?”



One Sad Story



One morning we received a call about a Turkey Vulture with a broken wing at an area business.

We didn't realize until the auto body shop employee brought the bird to the wildlife hospital that it had been hit by a car.

Sadly, it had been stuck in the grille, behind the bumper of the car, and had gone unnoticed by the owner until the next morning. The poor old bird spent the night lodged inside the car.

It broke our hearts to find that the damage to the bird's wing was beyond repair.

Keeping our roads and highways clean and in good repair is dangerous. Drive slowly and watch out for workers – both human and animal!

Keeping roads clean and in good repair is dangerous work

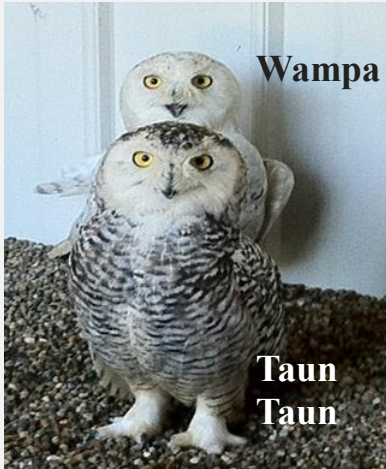
The Turkey Vulture is one of the few birds that can use its sense of smell to find food. They are carrion eaters – they eat dead things. Their purpose in the world is to keep it clean. But as their natural habitat shrinks, they have to turn to alternative places to find dead critters. And where could that possibly be? Our roads and highways, of course. Sadly, many vultures are hit by cars while feeding on carrion and are turned into “road kill” themselves.

Migration has started.

Turkey Vultures are getting ready to leave Illinois. Some Turkey Vultures in the southern United States are year-round residents. Birds from our area might move to North Carolina or down to Louisiana. Western birds migrate much farther, and in large numbers (more than a million) moving through Central America and in some cases as far as Venezuela, Colombia, and Ecuador. A large group of vultures is called a wake.



Wampa, Taun Taun and Y2



It was not long ago, in our memory at least, that we lost Yeti to West Nile. It was heart-breaking. Yeti was priceless. A couple years earlier we found out Yeti's parents were placed in zoos and no one in the U.S. was breeding Snowy Owls. So Yeti was also irreplaceable.

Time went on and by some miracle we came across another breeder for Snowy Owls in Canada and put our name on the list for a next year's baby. The wait began.

Out of the blue, we learned about two Snowy Owls in rehab centers here in Illinois. Both were permanently injured, and both needing a permanent forever home. Saying we were thrilled is a totally understating the feeling. We gladly accepted both of the owls into our Education on the Wing program. Having a male (Wampa) and a female (Taun Taun) in one education program is a dream and more than we could ever wish for.

Then, the Snowy eggs hatched. Our baby owl was on its way. A search for a name began. But we didn't have to search very far. Yeti was the name. We felt it was the perfect way to honor the Snowy that gave us so much joy.

So little Yeti, Y2 for short, is here. Sweet as can be. Just like her predecessor. Ready to charm and educate children of all ages.



Yeti was our first little education Snowy. We got her when she was just a couple weeks old. It was around the time of the Harry Potter movies and everyone wants to see a Snowy.

Her feathers hadn't even started coming in when we got her. We were so privileged to watch her grow into a beautiful Snowy.



Pop Fly and a Fowl in MacArthur Batting Cage!

The IRC was called to MacArthur High School by a construction worker who said there was a hawk caught in a batting cage. We drove there to find a beautiful sub-adult female Cooper's Hawk trying to find her way out of the mesh maze. She was quickly netted, examined, and released.

Illinois Raptor Center Board of Directors



Jane Seitz

Jacques Nuzzo

Chris Young

Jo Fessett

Travis Wilcoxon

Performance Learning Enhancement Grant Awarded to Dr. Travis Wilcoxon

[Dr. Travis Wilcoxon](#) was awarded a Performance Learning Enhancement Grant (PLEG) from Millikin University to continue, and expand, research opportunities for Millikin biology students working with the Illinois Raptor Center (IRC). Travis, his students, and the IRC have been working together to better understand the health of birds of prey admitted to the IRC since receipt of another PLEG in November 2013.

Many positive things have come from the first year of collaboration, including improved assessment of patient health upon admission, a better understanding of conditions that led to admission to the IRC hospital, new knowledge about which metrics can serve as good indicators of improvement in health, and even health assessment of nestlings of an endangered species, the Osprey, prior to their release.

With the new grant will come valuable new assessments, including the detection of lead poisoning and West Nile Virus infection in birds.

During the past year, three Millikin students have worked on this project and all have plans to use their experience with the IRC after graduating from Millikin. Liz Wrobel (who plans to complete a Ph.D. program studying animal physiology), Bridget Spitzer (who plans to attend veterinary school), and Morgan Kincheloe (who plans to attend veterinary school) will all present their raptor research at national meetings in the coming year. Travis anticipates another two students developing novel research projects in the coming months, which will be funded by this new grant, as Liz and Bridget will be graduating in May 2015.

Performance Learning Enhancement Grants were initiated by Millikin University during the 2012-2013 academic year as a means of supporting new initiatives to identify and enhance performance learning within academic programs. The goal of this program is to identify and measure the most salient characteristics of performance learning, including partnerships with external partners, implementation of innovative curricular deliveries, and new co-curricular activities that more intensely engage students in performance learning.

All proposals approved for funding are asked to offer assessments that measure the effective change in enhancing performance learning. The most competitive proposals seek to create innovative expressions of performance learning that will serve as models for the campus community.

Millikin University Illinois Raptor Center - The Partnership Continues

This past year has been a very rewarding year for wildlife rehabilitation at the IRC. The reason for that is our partnership with Millikin University's Biology Department.

The information that has come from the Millikin studies is priceless. Through Millikin's blood sample study, the IRC is learning and understanding so much more about the overall condition of the birds that we care for and about. We are also getting a glimpse into the patient's life and history through those same blood samples and feather analysis.

The IRC is able to respond much more quickly to individual animal needs through results from Millikin blood samples taken after admission. Then, Millikin's data allows us to evaluate that response by comparing the results of Millikin blood samples taken before release. And in addition to all this, we are getting a baseline of what "normal" is for these birds.

The IRC is thrilled that data from our rehabilitation efforts can be collected and processed by bright and upcoming veterinarians, environmentalists and scientist. We are very proud to make a contribution to the future in that way.

As you know, wildlife rehabilitation facilities are few and far between. With the IRC just six miles away, Millikin students are able to take advantage of a valuable resource that isn't available to most other colleges and universities.

There is no question that the Millikin Biology Department/ Illinois Raptor Center partnership should continue indefinitely. It is a win-win for everyone. We are greatly looking forward to the upcoming year! Many thanks to Millikin University and Dr. Travis Wilcoxon.

Go Big Blue!



Summer Raptor Camp 2014



Every summer the IRC plays host to people from all over the state at our Raptor Camps. The camps are huge fundraisers for the wildlife hospital and a great experience for bird lovers.

Last week I went to a “Bird Fair” in Springfield. I didn’t exactly know what to expect but I was looking for some small caging, bowls and feeders – which I found and bought!

What I hadn’t expected was a number of large parrots setting on perches that people were allowed to hold. I have held about every raptor that exists in the state of Illinois, including Bald and Golden Eagles, but I’ve never held a parrot.

I asked the owner if I could hold one and he walked over, picked up the biggest parrot, with the largest beak and longest tail, and placed it on my bare arm. (I’m not use to that!) The parrot stepped over to my arm gently. Once he was balanced, he moved from side to side, leaning on one foot and then on the other. Then he bent over and touched his huge beak to my arm. He didn’t bite but that’s when I knew - that he knew – that I was green! And the experience was simply - awesome!

As I held the parrot I started to think about all the many people on whose arms I have put hawks, falcons, owls and eagles. I started to smile. Wow! This is how those people feel! It has been a long time since I held my first raptor. I forgot how it feels to meet one for the very first time. The experience is simply – awesome!

I love offering unique wildlife programs to wildlife lovers. And those programs are a great way to fund wildlife rehabilitation. It is a win-win for both people and animals! In the beginning, who would have ever thought? The IRC is simply – awesome!

Hope to see you at a Raptor Camp some day! Jane

Donate, Participate, Education, Volunteer!

Announcing the “*Personal Raptor Experience*”

The IRC **Raptor Camps** have been very successful programs and fundraisers for the IRC. But some folks don’t like group settings, some folks don’t have a whole day to spend, others have a fondness just for one certain species, and then there are those looking for that perfect personalized gift for a loved one on a birthday, anniversary or at Christmas.

The IRC has been asked over and over to offer private programming. So we did some research and put some ideas together and came up with the **Personal Raptor Experience**.

We created the **Personal Raptor Experience** so people could meet their favorite raptor, up-close and personal, in a private and comfortable setting.

First, participants will learn everything they ever wanted to know about their favorite bird and more. Next, they will get familiarized with raptor handling equipment and how to use it. Then, when the participant is prepared and equipped, they will be introduced to the live bird of prey. And a few moments later – their favorite bird will be sitting on their gloved fist. Participants may bring their own cameras or the IRC will provide the picture taking.

The cost of a **Personal Raptor Experience** is \$300.00 for 2 people with 1 raptor for 2 hours. This program is for ages 10 years to adult. Children must be accompanied by paying adult.

The cost of a **Personal Eagle Experience** is \$400.00 for two people with a Bald Eagle for 2 hours. This program is for 18 years and older only.

Two couples may schedule their Personal Raptor Experience together – on the same date and at the same time. However, to keep the experience at a personal level, a Raptor Experience is limited to 4 people.

Fees paid in full will reserve the participant’s choice of date and time.

For more information about a Personal Raptor Experience call 217-963-6909 or email to ircinfo@comcast.net.

Final Thoughts

Please help the IRC!
Donate, Participate, Education or Volunteer

The Illinois Raptor Center has grown, in part because we want to, and part because we have to. The IRC is one of less than a handful of wildlife rehabilitation facilities in Illinois with accommodations to tackle problems such as injured eagles, oil spills and special environmental education. We are the only facility of that category in central Illinois.

As the IRC grows and becomes a vital part of the community and the state, so has people's awareness, curiosity and interest in our work. One newsletter a year hasn't kept you – our contributors, our friends, our community - up-to-date about the work we are doing here – the work you have so generously supported throughout the years. And one newsletter a year hasn't kept you informed about the IRC's immediate needs - how you can help or how you can get involved.

So, you will be receiving more newsletters. Not the heavy, glossy, colored, and expensive kind either. It

will be a cheap black and white copy that serves the purpose. Please share it, pass it on or recycle it. If you would like the glossy color version of the newsletter please sign up for our E-newsletter on our website and let us know by email to stop your paper version.

We just recently updated our website. The site now is more compact, has more information about the organization, is easier to update and has more material for those looking for useful information or help with wildlife questions. Please log on and take a look around!
www.illinoisraptorcenter.org

Follow us on Facebook!

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Illinois-Raptor-Center/54956777082>

Shop for us through Good Search

<http://www.goodsearch.com/>

[Donate through PayPal](#)

Call us at 217-963-6909 | E-mail us at illinoisraptorcenter@comcast.net | Visit us at www.illinoisraptorcenter.org



5695 W. Hill Road
Decatur, IL 62522-9520

