

Wingover Newsletter

December 2019

Happy Holidays!



Solo, IRC's 24-year-old female Red-tailed Hawk looks up at Laura, IRC's 2-year-old female Bald Eagle during a conservation education program. Laura was on a perch. Jane was holding Solo on the glove. Jacques took the picture because it was one of those perfect moments. Solo is blind in one eye. Laura suffers impairments from West Nile Virus. Both are wonderful education ambassadors for their species.

From the Executive Director's Desk

Greetings from the Illinois Raptor Center,

I knew many years ago, when I started rehabilitating wildlife in my garage, that the effort would not be enough. I will age and be gone someday and so will my rehab effort. My cages, equipment, and supplies will be dispersed, the house sold, and wildlife in need will be left without any place to go for care, once again.

Seeing brick and mortar humane organizations in nearly every city and town across the country made me aware of the stark differences in the way domestic animals and wild animals are thought of and treated. It was the pure unfairness of it all that became my personal motivator.

So, fast-forward 30 years. I am sitting in an office writing a newsletter for the Illinois Raptor Center. Outside the window, I see 66 beautiful mews (cage facilities), a 409 ft. flight cage, and a building with a sign that says "Wildlife Hospital". All this and much more sits on 25 acres along the Sangamon River owned not by me or anyone else. It is owned by the organization itself.

At a recent National Wildlife Rehabilitator Associate symposium in St. Louis, our organization was asked what process was followed to get our facility built. Well, there really wasn't an intricate process or a stunning business plan. As small charities are always hoping that one special person would come and fuel their mission, the IRC has been blessed with many special people! Each one, in their own way, changing the IRC yesterday, today, and forever.

Now, more than ever, wildlife will need support and understanding to survive in our ever-changing world. The IRC is at the right place, at the right time. The IRC, its staff, board, volunteers, and YOU, our donors, are also the brick and mortar for wildlife. Let us hold tight to our mission.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jane", is written over the end of the final paragraph.

Wildlife Patients

At the end of each year all rehabilitators have reports they have to create and send to the Illinois Department of Natural Resources and the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service by January 31. That gives us a month to work on the data. All of our admit/exam sheets are scanned and sent to Millikin University to match with blood samples that have been taken.

Basic information from those admit sheets has to be entered in a database in order to print out the required information for each of the reports. Here is some of the very preliminary data of the most common birds we have admitted. 30 Great Horned Owls, 26 Red-tailed Hawks, 17 Cooper's Hawks, 7 Red-shouldered Hawks, 9 Cooper's Hawks, 8 Bald Eagles, 5 Peregrine Falcons, 17 American Kestrels, 16 Eastern Screech Owls, 40 ducks. At the first week in December, we are at around 340 admissions.

A study at Millikin University several years ago showed that when comparing ten years of species data from our admission records with ten years of species data from Christmas bird counts, the data is very similar. When bird species populations decline or increase, the IRC is boots on the ground to witness and record it.



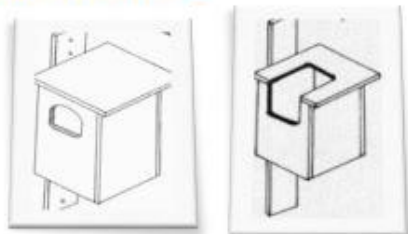
Partnerships and Citizen Science

The **IRC** is a progressive organization. We feel that science, technology, and education are the only way to help wildlife now and in an uncertain future. Each animal that comes through IRC's door is treated and cared for as an individual. But, when the data and blood samples from that individual are compiled with data and blood samples of the hundreds of other animals we have admitted, it becomes an unlimited resource for research projects through our partnership with the **Millikin University Biology Department**.

The IRC has established many partnerships over the years. One of the newest is the *Modified Barred Owl Nest Box Project*. IRC Program Director, **Jacques Nuzzo**, has observed that Barred Owls prefer nesting in open chimney cavities. So Jacques modified some nest box plans to simulate an open chimney cavity. In his experience placing them at the center, he found that Barred Owls love these boxes. Squirrels and raccoons do not! So that in itself is a game changer!

There is now a statewide *Modified Barred Owl Nest Box Study* being done in partnership with **4H Club members**, the **University of Illinois Extension**, and **Cornell Lab of Ornithology** to test Jacques's theory. As hollow trees are cut or fall, nest boxes can be hung on young trees to replace the habitat. But it is very important to hang the correct nest box for the species you want to attract.

Through "citizen science" studies such as this, we learn more about animals, their needs, and how to help them. If you would like plans for this nest box and instructions on placing a variety of nest boxes, just email to information@illinoisraptorcenter.org.



Care and Caring for the Least of These

Illinois Raptor Center Wildlife Hospital. (examination, lead testing, incubators, oxygen machines)



Watching Our Work Take Flight



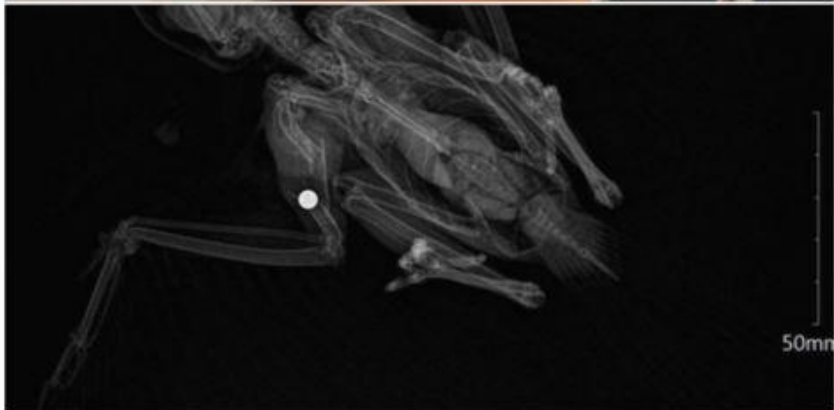
Executive Director, Jane Seitz, releases an immature Red-tailed Hawk after it spent time rehabilitating in Super Flight. It takes effort, time, and money to do this job. The importance of it all is realized when a beautiful animal is released back to the wild knowing it was given the best care possible.



Intentional, Deliberate, Thoughtless, Sad

It is rare, but we do occasionally get in a bird that is shot. It is beyond reason why a beautiful little bird like an American Kestrel would be used as a target. But, as you can see, it happens. This little female was being transferred for further veterinary care.

These small falcons main food source is insects and mice. So they are truly a benefit to people. They nest in a cavity where the female will lay four to five eggs. The male and female share incubation and both will feed the chicks when they hatch. They are one of the very few raptors where the male and female are different colors. They are just a stunning little raptor.



Conservation Photography

There are events at the IRC Wildlife Hospital, and wildlife observed on the IRC property, that the public will never get to see. We have many photographer friends willing to take pictures, but they cannot be here every day. Therefore, our staff has had to develop some photography skills in order to capture and document the IRC's work.

Jacques took the photography effort seriously and with anything he does, he does it well. If you are a friend of the IRC Facebook Page, you have seen his pictures and enjoyed his stories. We call his photography "**Conservation Photography**" rather than wildlife photography because it has a conservation purpose.

From bioluminescent fungi to documenting the growth of baby Kestrels, Jacques posts every weekday to an audience of over 8,000 Facebook Friends. Join us. www.facebook.com/illinoisraptors



Upcoming Events



Focus on Feathers – Annual Dinner

Friday, February 14, 2020

Hickory Point Banquet Hall

727 W Weaver Rd, Forsyth, IL

Make your reservations starting December 15 at

<https://www.brownpapertickets.com/event/4458375>

Register for Raptor Camps, Owl Days, and much more at

<https://www.brownpapertickets.com/browse.html> and search for “Illinois Raptor Center”

Email us at information@illinoisraptorcenter.org for information on Personal Raptor or Personal Eagle Experiences for two.

IRC programs free to the public thanks to generous sponsors.

Ameren Illinois will be sponsoring programs at Starved Rock Bald Eagle Watch Weekend again on January 25 and 27, 2020. For information go to

<https://illinoisaudubon.org/programs/bald-eagle-watch-weekend/>

The US Army Corps of Engineers is sponsoring "Search for Eagles" on January 11, 2020 at 11:00 AM and 1:30 PM in the Prairieview Education Center in McHenry County. Check it out all the activities at

<https://www.mccdistrict.org/rccms/special-events/>

The International Festival of Owls in Huston, Minnesota, March 6th through the 8th, 2020. It is an all owl event. Many events to sign up for at

<https://www.festivalofowls.com/schedule.html>

Douglas-Hart Nature Center in Mattoon is sponsoring a program on Saturday, January 18, 2020 at 11:00AM <https://www.dhnature.org/>



Illinois Raptor Center Charitable Donation Form

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* Phone _____

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This donation of \$ _____ is tax deductible.

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*The Illinois Raptor Center will never sell, give away, or share your information.
We will always keep your information confidential.*