



Illinois Raptor Center

Avian Conservation through Captive Propagation Data Collection & Education

The Illinois Raptor Center (IRC) hadn't considered breeding raptors when we first began rehabilitating and presenting conservation education programs back in 1991. It was in 2018, when Scarlett and Wink laid eggs that were viable, that we unintentionally stumbled into the world of captive breeding.



Both Scarlett and Wink, Eastern Screech Owls (EASO), were admitted to our wildlife hospital in 2013. Both were branchers. Both had eye injuries that made them non-releasable. Both were put in our education programs and became Wildlife Ambassadors. For years they were thought to be females. It turns out we were wrong. Wink is a male.

Breeding native raptors requires an Illinois Department of Natural Resources Raptor Propagation Permit and a USFWS Raptor Propagation Permit. To be consistent with the wildlife law, we quickly called our IDNR Permit Office and our USFWS Region 3 Migratory Bird Permit Office to explain our situation and apply for the permits. These permits are not issued to organizations so our permits were issued to Jacques Nuzzo, IRC Program Director. Jacques received both permits in a timely manner.

No one knows why but EASOs are known to eat their chicks in captivity. To be safe, we removed the eggs from the parents and started incubating them ourselves. From those eggs, we hand-raised four chicks. Because our organization is adamant about data collection, Jacques took pictures of the chicks in the eggs, pictures as they hatched, and a picture every day of their lives until they fully feathered. This year (2019) Jacques is getting even more data. This is a valuable resource in rehab to be able to identify the ages of EASOs admitted to our hospital in the future.



When we want a certain species for presentations, a species normally not seen in our area or rarely comes into our hospital, the IRC has purchased captive bred birds. These are raptors that people love, want to see up-close, and are eager to learn about. Because we are falconers as well as rehabilitators, we were not surprised at how much time and money it takes to hand-raise a raptor. In our nearly 30 years, the IRC has purchased 3 Barn Owls (\$500 each) and 2 Snowy Owls (\$3,000 each) for our education presentations. And from our experience, captive bred owls are wonderful ambassadors and worth the expense if you do serious education.

This leads us to the position statement put out by the International Association of Avian Trainer and Educators (IAATE) in March 2018. ***“IAATE supports the use of human-reared owls in ambassador animal programs. IAATE strongly discourages the use of parent-reared owls in ambassador animal programs.”******“When it comes to adaptability, parent-reared owls are unlike human-reared owls because they lack a history of positive affiliation with human caregivers and also lack positive exposure to the circumstances and stimuli encountered in the human world.”*** Read the full position statement on their website:



So, because of what we are learning from data collection and for being able to provide other facilities with Wildlife Ambassadors for Conservation Education, we have decided to continue with and possibly even expanding the IRC Raptor Propagation Program.



Avian Conservation through Captive Propagation

The IRC breeds a small number of Eastern Screech Owlets for exclusive use in conservation education presentations.

Eastern Screech Owlets hatching in captivity at the IRC are cared for entirely by staff members under the supervision of Jacques Nuzzo. The owlets become human imprints and socialized. They are banded with USFWS markers, and at the proper age they are fitted with program equipment - anklets, jesses, swivel, and leash. Owlets are fully feathered, trained to the glove, and are ready for programming when picked up by the recipient.

Jacques will not know how many males or females will be available in a given year or what color morphs they will be. Please make it known if you have preferences.

Pickup is definitely preferred but shipment (American Airline Live Animal Cargo) can be made if necessary. We do not export out of the country.

A \$525 donation to the IRC is required before pickup or shipment. DNA sexing and program equipment are included. Health certificates, if needed, are an additional fee. Recipient pays shipping fees. Send your crate in advance of shipping or one can be provided for an additional \$45.

This is our information:

- Jacques Nuzzo (IRC) is state and federally permitted in the areas of wildlife rehabilitation, conservation education, falconry, eagles, endangered species, and raptor propagation. Jacques, IRC Program Director, and Jane Seitz, IRC Executive Director, have combined, well over 50 years of experience in the field of raptors.
- The IRC 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization established in 1991 in good standing. FEIN 37-1287919
- www.illinoisraptorcenter.org www.facebook.com/illinoisbirds
- The IRC feeds only quality raptor food purchased from reputable breeders/vendors. The IRC does NOT feed: donated store bought meat from freezers, donated wild meat shot with lead bullets, alive or dead wildlife patients that are prey species, road-kill, or bird of prey diet products.
- The IRC does both on-site and outreach programs, including large yearly venues such as Starved Rock Eagle Days in Illinois and the International Festival of Owls in Minnesota, as well as small on-site Personal Raptor Experiences for Two and Adult Raptor Camps. Sponsors for our programs include the IDNR, USFWS, USACE, and Ameren Illinois.
- The IRC's 25-acre property is located at 5695 W. Hill Road, Decatur, IL 62522, has an office building with nature center and 30 outdoor mews for our education raptors. We have a wildlife hospital building, 36 outdoor mews, barn flight, and 409' long flight facility for rehabilitation.

Send all inquiries to Jacques at information@illinoisraptorcenter.org with your information:

- USFWS Special Purpose Possession – Live and Dead Migratory Birds for Educational Use Permit
- State education permits if applicable
- 501(c)(3) nonprofit status FEIN #
- Website and Facebook addresses
- Experience/years in raptor handling, care, and management
- Food items and source/s
- Number and types of conservation education programs each year
- Raptor housing facilities (provide pictures)