

On the Horizon



Horizon Wings Newsletter – Fall 2010

www.horizonwings.org

Welcome to Horizon Wings' first quarterly newsletter – *On the Horizon*. We would like to keep you informed of happenings, events, and news going on at Horizon Wings.

Our mission at Horizon Wings is to rehabilitate birds of prey for release into the wild, in order to maintain their population and to educate the community to enhance awareness of the environment. It is our hope by doing this that we reach people of all ages and create the desire in them to help preserve our natural world.



WELCOME SILO – Newest member of Horizon Wings

On October 18th, Silo the Common Barn Owl arrived at Bradley International Airport after her five hour flight from South Dakota. Finally, after waiting an hour for our precious cargo we could see her coming across the tarmac to the Delta Cargo hanger. We peeked inside her carrier to make sure she was doing ok and then made the hour drive to Horizon Wings in Ashford, CT.

We were all anxious to get a better look at her but when we finally arrived back at the facility it was dark. Unfortunately, we didn't have much of a chance to watch her settle in. Mary-Beth brought the carrier into the aviary and opened the door. Without much coaxing, Silo came out of the carrier and stepped right up onto Mary-Beth's glove and into her new forever home.

Ever since Mary-Beth started her Raptor Rehabilitation business 10 years ago, she has been hoping she would be lucky enough to have a Barn Owl as a program bird. This finally became a reality when Wildlife Experiences in South Dakota abruptly closed their non-profit organization and needed to find homes for all of their birds. We are honored and would like to thank Maggie Engler of Wildlife

Experiences for choosing Horizon Wings as Silo's new home.

Silo was born in captivity in Montana 14 years ago. At 3 weeks of age she was moved to Wildlife Experiences in South Dakota where she was trained to be an educational bird. During the summers she was brought out and flown 4 times a day for the public. Now that she is at Horizon Wings, we have retired her from flying but she will become an educational ambassador and brought around to schools, libraries and other public events to teach important information about owls and conservation.

Barn owls are currently on the endangered list here in Connecticut due to loss of habitat and changes in the land use. They like open farmlands and will nest in old barns, silos, and tree cavities. A study done by the Connecticut Dept. of Environmental Protection found that a pair of Barn owls with six young can eat as many as 1,000 rodents in a nesting season. They are able to locate their prey using only their sense of hearing. Barn owls are easily identified by their white chest and heart-shaped facial disk. Females are larger and have heavier speckled chests.

Their call is a long hissing shriek. Silo will be making her Connecticut debut on November 13, 2010 7:30 pm at Northwest Park in Windsor. This is a great opportunity to see a Common Barn owl up close and to learn more about them. Come on out and meet her! Please check out website at www.horizonwings.org for more details and future programs dates.

Written by Jeanne Wadsworth

Rehabilitation News

As of November 2010, Horizon Wings has had a total of 60 birds in rehabilitation. 31 of which have been released, two transferred to other rehabilitators, two pending release, 12 birds died and 13 were humanely euthanized due to their injuries.

Bald Eagle – 1
Great Horned Owl – 2
Barred Owl – 6
Eastern Screech Owl – 7
Cooper’s Hawk – 5
Red-Tailed Hawk – 10*
Broad-Winged Hawk – 6
Red Shouldered Hawk – 2
Osprey – 2*
American Kestrel – 4
Peregrine Falcon – 1

Turkey Vulture – 1
American Crow – 7
Bittern – 1
Green Heron – 1

* As of publication, one of each of these species is still in rehabilitation.

A Wing and a Prayer

Friday, September 24, was a characteristically hectic day at Horizon Wings, when a typical rescue call came in reporting “some kind of hawk” in trouble at Somers Golf Course. One of our volunteers, Jeanne Wadsworth, immediately headed out to Somers, Connecticut to investigate, expecting to see a Red-tailed Hawk, Cooper’s Hawk, Red-shouldered Hawk, or any of the more common hawk species in our area. But what she found surprised her. There on the driving range, entangled in netting, was a frightened juvenile Peregrine Falcon!

Peregrine Falcons are not common on the east coast. Historically, they experienced a rapid decline in population during the 1950s and 1960s throughout North America, due largely to the widespread use of DDT on agricultural crops. Peregrines ingested concentrated levels of the

pesticide which resulted in fragile, nonviable eggs. In 1970 they were officially declared an endangered species, and by 1975 the entire population of Peregrines in the Eastern United States was considered to be wiped out. A ban on the use of DDT by the United States and Canada in 1972, and the success of captive breeding and reintroduction programs saved the Peregrine Falcon from the brink. In 1999 the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service was able to remove them from the federal endangered species list. However, they continue to require careful monitoring, and they remain an endangered species on the state level in Connecticut.



Like most raptors, Peregrine Falcons are especially vulnerable during their first year of life. Urban fledglings, while practicing their flying and hunting techniques, need to be able to navigate around man-made obstacles such as tall buildings and bridges. Window strikes and car collisions are not uncommon. Perhaps this juvenile came from the north and ran into trouble on his migration route to South America.

Jeanne worked quickly to extricate the young falcon and transport him back to Horizon Wings, where he was carefully placed in a large kennel crate in a warm, quiet area reserved for intensive care patients. This young falcon was in poor condition, emaciated and severely dehydrated. Fortunately, Mary-Beth Kaeser, owner of Horizon Wings, has the years of raptor rehabilitation experience and specialized skills required to work with endangered species. She began the life-saving process of re-hydration by administering subcutaneous fluids.

When Mary-Beth palpitated his wing, she could feel an old break to his right ulna which had already begun to callus. This was worrying; Peregrine Falcons are powerful, sleek hunters, known for speed and agility. They have been clocked at speeds of up to 240 miles per hour in a stoop -- a corkscrew dive that ends in the capture and killing of its prey in mid-air. Perfect flight is essential to their survival.

X-rays taken at Bolton Veterinary Clinic confirmed Mary-Beth’s diagnosis. The young falcon was placed in a figure-eight wrap to immobilize the wing and keep it in proper position during



the healing process. This wrap was then changed and re-wrapped every two days for a period of approximately ten days. Caring for the new patient was time and labor intensive. Anti-inflammatory medications and supplements needed to be administered daily. For the first week, he had to be hand-fed three small meals a day. Gradually he began to gain strength and eat on his own. On October 13, he returned to the veterinarian to have his wing x-rayed again. It was agreed that he would benefit from another week of cage rest.

The little falcon was indeed growing stronger and feistier by the day. By October 23 he was cautiously placed in a small flight cage in which he could be carefully monitored. He seemed to have no problem flying short distances to reach the higher perches. This was encouraging. He was exercising and building up his flight muscles with each passing day. But could he sustain flight? A little over a week later, it was time to find out.

The atmosphere was tense as Mary-Beth and Jeanne prepared to transfer the Peregrine Falcon to the large pre-release flight cage. A dead quail was attached to a string and suspended 14 feet above. Without a moment's hesitation, the falcon spread his wings, flew confidently across the expanse of the flight cage, and eagerly grabbed the quail in his powerful talons.



On November 6 he was banded and released.

Written by Patricia Cebrelli

New Horizons

2010 has been an exciting year for Horizon Wings. We completely refurbished three of our aviaries, hosted our first Earth Day celebration, and welcomed the addition of our newest educational program bird, Silo. We are experiencing some welcome growing pains as we face the challenges of the year ahead.

One of our major endeavors for 2011 is to install both electricity and running water to our aviaries. The electricity will enable us to provide the birds with ice-free water bowls and with heated nest boxes for those species which require it. Motion-sensitive lights will make it safer for the birds and their handlers, especially when returning from educational programs on dark winter evenings. The availability of running water closer to the aviaries will make cleaning the aviaries less back-breaking and more efficient. The estimated cost of all this is a daunting \$10,000, but we are determined to raise the money, and are currently involved in the process of applying for grants to help make these vital improvements a reality.

Another major project involves the construction of a large 20ft x 30ft aviary to be used for pre-release flight conditioning and for rehabilitation of larger bird species such as eagles. In June 2010, Horizon Wings was entrusted with the rehabilitation of its first Bald Eagle. Although the outcome for the eagle was less than good due to the severity of his injuries, the experience underscored the need for a large enclosure for future use. *Some of the lumber for this (Continued next page)*

Would you like to help Horizon Wings? Fill this form out and mail back with a donation.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Email: _____

Would you like to be added to our email mailing list? Yes No

Mail to:

Horizon Wings Raptor Rehabilitation and Education

P.O. Box 238

Ashford, CT 06278

Wishlist

- Lumber
- Cordless power tools
- Vinyl coated wire
- Zip-Loc freezer bags
- Postage stamps
- Paper towels
- Astro-turf

Please contact us at horizonwings@sbcglobal.net if you can donate any of these items. Monetary donations may be applied to any of the above.

project has been generously donated by Hope Douglas, of Wind Over Wings, but an aviary of this size requires much more construction materials.

In addition, we must build a new aviary customized to meet the needs of our newest educational ambassador, Silo, the Barn Owl. Our hope is to get Silo into her new home by the early spring of 2011. Again, we are actively pursuing funding from grants, but will also need your help in the form of private donations, as well as donations of time and materials. Any help, no matter how small, would be greatly appreciated.

Horizon Wings is also focusing on expanding its educational outreach programs in order to better accomplish the goals set out in our mission statement.

Thanks to your support and participation, last year's Earth Day Fair was a big success. We look forward to planning our 2nd annual Earth Day Fair, scheduled for April 2011. Come join us for an inspirational, educational, and fun day! And please keep checking our website for details of other upcoming programs and events.

Written by Alan Nordell

Thank You!

Horizon Wings would like to thank the doctors and staff of Bolton Veterinary Hospital and North Veterinary Clinic for their ongoing care of the birds.

We also wish to thank Tufts Wildlife Clinic for their care and compassion in assisting us with the bald eagle.

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Horizon Wings Raptor Rehabilitation and Education
P.O. Box 238
Ashford, CT 06278

www.horizonwings.org
860-429-2181