

On the Horizon



Winter 2022 Edition
www.horizonwings.org

Welcome to Horizon Wings' semi-annual 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.

Rehabilitation and Education 2022

The year 2022 has been a busy one for Horizon Wings. We provided a total of 136 programs, both on and off Horizon Wings' grounds. Our programs included private birthday parties, scout groups, summer camps, schools, and libraries as well as tours of our facilities.



Merlin in rehab

The HPAI (highly pathogenic avian influenza) compromised our ability to provide rehabilitation for birds in need. With our limited space for quarantine, we were able to rehabilitate a total (at this writing) of 45 birds. This number includes two Merlins, a bird that we rarely see in rehabilitation. They are small falcons that migrate through Connecticut to reach their breeding grounds in northern North America. Merlins will winter as far south as northern South America.

There are three subspecies of Merlin in North America. We commonly see the Taiga in Connecticut while they are on migration. The other two subspecies are the Prairie, a paler color variation found in northern prairie areas, and the darker plumaged Black of the Pacific Northwest.

The Taiga's plumage differs between the female, male, and juvenile birds. While the mature male is gray in coloration, the juvenile and female are brown. Their faces lack the malar mark, the dark streak under their eyes that other falcons like the kestrel and peregrine have. Both sexes have heavily streaked chests and narrow white tail bands.

We are currently wintering over one of the two Taiga Merlins we rehabilitated as her flight was not strong enough for her to be released before winter. We hope to release her in the spring.

Written by Mary-Beth Kaesar

Owl Prowl

On Saturday, October 22, more than 125 visitors joined us at Horizon Wings for the 2022 Owl Prowl. It was a wonderful return for the annual event that had been on hiatus during the pandemic.

Volunteers introduced Horizon Wings' owls to guests, telling the birds' stories, describing special features of owls, and answering questions. Guests were delighted by the opportunity to see Tyton, the Barn Owl; Screech Owls Oakley, Jade, and Tansy; Great-Horned Owl Oscar; and Barred Owl Asha. A sign commemorated Keegan, our Northern Saw-Whet Owl, who sadly died this past September.

Also at the owl prowl were some other nocturnal animals: Ferncroft Wildlife Rescue's educational ambassador opossums, Mango, Bella and Coco, with their handlers, Pam and Bill Lefferts, both licensed wildlife rehabilitators and operators of Ferncroft.

Young visitors made owls from cotton balls and googly eyes. The owl education table featured a display of wings and talons, with sterilized owl pellets for dissection.



Tyton, our barn owl with handler Deb.



All raffle items are donated.

Refreshments, many of them homemade, were served by Horizon Wings volunteers and included apple cider donuts, cupcakes, pumpkin bread, brownies, chocolate chip cookies, oatmeal raisin bars, and hot cider, coffee, and tea.

Gift baskets offered an array of owl themes, including birdfeeders, owl art, kitchen items, wine, and kids' activities; a handmade pottery bowl; and a Horizon Wings hoodie. Also available were Horizon Wings T-shirts, calendars, and notecards. The event raised more than \$1800 in donations, which will help Horizon Wings carry out its mission of raptor and corvid rehabilitation and educating the public about these birds.

At 7:00, a pre-registered group set off with board member Paul McKiernan and volunteer Laura McKiernan on the owl prowl, a walk down Iron Mine Lane and along the Pixie Falls trail. The group didn't encounter any owls on the prowl, but earlier, Silas, our male Barred Owl, put on quite a vocal display from his aviary, calling to Asha, who was outside with visitors.



The Owl Prowl has many fans. One of them first came in his parents' arms as an infant, clutching a stuffed owl toy. He was very attached to his toy and came to love the owls at Horizon Wings. While the family lived in Connecticut, relatives made donations to Horizon Wings in honor of his birthday. After moving to Vermont, the boy and his family continued to return annually for the Owl Prowl, missing it during the pandemic. They came back this year, and the young man, now eleven years old, brought along that same stuffed owl!

The Owl Prowl, which has been held for ten years, is a fun, festive, and educational fall event where visitors can meet Horizon Wings' owls and learn everything they want to about these special birds. Watch our Facebook page for next year's Owl Prowl!

Written by Sara Putnam

In Appreciation

Horizon Wings thanks the following businesses and people for their ongoing support.



Vaughn and Sheila Numrych
Debra Tosto
Executive Director, Avian Vaccine Services
Jackson Laboratories
Jenny Nord, Trinity College
Quinebaug Valley State Trout Hatchery



All of us at Horizon Wings wish to thank everyone who so generously donated and supported Horizon Wings this year! We wish you all a happy holiday season, and a happy, healthy 2023!

Wish List

- Lumber (Plywood, 2x4s, 2x6s)
- Roofing material
- Hardware (deck screws, rafter hangers, hinges, hasps)
- Pea stone for aviary flooring
- Zip-Loc freezer bags
- Cleaning supplies (paper towels, bleach, Simple Green)
- Office supplies (Postage stamps, paper, envelopes, card stock)
- Gift cards for building supplies
- Hardware cloth
- Disposable vinyl cleaning gloves
- Amazon (https://www.amazon.com/hz/wishlist/genericItemsPage/2QDT9KR9W3EX2?ref=wl_share)

Please support your local merchants whenever possible!

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www.horizonwings.org

Visit us for current news, photos, and information on upcoming programs.